

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The European Alps may bring to mind skiing, mountaineering, the Matterhorn, snow-capped chalets, glacier-sculpted valleys, or perhaps traditional-garbed yodelers. The Alpine region certainly has a strong geographic and cultural identity. The Alps, which stretch across eight European countries, were formed as a result of the collision between the African and Eurasian tectonic plates. The Alpine orogenic belt is one of the most studied orogens in the world. Over the last 30 years, new fundamental concepts have emerged bringing into question long-established theories about how this mountain belt formed. In this issue, the



authors provide a petrological, geochemical, and tectonic overview of the Alpine orogeny, from rifting and spreading to subduction and collision and, finally, to postcollisional uplift and erosion.

This issue on the European Alps is the third geographic region showcased in *Elements*. If you are interested in reading about other geographic regions, we encourage you to check out the *Elements* issues on the Central Andes (August 2018) and the South Aegean Volcanic Arc (June 2019).

WELCOMING THE SWISS GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Swiss Society of Mineralogy and Petrology (SSMP) has been a participating member of *Elements* since 2009. The SSMP, along with other specialist groups in Switzerland, are affiliated to the Swiss Geological Society (SGS). There was growing interest by the SGS to have all of its members to be part of *Elements*, not just the SSMP. We are pleased to announce that the *Elements* Executive Committee approved the application of the SGS to become a participating member of *Elements* and now all 700+ members of the SGS, including the SSMP, are part of the *Elements* family. *Willkommen!*



The Swiss Geological Society was founded in 1882 and comprises specialist groups in geophysics, mineralogy and petrology, sedimentology, tectonics, and paleontology. The SGS is part of the Swiss Academy of Sciences and promotes the advancement and dissemination of Earth Sciences in Switzerland. The SGS also co-organizes the annual Swiss Geoscience Meeting and publishes the open-access *Swiss Journal of Geosciences*. Members receive discounts for publishing in the *Swiss Journal of Geosciences* and participating in the Swiss Geoscience Meeting.

The Swiss Geological Society contact information is now posted on the participating society page (page 2 of this issue) and the *Elements* website (<http://elementsmagazine.org/society-news/swiss-society/>).

OUR NEW COLUMN: ELEMENTS HERITAGE

In April 2020, Nancy Ross authored the *Elements* editorial "Our Academic Family" (<http://elementsmagazine.org/2020/04/01/our-academic-family/>). In the editorial, she asked readers to find a way to preserve the history of the scientists who have contributed to the development of the fields of mineralogy, petrology, and geochemistry. History that is not focused solely on scientific contributions but also on their personal story, details that capture the "human" aspect behind the scientist. Nancy proposed the creation of a history portal, similar to that by the American Crystallographic Association (<https://history.amerystalassn.org/>).

To follow up on her idea, we have created a new column called *Elements* Heritage. The articles in this column will take us on a journey through the lives and careers of individuals who are part of our rich scientific heritage, preserving their stories for future generations. Please note, this column is not meant to be an obituary column announcing the recent passing of our colleagues. That news is best featured by *Elements* participating societies in their news pages.

In this issue, the first *Elements* Heritage article features Barbara Neumann, the scientist who, in 1962, invented Laponite®, a synthetic clay that is widely used today in agriculture, the surface coatings industry, and personal care products.

We welcome you to be part of this community effort to preserve our rich heritage. Ultimately, these columns can form the foundation for forming a history portal hosted on the *Elements* website.

WELCOMING BECKY LANGE



With the start of 2021, Rebecca (Becky) Lange officially begins her term as the petrology principal editor with *Elements*. Becky is an igneous petrologist and professor at the University of Michigan (USA), where she has worked since 1991. Prior to her appointment at the University of Michigan, she completed a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley (USA) in 1989, followed by a two-year post-doctoral appointment at Princeton University

(USA) (1989–1990). Becky's research focusses on subduction zone magmatism and volcanism and how those processes shape the evolution of the solid Earth. She has already been an active participant at our editorial meetings and is currently working with the guest editors of the Geoscience Beyond the Solar System issue, which is scheduled for August 2021.

John Eiler, Richard Harrison, Becky Lange and Jodi Rosso

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