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Elements: Getting into the Swing

With this second issue of *Elements*, both the editorial team and you, the readers, will sense that we are getting into the swing of a new and exciting enterprise. From now on, each issue will be the responsibility of one of the three scientific editors and a guest editor. This gives me an opportunity to express, I can safely say on behalf of the entire geochemistry–petrology–mineralogy community, heartfelt thanks to the two people, Rod Ewing and Pierrette Tremblay, who more than any others have been responsible for the guiding vision, look, and feel of our magazine. Of course, we have benefited enormously from advice from many sources, but without Rod's clear vision and quiet persuasion, the whole concept would never have moved off the ground and attracted the support of the founding societies. And, as you thumb through this issue, consider the complexity of the production of *Elements*. Thematic articles, society news, various minor pieces, and advertising have to be integrated into an attractive whole, all within a tightly defined space and to an exact deadline. Pierrette does a superb job of piloting the whole ship through the sandbanks and narrows of the publishing business. Thanks too to Alex Speer and the MSA office staff, who took on the considerable task of orchestrating the first mailing of *Elements* to 6140 individuals in 82 countries and to 1258 libraries.

Elements belongs to the members of its supporting societies, and is connected to them through an Executive Committee and an Advisory Board. The Executive Committee is composed of one representative from each society experienced in its workings. It provides financial oversight, acts as a channel of communication between the magazine and the officers and staff of the societies, and approves the appointment of the principal (i.e. scientific) editors and members of the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board has representatives from each society plus some additional members, all chosen for their scientific standing and fields of interest. Their main roles are to propose potential thematic topics and guest editors for consideration by the principal editors, to provide informed

advice and comment as need arises, and to act as reviewers. Thematic topics may also be suggested by interested individuals; a form is available on our website.

The three principal editors are appointed for staggered three-year terms, so that Rod Ewing will serve until the end of 2005, Mike Hochella until 2006, and myself until 2007. Replacements are suggested by the Executive Committee and reviewed by the principal editors for final approval by the Executive Committee. The principal editors intend to meet at least twice a year, and of course we exchange a great deal of e-mail messages. Seeing full-colour pdf files of proofs materialize on my computer screen when I'm working from my cottage in the Scottish Highlands is wonderful—an e-miracle. Guest editors are taking on a substantial task, because they are responsible for getting manuscripts and illustrations up to pre-production standard with fixed deadlines and space restrictions. All papers are reviewed by an independent expert referee, the guest editor, and the principal editor. This procedure ensures quality and gives them all-important 'peer-reviewed' standing with those ever-watchful bean-counters.

Principal editors have an important role in defining the style and content of *Elements*, and in ensuring that articles are pitched at the right level. Authors will find that this is not easy. While we do not aspire to be available to a mass audience like the excellent *Scientific American*, we want to publish papers accessible not only to members of the supporting societies, but also to students, to scientists in adjacent disciplines and to popular science writers and policy makers. Writing for a wider audience means taking off the comfortable old jacket of jargon, buzzwords, acronyms, and notations that we all wear for our technical writing, and putting on something smarter and more outgoing. It's worth the effort—what you write for *Elements* is likely to be read by a far larger audience than even your most-cited technical paper.

Ian Parsons