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SOME PARTING THOUGHTS



James I. Drever

This is my final editorial for *Elements*: it seems a good moment to look back on my experiences with the magazine. My first awareness of it came when Rod Ewing gave a presentation to the Geochemical Society Board of Directors (I was vice president at the time) at the Kurashiki Goldschmidt in 2003. I must admit I was not enthusiastic. The GS had just put a major effort (thanks largely to Carla Koretsky and Johnson Haas) into upgrading the *Geochemical News*, which I was reluctant to abandon, and I wondered who among us would have the time and experience necessary to launch a completely new magazine. The idea was attractive, but were there enough good topics and people willing to be guest editors for the long haul?

A year later I attended another meeting, this time of the presidents (or their representatives) of what became the five original sponsoring societies of *Elements*. Again Rod presented the concept, but this time Pierrette Tremblay was in attendance and, thanks largely to Pierrette, there was a detailed business plan, with projections for all the likely costs and the subscriptions we would need to cover them until (we hoped) advertising revenues would pick up. Rod convinced us all that his idea was viable. *Elements* was Rod Ewing's baby, and it is thanks to his persistence that it came into being.

I have been asked several times at meetings: "Who is your publisher? Is it Elsevier?" The answer is that *Elements* is self-published by the participating societies. MSA is the publisher of record acting on behalf of the participating societies, and handles mailings, subscriptions, finances, contracts, and the required reporting, but essentially everything else is handled by Pierrette Tremblay. She keeps the editors on track, does the layout work in collaboration with the graphic artist, lines up advertisers, contracts printers and does numerous other tasks that come along. Copyediting and proofreading are largely the work of her husband, Thomas Clark, whose mostly volunteer efforts have contributed enormously to the magazine. Another question I get asked at conferences is: "Why does each society I belong to have to pay for my subscription to *Elements*?" My response is (apart from strictly budgetary issues): "Who do

you think is going to go through the membership lists of all (now) 17 societies, identify the duplicates, work up a new mailing list, and proportionally charge each society accordingly?" While the simple task of eliminating duplicate mailings is done, and all societies share in that cost savings, producing a subscription list for rebilling would end up costing more than any imagined savings. We are a tiny operation; we don't have an office staff. One consequence of the fact that we are a small-scale, cost-effective operation run by volunteers from our sponsoring societies (through the Executive Committee and the principal editors) is that we have no agenda other than to serve the needs of our sponsoring societies. We are a creature of the sponsoring societies: we have no managers or shareholders to please other than you, our readers.

The magazine is now at something of a turning point. Our fiftieth issue came out earlier this year, and the five original sponsoring societies have grown to seventeen. The increased subscription base plus advertising revenues make our finances secure. Rather than running out of topics, we have been receiving so many proposals that we have had to change the way we manage acceptances and scheduling. In the past, we evaluated proposals as they came in, and after they were accepted (usually after iterations with the proposer) they were put in the queue to be scheduled for publication. We had been receiving so many good proposals that the queue had become unreasonably long: guest editors are not happy if you tell them that their issue will be scheduled three years from now. We now schedule one year at a time, which I think will have several advantages. The magazine has become appreciated in the mineralogical and geochemical community. Well-known figures are eager to be guest editors and to write articles when asked—and to become principal editors. I have the impression that the membership of our societies actually reads and enjoys the magazine.

The big impending change, though, is the retirement at the end of next year of Pierrette Tremblay as managing editor. She, more than anyone else, is responsible for the success of the magazine, from the quality of its appearance to the fact that it actually comes out on time six times a year. It is hard to imagine finding someone who will do all she does now (and has a copyediting partner!). But then, I was originally skeptical about the whole concept of *Elements*. Now that Pierrette has done all the hard work of establishing the magazine, I am confident that *Elements* will continue to be a success in the future. I hope future principal editors find the experience as rewarding as I have.

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* Principal editor in charge of this issue