

SAIMM and SANIRE



In April 2024, SAIMM began providing secretarial services to the South African National Institute of Rock Engineering (SANIRE) https://www.sanire.co.za/, following approval by the council in February 2024. These services encompass membership management through the MYMEMBERSHIP platform, coordination of branch meetings and annual conferences, administrative support, and accounting services. Prudence Ntumelang has been re-employed by SAIMM as the SANIRE administrator. This arrangement aims to strengthen the collaboration between SAIMM and SANIRE.

SANIRE operates under a constitution that govern their operations, decision-making processes, and codes of ethics, like the SAIMM. It was established in 1969 as the South African National Group of Rock Mechanics (SANGORM) and became a national group within the newly formed International Society for Rock Mechanics (ISRM). In 1999, SANGORM was renamed SANIRE, reflecting its objective to evolve into a professional institute.

I am often asked about the difference between rock mechanics and rock engineering. Rock mechanics is a theoretical and applied science of the mechanical behaviour of rocks and rock masses. Rock Engineering is the creative application of rock mechanics, mathematical methods, and empirical evidence to the innovation, design, construction, and maintenance of surface and underground excavations. SANIRE primarily focuses on rock engineering in the mining industry, although it also includes members who work mainly in civil infrastructure. In contrast, the ISRM places a strong emphasis on civil infrastructure, while including mining and energy.

SANIRE is actively involved in the education and qualification of rock engineering practitioners in the South African mining industry. The Minerals Council Rock Mechanics Certificates, previously Chamber of Mines Rock Mechanics Certificates are managed by SANIRE on behalf of the Minerals Council of South Africa (MCSA). These are currently the only rock engineering qualifications currently recognized by the Mine Health and Safety Act of 1996 (MHSA). SANIRE is also actively participating in the MCSA Mine Occupational Health and Safety (MOSH) and Fall of Ground Action Plan (FOGAP) programmes, which I mentioned in my April President's Corner https://www.saimm.co.za/journal-presidents-corner/1091-quest-for-zero-harm-in-south-african-deep-gold-mines.

The SAIMM and SANIRE have collaborated in the organization of many successful international rock engineering conferences for more than 30 years. Our secretariat carries out all the administrative requirements and co-ordinates the refereeing of papers, while SANIRE provides the technical expertise. Papers on the management of rockfalls and rockbursts have probably featured in the SAIMM journal from the very beginning. However, the term Rock Mechanics was first coined in the 1960s, when the discipline really started in earnest, and the term Rock Engineering was introduced later. Many groundbreaking papers on the subject have been published in our journal, several preceding the formation of the ISRM. More recently recognition has been given through the award of many SAIMM gold and silver medals to papers on rock engineering. Notable multiple medal recipients include Dick Stacey, Nielen van der Merwe, John Napier and Francois Malan. SAIMM books on rock mechanics and rock engineering include: Rock Mechanics in Mining Practice (Sandor Budavari), Handbook on Hard-Rock Strata Control (Sam Spearing), Rock Fracture and Rockbursts-an illustrative study (Dave Ortlepp), Rock Engineering for underground coal mining (Nielen van der Merwe and Bernard Madden), Theoretical Rock Mechanics for Professional Practice (Matthew Handley), Johannesburg and its Holey Mining Heritage (Dick Stacey and Greg Heath). The recent book by Brian Protheroe entitled COMRO's Legacy: Research and Development of Stoping Mining Machinery and Technologies. https://www.saimm.co.za/publications/saimm-book-sale

President's Corner *(continued)*

The collaboration is further evident because I and four past SAIMM Presidents https://www.saimm.co.za/about-saimm/saimm-past-presidents, (Horst Wagner, Oskar Steffen, Dick Stacey, Nielen van der Merwe) have also served as SANIRE/SANGORM Presidents and ISRM Vice Presidents for Africa. Nielen also served as the President of ISRM from 2003 to 2007, and chaired the 2003 ISRM International Congress in Johannesburg, which was organized by the SAIMM. Past Presidents Pinkie (FG) Hill and Miklos Salamon also made major contributions to the discipline. Several former Brigadier Stokes Memorial Award https://www.saimm.co.za/about-saimm/brigadier-stokes-memorial-award recipients have provided key contributions to rock engineering (Pinkie Hill, Miklos Salamon, Horst Wagner, Dennis Laubscher, and Dick Stacey).

SANIRE held its 2024 symposium https://www.sanire.co.za/ at Silverstar hotel in Muldersdrift from 2024-06-13 to 2024-06-14, which was arranged by our secretariat, and I was glad to attend. The symposium was opened by the current SANIRE President, Kevin Le Bron and the programme included several keynotes: Winning the war on falls of ground, Lerato Tsele, MCSA; Advancing rock engineering skills for a sustainable future in Mining; Thabo Mashongoane, Mining Qualifications Authority South Africa (MQA); Developments in pillar design, Bryan Watson, University of the Witwatersrand. SANIRE also announced the launch of their new education platform. There were several interesting presentations on many topics covering open pit and underground mining, developments in support practice, case studies and an interesting trial on hydraulic fracturing for preconditioning. I certainly enjoyed the conference and learned a great deal. As always, the geotechnical service and rock support suppliers came to the party, sponsoring and providing an illuminating exhibition.

During the symposium, the SANIRE Treasurer, Sifiso Mashile, informed members of the new agreement and highlighted the contribution by the SAIMM secretariat, since the secretarial service commenced. Unfortunately, recent administrative challenges had prevented the reliable collection of membership fees, creating significant cashflow challenges. This has now been resolved through Prudence's timely intervention.

The process of organizing the next international conference on rock engineering in South Africa has commenced, so keep your eye out for announcements, starting with a call for papers. I believe that the new arrangement to provide secretarial services to SANIRE can only improve the collaboration going forward, and importantly, enabling SANIRE to maintains its identity as a leading national group of rock engineering.

W.C. Joughin
President, SAIMM