

# ROSA Annual Report | 2016



## Message from the Chairperson

The 2015-16 year was ROSA's second year as a registered non-profit organisation. During this year, our organisation has grown considerably, and I am encouraged by and grateful for the enthusiasm of our new members.

In this past year we have also seen an increasing number of our members published, both through traditional publishing as well as through self publishing.

For me, the highlights of this past year have been the introduction of the Imbali Award and our third annual conference, which is bigger and better than ever before.

During this past year we have had an increased number of volunteers assisting in the running of this organisation. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed time, energy and ideas to ROSA, most especially to the members of our Executive, Conference and Contest Committees.

Thank you for your support,

*Romy Sommer*

**ROSA Chairperson**



## Our Mission

ROSA's stated mission, as per our constitution and our website, is:

- To provide support, encouragement and professional development to romance writers, especially to writers resident in Southern Africa and of South African descent.
- To enhance and promote the various types of romantic fiction and to encourage good writing.
- To support writers of romantic fiction through networking, information, resources and an online community.
- Represent the genre of romantic fiction within Southern Africa.

During 2016 we have furthered these aims through the following initiatives:

## Membership

Since the time of our AGM last year we have grown from 30 members to 34. We've lost some members along the way (mostly people who have stopped writing for various reasons), and gained quite a few new ones. However, we still have a significant portion of people signed up to our mailing lists who have not registered as members.

In the coming year, we need to try to understand why they have chosen not to join, and how we can improve our offering to members to attract them to register with ROSA.

## Community & Social Media

The **Yahoo group**, our original community, has grown very quiet but the **Facebook group** remains very active. While the Facebook group is a platform for members to promote their books, its primary focus is as a place to share information and hold discussions.

The **free forum** hosted on Activeboard is still very much under-utilised. The forum has both public and private areas, and therefore guarantees members safety and privacy, which Facebook does not. Members are encouraged to make use of this forum, which can be found at <http://saromance.activeboard.com>.

## Website

The ROSA website ([www.romancewriters.co.za](http://www.romancewriters.co.za)) is hosted by Hetzner, who also maintains our domain registration, and the site is managed via Wix, a free online web design service. These expenses are covered by our income from membership fees.

Using Wix has enabled us to tweak the website whenever necessary, for example to include updates to the contest and events pages. The website also displays our members most recent published works. If you would like your new released displayed on the website, please email a high quality version of your book cover and a link to your home page to [admin@romancewriters.co.za](mailto:admin@romancewriters.co.za).

## Local Chapters

A **Johannesburg chapter** has existed for many years, long before ROSA became an organisation. During this past year we have had a number of get-togethers, including lunches and dinners, and a fascinating talk by the curator of Northwards mansion.

The Johannesburg mailing list has 59 subscribers, however attendance at any one get-together is seldom more than 8. We welcome suggestions on how to improve attendance and engagement within this chapter, as well as a volunteer to plan and coordinate events to attract attendance.

The **Cape Town chapter** has had a couple of get-togethers in the last year, including hosting New York agent Louise Fury. In February 2017 this chapter will host Louise once again, as part of a one day Writing Retreat at Lalapanzi Lodge in Sir Lowry's Pass.

Author Marie Dry runs the **Pretoria chapter**. It is still a very small chapter, with 6 people on the mailing list, and 3 dedicated members who attend regularly. They meet monthly.

## Newsletters

ROSA currently uses the free online Mailchimp service for newsletter distribution. There are Mailchimp newsletter lists set up for the conference (currently 89 subscribers), for Johannesburg residents (currently 59 subscribers), as well as for those members who have officially joined the organisation. We urge everyone to sign up to the applicable newsletters (and please check your spam filters, and approve [romy@romancewriters.co.za](mailto:romy@romancewriters.co.za) as a sender) as this our first line of communication.

