



## International Mineralogical Association

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

The arrival of *Elements* on the mineralogy–geochemistry scene presents IMA with an unprecedented opportunity to reach its members and provides a means for its members to communicate with each other. Of course, by no means all members of IMA are members of the current group of societies supporting *Elements*, but most will be able to see the magazine through their institutional subscription to one of the technical journals produced by the consortium. The editors of *Elements* hope that other societies, particularly from countries where English is not the main language, will join and make use of the opportunities for widening communication that *Elements* offers. Like the predominantly English-speaking founding group, they can use *Elements* as a pointer to their national, own-language website to provide detailed information to members.

IMA is supported by small subscriptions, based on membership, from 37 mineralogical organizations, the largest with more than one thousand members, the smallest with less than ten. The oldest of these national mineralogical societies were founded in the early second half of the nineteenth century when many of the important mineral species were being established on the basis of crystal morphology and physical properties, a time when analytical chemistry was extremely primitive. The newer science of geochemistry grew up in a world in which travel and communication were more developed, and most geochemical organizations had an international character from the outset. The IMA was founded to improve contact between its historically fragmented members. Its best known activities are its quadrennial general meetings, the next in Kobe, Japan, in 2006, and the work of its Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names. Its commissions and working groups regularly sponsor or organize

sessions at other meetings, such as the recent International Geological Congress in Florence and the forthcoming Goldschmidt Conference in Moscow, Idaho, and many of these lead to special publications or thematic journal issues. IMA has a new website ([ima-mineralogy.org](http://ima-mineralogy.org)), which can connect you to each of the member organizations.

So, do we need an IMA, and can it do its job more effectively? We certainly need an international organization as a focus for the worldwide activities of mineralogists. The word 'international' in the title is essential to raise travel funds in many countries where science is less well developed. But our quadrennial meetings have been nothing like as successful as the annual geochemical Goldschmidt meetings, which often attract more than twice the number of delegates, even though the scientific territory the two organizations cover is a continuous solid solution. I fear that one reason for this is the current scientific dominance of an English-speaking world, whose members see the 'I' in IMA (or, for that matter, IGC) as implying that participants will have to sit through large numbers of lectures delivered in less than perfect English. If this influences your choice of annual big meeting, I can only suggest that the greater gains for mankind of a truly international scientific community is a factor you should consider, even if it entails a little extra effort.

IMA has long suffered from lack of a communications channel. *Elements* gives us the opportunity to be regularly in the public eye, and we will provide news of the activities of commissions and of

meetings in which we are involved. My personal view (not shared, I should say, by all members of Council) is that the IMA is bureaucratic out of all proportion to its modest size. The members of commissions are chosen as representatives of the supporting societies rather than for their scientific standing or ability to inspire. I think they would do a better job if composed of like-minded experts and enthusiasts in each field, and if they were responsible for their own membership. Commissions would not be required to involve every national organization, but would have the duty to serve the whole community. Their membership would be subject to the approval of Council, which would ensure that the international community was represented as widely as possible.

Running IMA is not easy. Many of the problems fall on the shoulders of our hard-working secretary, Maryse Ohnenstetter, and dogged treasurer, Kase Klein. It is frequently difficult to get answers from national representatives and even from chairs of commissions. No less than 10 out of 37 member organizations are currently behind with payment of dues for 2004 (some for several years). So let me end with a rallying call to you, the mineralogists who own IMA: it is only going to be as effective as you make it. Come to the Kobe meeting, support the work of the commissions and working groups, do your bit for mineralogy international!

Ian Parsons, President of IMA,  
2002–2006

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