

Arnold Stahel : journal editor 1986-2000

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Editorial



Arnold Stahel Journal Editor 1986–2000

For the past fifteen years, Dr. Arnold Stahel has edited the Swiss Bulletin of Mineralogy and Petrology (SMPM). He has led this journal to increased international visibility and reputation. It is primarily due to the competence and determination of this outstanding editor that the SMPM has not only been included in the Science Citation Index (SCI) in 1994, but has since then gained very respectable ratings in terms of this journal's impact factor and other measures of scientific relevance.

Noldi, as his friends call him, possesses in unusual balance the necessary ingredients that make up a successful scientific editor: One needs broad and solid scientific foundations, a keen interest in new directions, and an openness to technical change. Good judgement is indispensable. In the long term, however, human qualities are crucial. Noldi has a way with words and people, a fine (if sometimes impish) humour, a twinkle in his eyes. He manages to be at once serious and playful, and this balance has helped in times when deadlines were pressing, reviews delayed, authors unhappy

with a verdict, or when financial limits were threatened. It is by no means a simple task to plan a periodical of high scientific profile and to output issues at regular intervals, given the highly stochastic input sequence of manuscripts at all of the required stages of (im)perfection. The ambition to lead each promising manuscript to an article of the highest standard it can reach is, of course, shared by all of those involved in the publishing process. However, the authors' and the reviewers' views and standards are commonly diverging, and finding a compromise may demand diplomatic skills. The editor requires both an eye for the big picture and meticulous attention to detail. In practice, an acute sense of balance is needed to judge what is indispensable versus what is possible within publication deadlines. Noldi has handled the stresses of too much or too little input, the worries of late manuscripts and all of the other daily joys of an editor, and he has handled them with a good mix of gentleness, pragmatism, and determination. A whole generation of new authors and reviewers has benefitted from the col-

laboration with Arnold Stahel as an editor. Over the years he has sought and found support for the SMPM with many colleagues both nationally and internationally, and he has thus fostered scientific communication.

The visibility of a scientific periodical depends not only on a steady sequence of solid papers appearing in its issues, but ever more on a profile that is in some way unique. SMPM has traditionally published classical studies on the Alps. Following this path, Arnold Stahel has initiated an acclaimed series of special volumes on specific Alpine topics, often collaborating with one or more special editors. Some of these volumes are likely to have far more lasting impact than the individual papers in separate issues would have had. This is but one of many important evolutions Arnold Stahel has set in motion, though perhaps one of the most visible ones, and one that the present editors will strive to continue. Apart from important procedural standards set up by the outgoing editor, we inherit a community of uncounted authors and reviewers, who have been blessed with Arnold Stahel's open style of working closely with them. Fifteen volumes of SMPM testify to the successful net result of this exchange as well as equally fruitful working relations with our publisher, Stäubli Verlag AG.

Following many years as a "soloist" editor, Arnold Stahel has, over the past two years, started to organise the changes necessary after his retirement. Behind the scene, he has helped to pave the way for yet another major change – possibly the most drastic one – the production of the journal by desktop-publishing. Despite years of excellent collaboration with our publisher, financial restrictions have forced the Swiss Society of Mineralogy and Petrology to envisage such a change. Again, as in all previous developments over the past twelve years, the essential impulse to prepare for such a bold move had to come from Arnold Stahel.

The present issue of SMPM is the first one produced in-house by the new editorial team, notably with Peter Nievergelt as our new administrative editor. It is a pleasure to welcome him as a third partner in our editorial team. Beyond the administrative chores, he is responsible for the layout of each issue, a duty so far covered by our publisher. To make this first-order phase transition less than obvious, we shall largely retain the layout of previous, professionally styled issues. At best, we hope that the reader may not notice a thing.

We certainly intend to continue, with the help of our authors, our reviewers, editorial colleagues, and the printers' office to produce a visible journal, one that cannot be ignored internationally, and one that retains the identity shaped and the flavour imparted on it by Arnold Stahel. In that sense, we might introduce this issue as a first in the era P.S. While we do not anticipate that everything published in the SMPM will be a mere *post scriptum*, the editorial era is now definitely *post Stahel*.

Following 28 years of activity at the ETH Zurich, Arnold Stahel retired on March 31, 2000. It is on this day that he stepped down also as Editor of the Swiss Bulletin of Mineralogy and Petrology. The readers of this journal, its authors over the past twelve years, the members of its Editorial Board, and many friends and colleagues are greatly indebted to him and to the institution that supported and hosted his activities over all the years: the Institut für Mineralogie und Petrographie at ETH Zurich.

To Noldi we add our very personal thanks for the productive, always enjoyable collaboration, and we extend our best wishes for a joyful retirement, full of music.

Martin Engi and Martin Frey, Editors