

## Editorial

### **Thirty years of EJM: a society-managed journal at the crossroads. A personal analysis and an appeal for responsible action**

*This regular issue leads off the thirtieth volume published by the European Journal of Mineralogy (EJM), and this may be the last editorial I will write as editorial manager. It is time for a change, in a changing world of scientific publication. Indeed, alongside the usual 'big sharks', i.e. the monopolistic publishing houses that have been dominating the market and pressurizing institutional subscribers for decades, a wealth of new, online players is emerging under the Open Access (OA) banner. These are a true challenge not only for journals published by non-profit learned societies, but for scientific publication in general. The OA label comes over well and handling times are attractive, as are the impact factors because of the open access on the web. However, these advantages may also mask the dealings of a predatory publisher. We experience on a daily basis that we are being aggressively chased by OA publishers who invite us to submit a paper with reduced or rescinded publication fees, or to convene a special issue on any subject of our choice, or even to act as board member. Of course we can accept these offers in good faith and offer our meticulous services, but we must be aware that, by so lending respectability, we are encouraging a perverse system that is not only riding on the OA concept but actually prospering to the benefit of share-holders. Moreover, and more importantly, this system contains the malicious seeds that could lead to the discreditation of scientific publication as a whole. Indeed, the high-profile papers and issues and names we are being chased for may serve as window-dressing for respectability, to show-case a journal and attract lesser-profile authors who just need to pay to be published, as some glaring examples of fake and dummy submissions have shown (e.g. <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/neuroscience/2017/07/22/predatory-journals-star-wars-sting/>).*

*The issue at stake is no less than the credibility of scientific writing, which is of increasing concern in the emerging 'fake-news' era. The reputation of scientific writing rests on the process of a rigorous evaluation by peers. This is our treasure; we should not lend it to dubious companies whose prosperity may be linked to the weakness or lack of content validation.*

*I have heard the objection that this is what we have already done with the 'big sharks' and their journals. However, in a subscription-based model, the situation is different. When buying (expensive!) subscriptions, the scientific community expects value for money, and validated content is the value. What guarantee do we have for material offered on the web by OA publishers, whether predatory or not? With any such profit-based publisher, the suspicion that the balance between profit and rigorous evaluation may be biased is obvious, thus undermining not only the credibility of 'scientific content' in that particular journal, but also undermining the credibility of any scientific writing in our connected world.*

*This is not an indictment of OA, on the contrary. This is an appeal for investing our treasure in publications that are not profit-based, whether they are OA or not. This is why the role and moral responsibility of learned societies as scientific publishers are more important than ever. With them, the scientific community has direct control over the editorial boards, evaluation policies and peer-reviewed validations that are so crucial for OA publication. An additional bonus is that any profits that may arise will serve the community rather than owners and share-holders.*

*After thirty years of high-standard publication, the European Journal of Mineralogy is at the cross-roads. The owner societies DMG, SEM, SFMC and SIMP, which are financially responsible for its publication, are evaluating present strategies and models which may reconsider the role of OA publication in the journal. In any event, authors and colleagues are urged to take on a responsible stance with respect to profit-oriented OA publishers (no compromises!) and, instead, to make use of the OA option in learned-society journals like this one, an option we should try to make more affordable. Stay tuned!*

*This editorial is also the place for both retrospective and prospective news. After the special issue published in 2017 on 'Chromitites, platinum-group elements, and ore minerals' to honour the memory of Zdeňek Johan, this year will see two special issues, issue no. 2 entitled 'Mineral diversity, complexity and evolution', convened by Ed Grew and Sergey*

*Krivovichev, as an echo to two sessions of the emc<sup>2016</sup> in Rimini, and 'Minerals and materials: building principles and applications' to celebrate the contributions of two major figures of mineralogical crystallography, Giovanni Ferraris and Stefano Merlino, on the occasion of their 80th birthday. Further in the pipeline is the issue 'Mineral reactivity: from biomineralization and Earth's climate evolution to CO<sub>2</sub> capture and monument conservation' coordinated by Encarnación Ruiz-Agudo and Christine Putnis. The first book review in a long time will appear soon, and the publication of the CNMNC Newsletter in EJM, initiated in January 2017 under Marco Pasero's shepherding, will be continued. On the other hand, the promotional offer of free colour print made to authors in 2017 shall end on 31 January 2018.*

*A turning point of the year was the move of the entire GeoScienceWorld content from the Highwire to the Silverchair platform in November, with enhanced facilities for the reader but still a few bugs to be fixed after this tremendous operation. The move required complete reorganization of EJM production workflow and resulted in delays that are not yet completely overcome; for this we offer sincere apologies to authors. The reorganization only marginally affected the performance for the articles published in the 2017 volume, with an average of less than seven months from submission to online publication.*

*On the editorial side, we welcome Carmen Sanchez-Valle, Sandro Jahn, Didier Laporte, Allan Pring and Rucheng Wang as new associate editors, and thank Bénédicte Menez and Razvan Caracas, who will be departing soon. We also thank the other associate and chief editors for the time unselfishly offered to maintain the standards of the journal. These words of thanks are of course also extended to the many referees who are active for the journal, and who are acknowledged in each November-December issue. This is also the place to thank authors, readers, and the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique for their continued support.*

Christian Chopin  
Managing editor