

EDITORIAL NOTE

One Principal Editor Bowing Out – John Adams

It has been a privilege and (mostly) a pleasure being the Principal Editor of *Clay Minerals* – *Journal of Fine Particle Science* for the last 12 years.

Over the dozen years we have published some outstanding papers while, at the same time, we have broadened the base of authors considerably. An important change, also, has been the publication of many special issues and thematic sets from meetings and conferences, some towards the edge of the scope of the journal, broadening its appeal considerably.

Early on, unbelievably now, many papers were still being submitted in hard copy form and hard copy was the medium that most readers used to access the information. It has been many years now since 100% of authors submitted their work electronically and the journal itself is now accessed electronically through several distribution routes.

Keeping the journal functioning efficiently, while implementing these changes, has been a team effort. My job as Principal Editor would have been impossible without the fantastic support of the Associate Editor Team, the Production Editor, our

Typesetter and Printer. The individuals who have undertaken these roles have changed over the years but I am very, very grateful to them all. The current postholders (AEs listed inside the front cover, Andrew Clark, Robert Preston and Henry Ling Ltd) are all excellent. I also wish to record my thanks to Kevin Murphy, now Mineralogical Society Chief Executive, a constant supportive and encouraging presence since I started. My final thanks go to the wonderful network of people across the world who make an Editor's job actually (mostly) enjoyable: authors who take criticism with a rueful smile; referees who deliver praise or sanction speedily and with humour; the production team who get the issue out on time, quarter after quarter; Associate Editors who leave an encouraging email late on Friday night or deliver something they promised just after midnight on a Sunday....

So now I fade from the stage and a new Principal Editor emerges. George Christidis will, no doubt, do an excellent job academically and also in managing further changes to the journal. I wish him and *Clay Minerals* all the best for the future.

And Another Principal Editor Taking Over – George Christidis

When my first peer-reviewed paper was published in *Clay Minerals* in June 1993, I could not imagine that I would serve as Principal Editor of the journal twenty years later. The main editorial comment from Derek Bain, then Principal Editor, was to shorten the discussion of the manuscript by half. Although at that time I could not understand the meaning of this reduction, later I found out that while time is valuable for normal humans, space is valuable for editors, so authors have to be concise. This was the second lesson I got from the editors of the journal. The first one was one year earlier from David Morgan, the previous Principal Editor and external examiner of my PhD Thesis. At that time clay scientists were still discussing the concept of “fundamental particles”, published in the journal a few years ago, which changed our perception for

clay minerals. Although the reviewers were not enthusiastic about the new concept, David decided to publish the papers, and this was proved to be a wise decision. The lesson was that the editor should have an open mind and solid opinion about the scientific aspects published in the journal. Some people call it intuition; I call it good judgement.

Clay Minerals has gradually evolved to become a highly respected journal, read and cited by scientists worldwide. In my opinion it has three strong assets. First, it is the journal of the European clay community and Europe has very active clay mineral groups. The research results produced by European clay scientists have increased the scientific impact of the journal over the years. Second, it has built up a long, solid tradition through time; the first issue was published more

than 60 years ago, in 1950, and the leading figure behind it was George W. Brindley. And third, it is founded on two strong pillars; a reputed Board of Editors, scientifically very active, and an excellent dedicated editorial staff. All these people work as a team which continues and enriches this long tradition. Serving as Associate Editor of the journal for the past six years, I have met most of the members of the Board of Editors in various conferences and meetings. It will really be an honour to collaborate with these colleagues on the common target, progress in clay science, and it will be a real pleasure to work closely with the editorial staff, the “invisible heroes”, whose contribution is invaluable. It is a pity (but understandable) that Enver Murad has decided to step down after 15 years of very successful service but I am confident that his successor (Helge Stanjek) will also do an excellent job.

Over the years the scope of the journal has been broadened following the emerging scientific trends. This route was facilitated by the multidisciplinary nature of clay science. A good editor should read the changes, understand the new trends and meet the new challenges. The publication of suitable thematic issues is a good driving mechanism. At the same time the journal should not lose its identity. Indeed, this is the third lesson I learned from discussions with John Adams, the current Principal Editor, and Kevin Murphy, the Mineralogical Society Chief Executive. The three editorial lessons and my editorial experience will be my valuable guides during the first months of this new role. There are several intriguing challenges. To name a few, the need to attract papers for unknown important clay deposits in Asia and Africa, to have more manuscripts on the engineering aspects of clays and to publish more manuscripts on current hot issues like medical/biological applications of

clays and clay minerals or on computer simulation of processes on clay mineral surfaces, and all these without undermining the standards of the journal. This sounds like the steady state encountered during clay mineral formation in nature.

