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Mineralogical Society of America



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

An Appreciation for Giving

What happens when the gavel is passed from the outgoing to the incoming president of MSA at the annual GSA conference? Many of you may suppose that it's a whirlwind of inaugural galas filled with speeches that acknowledge the hard work of my supporters and that placate the 60 abstentions on my uncontested ballot. In fact, there are no concerts by Fleetwood Mac. There is no hurricane of confetti. Nobody entrusts you with the briefcase containing the code for global thermonuclear war.

Instead, executive director Alex Speer hands you a thick manila envelope filled with thank-you letters addressed to MSA donors, and he tells you that it really would be helpful to the business office if every one of those letters could be signed as soon as possible. So you retreat to your empty hotel room, turn on a baseball game (the World Series if you're lucky), and repeatedly write your signature until your hand cramps.

But this exercise that begins as a challenge in manual stamina gradually metamorphoses into a lesson in humility. It is impossible to sign letter after letter and not be a little awed by the generosity of MSA's membership. You see a few names that you recognize and many more that are unknown. You note that the donations come from people of all ages, backgrounds, careers, and countries. And you wonder what it is that makes MSA mean so much to so many people that they are willing to pay above and beyond the membership fee.

I asked Alex for the statistics on donations since the beginning of the last fiscal year, the period for which I was offering thanks. That covered 9 months between July 1, 2007 and March 25, 2008. Here are some of the data: of MSA's ~2500 members, 598 different people contributed to at least one of the endowments. That is close to a 25% level of participation. The donors hailed from 32 different countries, yet another proof that MSA's impact is international. The breakdown for individual member donations looks like this:

Fund	Average Donation*	Total Donation*
Sustaining Membership	\$153	\$2455
Donald Bloss Fund	39	1055
Outreach Fund	81	4036
Kraus Crystallography Fund	50	2321
Mineralogy/Petrology Fund	60	8343
MSA Endowment	56	27,741
Average and Total:	\$60	\$45,950

* 9 months from 1 July 2007 to 25 March 2008

These numbers do not include Don Bloss's extremely generous donation of just under \$30,000 to kick-start the optical mineralogy endowment that bears his name. Neither do they reflect the fact that many

individuals contribute to more than one fund. They do include about a dozen donations of \$500 and greater.

None of this is intended to instill guilt in those who choose not to donate at these levels due either to financial limitations or competing priorities. Nor would I want to frighten away the young members who are taking our advice to give a dollar for every year of MSA membership. We were all graduate students once and we remember the joys of student stipends.

The point is this: when you read that your donation to MSA is what keeps us going, it is no exaggeration. Without your extraordinary generosity, MSA's programs would have to be scaled back and a few never would have started—the distinguished speakers, the student awards, the website, the support for the magazine you are reading. I don't know whether any one of these activities is the reason that so many of you have chosen to give. In truth, I hope you are moved by something bigger. By investing in the Society, we are investing in each other. We are committing to the idea that as a community we can push back the frontiers of the science we love in ways that would not be possible without MSA.

On behalf of the Council, the business office, and all of the others who have relied on your charity, many thanks. And keep up the good work.

Peter J. Heaney
MSA President

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Rachel Russell
American Mineralogist
Managing Editor

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE S. SWITZER (Life Fellow – 1931)
EDWARD J. MARCIN (Life Fellow – 1947)

NOTES FROM CHANTILLY

• Balloting for the 2008 election of MSA officers and councilors is underway. The candidates are – president: Nancy L. Ross; vice president: John B. Brady and Craig E. Manning; treasurer: Darrell J. Henry and Jo Laird; councilors (two to be elected): John F. Rakovan, Penelope L. King, Marc M. Hirschmann, Mark Cloos. Mickey Gunter continues in office as secretary. Continuing councilors are Klaus Mezger, Jean Morrison, Peter C. Burns, and Carol D. Frost.

In addition to these races, there are two proposed Bylaw changes on the ballot. One is a recommendation to increase the cost of life membership; the other deals with how vacancies that might occur in elected offices would be filled. These are described in detail in the February 2008 issue of *Elements* and in the ballot information.

MSA members should have received voting instructions at their current e-mail addresses. Those who do not wish to vote online can request a paper ballot from the MSA business office. As always, the voting deadline is August 1. Individuals elected to office decide on the direction of the Society. Voting is an important job for all MSA members.

• The MSA set up a booth at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show, Tucson, Arizona, 14–17 February 2008. The Dana Medal will be presented to Thomas Armbruster at the 2008 Goldschmidt Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 13–18 July 2008. MSA will have a display at that meeting as well. MSA will have a booth at the GSA meeting in Houston, Texas, 5–8 October 2008. During that week MSA will also hold its Awards Lunch, the MSA Presidential Address, a joint MSA-GS reception, the annual business meeting, and a Council meeting, as well as breakfasts for the past presidents and associate

editors. Do not forget the lectures by the Roebling Medalist, Bernard W. Evans, and the MSA Awardee, James Badro. More information is available at the MSA website.

• Many people help MSA accomplish all that it does: officers, volunteers, and staff. Much less heralded are the many vendors MSA deals with, many of whom make tremendous efforts to assist MSA. Myrna Byer, who managed most aspects of getting the Reviews, monographs, textbooks, and flyers printed and delivered, was one of these individuals. Myrna passed away March 4, 2008, after a very short and unexpected illness. Her organizational skills and persistence in getting a job successfully completed on time will be sorely missed.

• All 2006 and 2007 MSA members have been contacted by mail, electronically, or both about renewing their membership for 2008. If you have not renewed your MSA membership, please do so. If you have not received a notice by the time you read this, please contact the MSA business office. You can also renew online anytime.

• If you have not been getting the few e-mail announcements from MSA about new issues of *American Mineralogist* online, voting, your renewal, or confirmation of your online orders, either we do not have a working e-mail address for you or your system is blocking messages from MSA. Consider rectifying the situation. Otherwise, you will need to keep watch on this column or the MSA website for this information.

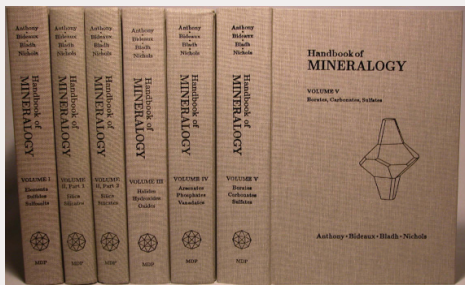
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