Dear Reader

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Happy Holiday season, wherever in the world you are. I am writing this having only recently returned from a fantastic time at the IMWA/ICARD joint conference in Pretoria, South Africa. If you were not able to be there, the conference proceedings are already posted on IMWA's web site at <https://www.IMWA.info/proceedings>, along with the proceedings from all of our previous conferences. Please take the time to look over this year's conference papers; I am sure that you will find many that interest you. Next year, IMWA will meet in Perm, Russia (<https://www.IMWA2019.info>), which will be the first time IMWA has been hosted in that country, and if you are making longer term plans, the 2020 conference will be in New Zealand, another first for IMWA.

The next two sections of this column are directed to those of you who are authors or prospective authors for this journal. If you are not an author, feel free to skip over them.

Open Access

Have you considered choosing the Open Access option for your paper? Open Access gives more readers wider access to our articles, including those without either institutional access or private subscriptions. It potentially also increases the number of citations an article might garner. In *Mine Water and the Environment*, we have noticed that Open Access papers are typically more often cited than other papers. The publication year 2017 is a particular case in point: the top nine out of our journal's top ten most cited papers were all published as Open Access. We, therefore, want to encourage more authors to choose the Open Access option.

Currently, there are three ways to publish Open Access: (1) you belong to an institution that has an open access contract with Springer Nature, (2) you are eligible for the Open access waivers fund when living in a low income country, or (3) you pay 2200 Euros for the Springer Nature Open Choice option (<https://www.springer.com/gp/open-access>). As this might not be financially feasible for many of our authors, the suggestion was made at our September Executive Council meeting in Pretoria that IMWA consider subsidizing the cost of Open Access for a limited number of papers each year. Therefore, on a trial basis, IMWA will allow up to 3300 Euros a year for up to three papers that the editorial staff decides should be featured in this way. For these papers, up to one-half of the Open Access fee will be paid for from the IMWA treasury, while the authors provide the rest.

Consequently, if you have authored a paper that you think warrants to be one of our better papers, and might be able to find at least 1100 Euros, but not the full amount, please let your associate editor know this during your correspondence, as well as why you think the paper warrants such a subsidy. The Open Access decision is made by the author after the paper has been accepted and as it is being prepared for online publication. Yet, to get IMWA's assistance, we need to identify such papers earlier than that, so please raise the issue with your associate editor once your paper has reached the minor revision stage. In addition, if the authors are not

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already members of IMWA, they should join before they ask for such a subsidy. I personally am always surprised to learn that individuals working in this field and contributing manuscripts to our journal are not already members of IMWA, and thus subscribers to this journal, considering how low the costs of membership are compared to other professional associations and societies. Feel free to provide this link to anyone you know working in our field who is not already a member: <https://www.IMWA.info/membership> and let them know that joining will allow them free on-line access to all of the journal papers previously published in our journal as well as papers that have been published on-line, but that have not yet appeared in print.

Speeding up Manuscript Processing

The editorial staff has made a firm commitment to speed up the average time it takes for a paper to move through our review and approval process and be published. As you know, we are all volunteers and have to squeeze in our editorial responsibilities when our paid work and family life allows, but over time, we allowed ourselves to be overwhelmed as the number of papers submitted continued to increase. The good news is that during 2018, we have made meaningful progress in reducing the time it takes to process a paper (thanks mostly to the efforts of Anne Weber and our many new associate editors) and believe we are on track to reduce our processing time quite a bit more. So, if your paper has been in the review stage for 3 months or more, please feel free to send a note to the appropriate associate editor; perhaps they are having a problem finding well-qualified reviewers who are willing to take on the assignment and you could offer a suggestion. And our volunteer translators are also committed to reducing the time it takes to get the final versions of the abstracts translated into Chinese, German, and Spanish; consequently, if your paper has been accepted for publication for more than 7 weeks and you have not yet received an e-mail from Springer Nature advising you about your publication options, please let us know and we will nag the appropriate individuals.

Finally, of course, we wish to reduce the time between when a paper is published on-line and when it appears in our journal. As mentioned here in September, Springer Nature has allowed us to reduce this backlog by publishing more papers per issue. You can expect to continue to see at least 20 papers in each of our 2019 issues.

Call for our Pit Lake Special Issue

You should all know by now that Melanie Blanchette and Mark Lund are working to pull together a special issue on pit lakes. This might be out of date by the time you read this,

but as I am writing this, they could still use another paper or two, so if you know someone working in this field who you believe is doing good work, please ask them to consider contributing a paper, and then let Melanie and Mark know that you made this recommendation, so that they can follow up if they do not hear anything from the prospective authors. If the authors are not sure, they can send an abstract to those two guest editors, who will then advise them on how best to proceed.