Any attempt to test these challenges requires those invisible heroes called reviewers, who would be willing to assist the journal. I can fully understand the disappointment of Enver underlined in his parting words, because people nowadays want to publish and be reviewed but some are not willing to review: an apparent contradiction. There are many reasons for this attitude. Enver mentioned some, but there are others as well. My negative record so far is 14 unsuccessful attempts before getting a positive answer, but I am aware of worse cases from discussions with other colleagues. Nevertheless, we have to survive with this reality, no matter how unpleasant it may be, because it does not happen only in this journal. My rules of thumb to circumvent this situation are patience, perseverance (better late than never!) and invitation of younger clay researchers, who are usually willing to do reviews. Our experience with IMACS, the International Master in Advanced Clay Science, coordinated by the University of Poitiers, has shown that there are excellent young people in all continents, who are interested in Clay Science and Technology. These bright young students are our successors, the future clay scientists who will expand and foster our knowledge. We should count and invest in their enthusiasm as our predecessors trusted us in the past.

Now, looking at the new challenge ahead, I feel that the change of roles is a matter of preserving continuity rather than a matter of fading and emerging on the stage, because although it is difficult to build a tradition, it may be more difficult to enrich it.

Parting words (irreverent comments of a retiring Associate Editor) – Enver Murad

Having served as Associate Editor of Clay Minerals for over fifteen years (1997 through 2012, during which I handled 80 manuscripts, accepted 59 and passed 2 on), the time seems rife for a change. There are, however, some insights which I would like to share with the readers of this journal.

1: A (forthcoming new) Principal Editor should be given the chance of choosing his own team.

- 2: Novel techniques, findings and lines of thought may make changes in the Editorial Board and the Board of Associate Editors from time to time propitious.
- 3: Last but far from least, there is one personal motivation for my inclination to retire: I'm simply sick of having to chase after potential reviewers of manuscripts. This is the most frustrating aspect of editorial work: while

essentially everyone in the business wants to publish, all too few colleagues are willing to review manuscripts. I divide reviewers and potential reviewers into several groups:

- i Those who are willing to review, respond rapidly, and do review;
- ii Those who don't agree to review (for whatever reason), but at least let you know so. The more helpful members of this group suggest alternative colleagues who might do the job;
- iii Those who don't even have the elementary courtesy to respond to requests for review;
- iv Those who agree to review but then back out and never respond, not even to repeated inquiries (I call it "go into hiding". Yes, such people do exist, and I've run across them more than once during my time as Associate Editor).

Over the years, I have observed a decreasing willingness of colleagues to review manuscripts. This could be a result of too many manuscripts being submitted, but it might also be an aspect of the current everyone-for-himself mentality: while many want to profit, only few are willing to bring sacrifices.

Scientific exchange means to take and give, and I would like to cite the following excerpt from Jim Bell's (2000) germane comments on the occasion of his retirement as editor of the scientific newspaper *EOS*: "I hold a special place in my heart for those in our community who willingly give their precious time to perform critical community service tasks like reviewing papers... I also have a special place somewhere else for the seemingly increasing percentage of our colleagues who repeatedly refuse to participate in the peer review system"

I am sure that most of my editorial colleagues are aware of and have – maybe even more – been subjected to the mentioned vexation of unresponsive reviewers.

To be fair, I must add that conversely (in two cases), authors who had been asked to re-submit revised versions of their manuscripts after review never responded and their manuscripts were eventually rejected. In both cases submission (not acceptance) was apparently a requirement for the award of a PhD by the first author's university.

Enough ranting

For most colleagues, reviewing manuscripts is at best an unrewarding assignment that adds on to their normal duties, and it is often appreciated only by the editor requesting the review; it is, so to say, a "necessary evil". I therefore don't want to miss the opportunity of conveying a heartfelt "thank you" to those colleagues who gave their time and talents to provide reviews of manuscripts I had sent them without grumbling at the extra chore.

On the whole, my activities as Associate Editor opened up gratifying possibilities for me to haggle with authors and reviewers over scientific issues, and I am writing the aforesaid not to voice any frustration, but rather in the (hopefully not futile) hope – sorry for the pun – that my words may serve as a wake-up call for at least some readers of and potential reviewers for our journal.

REFERENCES

- Bell J. (2000) Reflections of an EOS editor. *EOS*, **81**, 579.