Registered members of ROSA now also receive a quarterly newsletter containing news on members' new releases, industry-related articles and links, book reviews etc. Two newsletters have gone out so far and feedback to these has been good. We would very much appreciate contributions from members for these newsletters.

To sign up for the newsletters, please follow the links below:

ROSA Conference Updates: <http://eepurl.com/MXoj1>

Johannesburg mailing list: [http://eepurl.com/Wp\\_P](http://eepurl.com/Wp_P)

Newsletters for the Cape Town and Pretoria chapters are managed by the respective chapter leaders.

## Professional Development

Through our various online communities as well as local chapters, we encourage the sharing of information on both the craft and business side of writing in order to keep South African writers informed and up to date. However, our primary project aimed at the professional development of South African authors is the **annual conference**.

Our first conference in Johannesburg in 2014 was attended by 30 delegates. The second conference, in Stellenbosch in 2015, offered more sessions and speakers, more pitch opportunities, and featured an increased number of Afrikaans sessions, but was attended by only 23 paying delegates, of whom nearly half were from Gauteng.

Following the 2015 conference, we ran an extensive survey for feedback on the conference. Thank you to everyone who took the survey and assisted the committee in improving our conference offerings.

This year's conference, our third, is once again bigger and better than in previous years. The biggest coup of this year's conference is the presence of a major US author, Mary Jo Putney, as our keynote speaker. (Thank you to Alissa Baxter for arranging this). This year also features a screening of the documentary *Love Between the Covers*, and the presentation of the first ever Imbali award at the conference gala dinner. In 2016 we have 33 paying delegates attending, making this our most successful conference yet.

## Quality Control and the Pursuit of Excellence

As stated in our Mission Statement, ROSA aims to encourage good writing. Until now our focus has mainly been on providing information and training via the annual conference, but in 2016 we took this a step further by introducing an award for excellence.

For this first year, we limited entries to English language only, as our judging panel consisted of English book reviewers. 5 reviewers agreed to judge however only 4 participated in the end, resulting in some hurried last minute reading!

We received 10 entries, some traditionally published and some self-published. The entries varied in lengths and genres. It was interesting to note that some of the self-published works were clearly not yet ready for publication, while others were of exceedingly high quality.

At this year's AGM we will review the success of this first Imbali award, and look at ways to improve the contest as well as to extend the contest to other languages, as well as to as yet unpublished manuscripts.

## Outreach

In line with our mission statement, ROSA is keen to promote literacy and outreach in addition to promoting the Romance genre in Southern Africa. As yet, we have not initiated any outreach projects, however we were recently approached by the local distributors of Mills & Boon who are keen to work with us to extend our engagement with readers.

We ask members to come forward with suggestions on how we can attract new members and increase public awareness of ROSA, extend our outreach into disadvantaged communities, promote literacy, and engage with readers, bearing in mind that these projects will need to be run on a volunteer basis until ROSA has the financial means to invest in these projects.

## Financial Management

ROSA's second financial year ended on 30 June 2016. Upon approval of the financial statements attached to this report (the Asset & Liability Statement, as well as the Income & Expenditure Statement), these statements will be submitted to SARS.

ROSA does not yet have an official accounting officer, so all recommendations will be greatly appreciated.

Our expenses during this last year include the website domain and hosting costs and bank charges, with the bulk of income and expenditure being for the 2015 and 2016 conferences.

We have not yet drawn up a budget for our 2016-17 tax year, however we again expect our expenses to be focused on the website, bank charges and conference as in previous years, with the addition of the purchase of public screening rights for the documentary *Love Between the Covers*.

Thank you very much to Clare Loffler who has managed our memberships for the past year, and to our Treasurer Peter Barker.

## Looking Forward

Our organisation relies upon volunteers. We are only as strong as the members who are active within the organisation, and so we encourage all members to volunteer. Since most of us have day jobs, as well as trying to write, the more people who pitch in, the easier the workload!

Thank you for your time and your support.

The End.