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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Impending Revolution in Science Publishing and Its Predicted Effect on the Geochemical Society's Bottom-line



Samuel Mukasa

The escalating cost of producing professional journals and the changing landscape in publishing have brought the dissemination of scientific information to the precipice of a new paradigm. We are reminded of other previous transformative milestones, such as going from typewriters to computers or from journals on shelves in the library to electronic access in the comfort of one's office. Escalating journal prices have all but wiped out personal subscriptions, and entire journal genres are disappearing from institutional libraries as hard budgetary choices are made.

Moreover, there is a growing movement in the US Congress against double charging for science information: first, in the form of taxes, which underwrite government funding agencies and most of the research done in academic institutions, and second, through journal subscriptions, which provide access to research already paid for by taxes. Hence, the open-access-to-journals mantra now has enough forward momentum to sweep away the traditional concept of subscription-based access at the institutional and personal levels. A news article by Jocelyn Kaiser in the August 20, 2010, issue of *Science* reported that between 7% and 11% of all peer-reviewed scientific journals now offer an open-access publishing model, and this percentage is likely to increase dramatically over the next few years. Already some 20% of peer-reviewed articles across all disciplines are now available free of charge through various open-access portals, and this percentage is increasing steadily.

Against that backdrop, the Geochemical Society, in partnership with the Meteoritical Society, is currently engaged in contract negotiations with Elsevier for continued publication of *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta* (GCA), the flagship journal in the field of geochemistry. These negotiations were triggered by Elsevier terminating the previous GCA contract, last negotiated in 1991 with provisions for roll over every five years under the same terms. While these negotiations have continued to be cordial, they have not been without tensions, largely stemming from recognition by both sides that the global journal-publication enterprise is in transition, engulfed by uncertainties, and not likely to survive in its current form much longer.

A sizeable component of the Geochemical Society's operating budget comes from the royalties we receive for publishing GCA. With those royalties shrinking, at least in the near term, as stipulated by the draft contract now in discussion, we need to craft a new business model and find other income streams in order to sustain the same level of engagement and help our organization expand its activities and influence. Obvious possible changes in our operations include running meetings like the Goldschmidt Conference with a modest but significant profit margin and growing an endowment through membership and corporate donations. Our membership renewal web page solicits donations to cover Society expenses, such as running our business office at Washington University in St. Louis, student travel grants, publications, award medals and honorariums, legal and professional counsel, the meeting assistance program and outreach activities. Please consider donating to the Geochemical Society as you renew your membership

for 2011. Let me take this opportunity to thank those of you who have already made a generous contribution with your membership renewals and those who are perennial donors to our Society.

Professional societies, like ours, and publishers, like Elsevier, can reap mutual benefits if they join forces and work collaboratively in defining the future of research information dissemination before it is defined for us by lawmakers. Toward this goal, we should embrace the micro-economic concept of the economy of scale. With few exceptions, the geochemistry community remains centered in North America and Europe. To scale up the community, expand journal markets, and involve populations which have not always been represented in our science, robust outreach programs need to be created and nurtured, particularly in developing nations where hunger for scientific knowledge is high. We seek active partners to work with us to fulfill this vision of the future.

Samuel Mukasa
GS President 2010–2011

NOTES FROM ST. LOUIS

GS at GSA-Denver Meeting



The 2010 F. Earl Ingerson Lecturer, Patricia Dove, with GS President Samuel Mukasa at the Geochemical Society exhibit booth.
PHOTO BY SETH DAVIS

2011 Membership Drive

The 2011 membership drive, launched in October, has had an overwhelming number of responses. 2009 was our largest year ever with 3087 members in our Society, and with your help 2011 is poised to exceed this. If you have not yet renewed for 2011, please take a moment to do so now (www.geochemsoc.org). Membership in 2011 costs only US\$30 for professionals and US\$10 for students. If you have already renewed, thank you for your continuing support!

Knoxville Goldschmidt Membership

Delegates who attended the 2010 Goldschmidt Conference™ at the nonmember rate received a two-year Geochemical Society membership as part of their registration. Welcome to the Geochemical Society! A full list of member benefits can be found on our website at www.geochemsoc.org/society/benefitsofmembership.htm.

All the best,

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