

Journal Comment

A Southern African Silver Anniversary 2014 SOMP Annual Meeting

If it was not for the vision of the founder member of the Society of Mining Professors, Professor Günter Fettweis, the International Society of Mining Professors would not have been possible as it stands today. A group of mining professors under the guidance of Professor Fettweis gathered on 21 October 1990 at the Montanuniversität in Leoben, Austria to establish the Society of Mining Professors. The first ever international scientific society had been the *Societät der Bergbaukunde* formed in 1762 in Schemnitz (Banská, Štiavnica, now Slovakia). In memory of this scientific society, it was agreed that the German name would be retained and that the English version, the Society of Mining Professors, would be used in conjunction with it. The first elected President of the Society was Professor Gunnar Almgren, of Luleå, Sweden, and the first Secretary General was Professor Tim Shaw of the then Royal School of Mines in London.

The mission of the Society of Mining Professors/Societät der Bergbaukunde is to be a vibrant society that represents the global academic mining community and is committed to making a significant contribution to the future of the minerals disciplines. The main goal of the Society is to guarantee the scientific, technical, academic, and professional knowledge that is required to ensure a sustainable supply of minerals for mankind. The Society facilitates information exchange, research and teaching partnerships, and other collaborative activities among its members and has been doing so for the last 25 years of its official existence. Today the Society is very well represented with more than 200 registered members from more than 70 universities in more than 40 countries and from all the continents of the world.

All lecturers in the Department of Mining Engineering at the University of Pretoria are currently members of the Society of Mining Professors and benefit from all the activities presented by the Society. The Department of Mining Engineering currently has 404 registered students, of which 337 are undergraduate students (77% Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSAs), 23% white, and 29% women). It is our firm belief that our association with the Society of Mining Professors benefits our students as we are continuously comparing ourselves with acclaimed international mining institutions and their related activities. International mining education collaboration has never been more possible than at present.

A highlight of 2014 was the co-hosting of the annual International Society of Mining Professors conference in June, in conjunction with the School of Mining Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand, with Head of Department Professor Fred Cawood. As President of the Society of Mining Professors for 2014, it was a great privilege for me to be part of this special occasion (the 25th silver anniversary celebrations of the Society), which was the first visit of the Society of Mining Professors to Africa. More than 100 delegates and their partners joined us at the end of June for a four-day event that was very well received by all our international visitors. Conferences of the Society have been held all over the world since its inception in 1990 – Europe, Australasia, the Americas, and now Africa. The South African conference was one of the biggest Society events to have been held outside of Europe. My acknowledgement and appreciation on behalf of the Society of Mining Professors to everyone that made this a great success, including all the sponsors (the Society of Mining Professors; Gold Fields; the Department of Mining, University of Johannesburg; the School of Mining Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand; and the Department of Mining Engineering at the University of Pretoria)

The allocation of the December 2014 SAIMM Journal to the papers presented at the Society conference in 2014 is really a great step in the right direction for the Society, and I am very glad that this has been made possible. As a future initiative, all papers that are presented at the annual Society of Mining Professors conferences anywhere in the world will be used to make Society-related publications more available to the broader mining community. The cooperation of the SAIMM in this regard is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

Glückauf!

R.C.W. Webber-Youngman