



This edition of the Journal again covers a wide range of subjects related to underground mining. Safety features strongly, with topics covering the spectrum from the helicopter view of the probability-based likelihood of successful outcomes of the systems to the detailed design of rock support elements. Accident prevention utilizing advanced technology receives attention, as does the design and implementation of mining methods. The environment is not ignored either.

It is interesting to note where the papers come from. Three have their origins at universities, the traditional suppliers of research. All are from non-South African universities. While this indicates perhaps a lack of mining research being done at South African universities, it also highlights the ability of the Institute to attract contributions to knowledge from other parts of the globe, to the benefit of not only our own industry, but everywhere in the world where the Journal is read.

Another four papers are directly from practitioners employed in our mining companies, indicating that knowledge is not only generated but new procedures are also implemented in practice, highlighting the developmental aspect of research and development. The balance of the papers are from consultants and suppliers, all contributing to the public domain of mining knowledge.

The point I want to make here is that mining research in South Africa is not completely dormant, but that it is being done in several different places. It is good that development is still taking place, but looking at the long term, we do not have the coordinated effort and a long-term plan that we need. The situation is not yet completely hopeless, but we certainly do need a more coordinated effort as well as more fundamental research than we have at present. Without the generation of new knowledge at the fundamental level, we will run out of foundations on which to develop new processes and procedures for implementation.

Turning now to the Institute and the little bit that is left of the year, the major upcoming event is the annual banquet. The banquet *per se* is not mentioned anywhere in our constitution, yet it is our most important event from several perspectives. As the Institute we provide a platform for communication and the banquet does exactly that in a direct fashion. It is the event every year where we can talk directly to friends we have not seen in a while and meet new ones.

There is also a component of tradition in the proceedings. It starts off formally, reflecting the prestigious and professional nature of the Institute, but as the evening wears on, it becomes less and less formal and towards the end there are few differences between this event and a pub get-together. The most important difference is probably the composition of the body of participants, consisting of professors, decision-makers and implementers, and advisors from all parts of the country and from all conceivable disciplines in mining. I certainly hope that as many as possible of us will again meet old friends and make new ones at the event. In addition to everything else, the banquet is simply an occasion to enjoy, have fun, and celebrate our industry.

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