

International Mineralogical Association

FROM THE PAST-PRESIDENT

The excellent 19th General Meeting of IMA in Kobe is described by the organisers elsewhere in this issue of *Elements*. Everyone I spoke to agreed it was a thoroughly enjoyable event. The scientific standard of the talks was particularly high, reflecting the emphasis placed by universities and government on mineralogy and materials science in Japan. Heartfelt thanks are due to Takamitsu Yamanka and his team for an extremely smoothly run meeting and some memorable (sometimes deafening!) social events.

Slightly smaller and more mineralogical than competing conferences, it is the emphasis on 'international' that gives IMA meetings their distinctive flavour. IMA has an important role in fostering international collaboration, particularly for the smaller mineralogical societies, and it is always a pleasure to renew old acquaintances. It is, however, disappointing that many members of the largest mineralogical societies do not automatically make IMA meetings their first choice of 'big' meeting. They should. I contend that the international character of science, the set of common rules and practices that all scientists share, is of enormous potential benefit to mankind, well worth the effort of some extra travel or the need to concentrate a little harder on slightly less-than-perfect English.

IMA meetings are complex for the officials of IMA. As President I had to chair two meetings of the IMA Council and two Business Meetings (at which each supporting organization is represented, in proportion to its size, by between 1 and 5 National Representatives) before handing over to Takamitsu Yamanka, my successor as President, for a final Council meeting. All this activity has to be orchestrated, and papers provided, by our very hard working Secretary, Maryse Ohnenstetter. Thanks from all of us, Maryse. In addition, the various Commissions and Working Groups of IMA each hold at least one meeting – thanks too to their chairs and secretaries.

Practical matters

From this behind-the-scenes activity emerged both formal changes and exciting initiatives for IMA. The Council for 2004-2008, shown in our picture, was approved, with some new members. Missing from the picture is a new Communications Officer, yet to be appointed, who together with the President, Secretary and Treasurer, will be a member of the Executive Committee. New officials were appointed to Commissions and Working Groups. Dogan Paktunc, Katsuo Tsukamoto and Sergey Smirnov become chairmen of the Commission on Applied Mineralogy, Commission on Mineral Growth and Interface Processes and Working Group on Inclusions in Minerals respectively. A full list of officials can be found at www.ima-mineralogy.org.

The Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names (CNMMN) has been merged with the Commission on the Classification of Minerals (CCM). These commissions represent the most widely known activities of IMA. The merger will solve problems encountered in the past at the boundaries of their fields of activity, and gives us a new Commission on New Minerals, Nomenclature and Classification (CNMNC). It will

continue the work of both Commissions under the hard-working leadership of Ernst Burke, who described the important activities of CNMMN in *Elements* 1 (3).

Although far in the future, IMA needs to find a venue for the 2014 General Meeting. In view of the locations of recent meetings and the 2010 meeting in Budapest, it would be appropriate to meet in North America and we hope that proposals will come forward. Business meetings take place every two years and it was decided to hold Business and Council meetings at the time of the 2008 Goldschmidt Conference in Vancouver, Canada. Council will meet during the combined societies 'Frontiers in Mineralogy' meeting in Cambridge, England, in 2007.

We hope that the problems of collecting membership dues [*Elements* 2 (1)] may have been solved. The formula for calculating subscriptions leads to *per capita* payments that are smallest for the largest societies. Rather than increasing contributions paid by the larger societies, the subscriptions of our 15 smallest societies, each with less than 25 members, will be reduced from 60 to 30 US\$. The decrease in income will be compensated by an improvement in our annual investment income. The problem of the costs of international bank transfers has been solved by Bob Downs' discovery of a bank that will not charge for accepting cheques in foreign currencies. We can further help societies by accepting payment up to four years in advance at Business Meetings.

Strategic initiatives

Several initiatives will be developed in the months to come:

- An annual IMA Medal for Excellence has been founded. A Medals Committee will be formed, chaired by Jeol Grice. Candidates can be nominated by national societies and by individuals.
- IMA will become the home of the comprehensive Internet mineral database, currently known as the RRUFF project, being built by a group led by Bob Downs, with support from Michael Scott, the first President of Apple Computers, a keen mineral collector. The database will contain X-ray diffraction data, Raman and Infrared spectra and microprobe data and analyses. It has spectacular opportunities to be linked to new, miniaturized spectrometers for mineral identification in the field.
- Many councillors feel that some of the Commissions and Working Groups are not fulfilling their role adequately. Suggestions include forming a nucleus of experts in each field to lead developments, making more use of the Internet, and ensuring that chairmen serve no more than four years.
- The presidency of IMA will, in the future, be decoupled from chairmanship of the General Meeting, a connection that has developed through custom rather than statute. A democratic system and a shorter term of office for the president would ensure that an increasing number of leaders in the field of mineralogy would become aware of the workings of IMA and contribute fresh ideas.

I will end by wishing my successor, Takamitsu Yamanaka, every success in the next four years.

Ian Parsons
President of IMA, 2002–2006



The current Council of IMA. Left to right. Back row: Anhuai Lu (China), Joel Grice (Canada), Ekkehart Tillmanns (Austria, Chairman of the 2010 General Meeting), Nicolai Yushkin (Russia), Maryse Ohnenstetter (Secretary, France), Herta Effenberger (attending on behalf of EMU). Front row: Walter Maresch (Germany), Ian Parsons (Great Britain and Ireland), Takamitsu Yamanaka (President, Japan), Robert Downs (Treasurer, Canadian based in the USA), Marcello Mellini (Italy), Kari Kojonen (Finland).