Call for Technical Communications and IMWA Insights

Our journal is meant to be more application oriented than other peer-reviewed journals. Ideally, our industrial members should be able to pick up any issue of the journal and find something that interests them. Sadly, that is often not the case. If any of you know of individuals doing interesting work at mine sites that others in our field can learn from, please ask them to write up their work and submit it as a Technical Communication or IMWA Insight. These papers are not peer reviewed unless the authors want them to be—the editor-in-chief is the sole reviewer/editor—since such papers often lack the type of experimental controls that academicians want to see. We especially welcome interesting case studies, so please encourage the practitioners you know to write up their work!

New Guidance for our Technical Reviewers

To help our current and prospective reviewers, we have prepared a guidance document, which can be found at <https://www.IMWA.info/ReviewerGuide>. Please take a moment and look it over. We try very hard to only send you papers to review that you are potentially interested in. So, if you would like to be a reviewer, please go to our journal's web site (<https://www.IMWA.info/em>) and register as a reviewer, make sure that your e-mail address is correct, and that your areas of expertise are clearly identified, as that is what we generally use to assign papers. And if you are signed up to be a reviewer, but were somehow not asked to do so in 2018, just send me an e-mail and we will try to make sure that you receive the opportunity to help in 2019.

Thanks to ...

First and foremost, I want to recognize the extraordinarily talented Anne Weber, who joined our editorial staff late in 2017 as my assistant; she is the main reason why our paper processing time has gotten better. She has greatly improved

the initial screening process, rejecting papers that are too academic in nature or only likely to interest readers from a local region. She is also responsible for assigning papers to our associate editors and seeing to it that they do not sit in anyone's queue for too long. I was drowning in this job before she came on board and now, with her great efforts, feel much better about our journal's future.

I also thank all of the associate editors who graciously helped out for part or all of 2018: Moustafa Benzaazoua, Melanie Blanchette, Rob Bowell, Detlef Bringemeyer, Carlos Ruiz Cánovas, Donglin Dong, Shuning Dong, Rodrigo Jr. Embile, Braden Hanna, Massimo Gasparon, Gyözö Jordán, Candace L. Kairies-Beatty, Jeff Langmann, Peiyue Li, Wenping Li, Ann Maest, Steven Meyerhoff, Len Murray, Benoît Plante, James Pope, Dyllon Randall, Pierre Rousseau, Devin Sapsford, Martin Schultze, Abhay Kumar Singh, Gideon Steyl, Christie Terrell, Purushotham Tukkaraja, Teresa Maria Valente, Rob van Hille, Qiang Wu, Kendra Zamzow, Wanfang Zhou—our success this past year would not have been possible without them. Note that this list may not include a few additional individuals because we give our new volunteers a few months to find out if it they enjoy doing this job before we list them here and on the inside front cover of the journal.

Thanks also to our volunteer translators: Changshen Wang, Edgardo Donati, Friedrich-Carl Benthhaus, Jörn Geletneky, Helmuth Landsmann, Joscha Opitz, Michael Paul, Walter Pohl, Martin Schultze, Wilfried Uhlman, and Kai-Uwe Ulrich, who translate the abstracts into Chinese,

Spanish, and German. I also want to thank Josepha Zielke, who is now managing abstract translation. The translated abstracts appear along with the on-line version of the papers.

I also thank the Springer Nature staff, especially Divya Ananthanarayanan, who was our primary point of contact for the past several years. She has greatly helped me and the other editors, our authors, and our reviewers, but has recently left that position. The new primary point of contact for all of us, as of September 2018, is now Saranya Sekar, who can be reached at saranya.sekar@springernature.com. We are also grateful to Fritz Schmuhl, our Publishing Editor, and his assistant, Catalina Sava. Fritz is the person who authorized the expansion of our journal's content and some of our other improvements. Srikanth Reddy and his staff oversee all the electronic and hardcopy printing of our papers; as our workload has increased, so has theirs. Finally, I thank Christian Wolkersdorfer, who in addition to serving as IMWA's President, serves as this journal's Managing Editor—which means that he worries about the non-textual aspects of the journal, such as how figures should be formatted, and generally oversees our interactions with our publisher, Springer Nature.

On behalf of the entire Editorial Staff, I wish all of them, and all of you, a fantastic 2019!

Regards,

Bob Kleinmann, Editor-in-Chief.