

# ROSA Annual Report | 2018



## Message from the Chairperson

In our 2017-18 year, ROSA continued to grow in strength and numbers, improving upon the initiatives introduced in previous years, as well as introducing a couple of new initiatives.

Our membership has grown, and the number of published members within our membership has also grown, which indicates that we are achieving a level of success both in attracting established writers to the organisation, and also in developing the existing writers within the organisation.

The highlights of this past year were a successful 2017 conference, the Cape Retreat in March 2018, and the Imbali and Strelitzia contests.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who served ROSA on the various committees this past year, with especial thanks to our chapter leaders, our treasurer, Peter Barker, our membership administrator, Clare Loffler, and Suzanne Jefferies who assisted on both the conference and contest committees.

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 to all our members for your support, and best wishes for the 2018-19 year.

*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 our 2017-18 year we furthered these aims through the following initiatives:

## Membership

### Report by Clare Loffler

Membership of ROSA continues to grow. Since our AGM last year we have grown from 46 members to 61, an increase of 25%.

Our membership is currently spread across 6 provinces, with just over the half coming from Gauteng. The breakdown per province is listed below. We also have 4 members who live outside of South Africa – two from Canada, 1 from Mauritius and 1 from Qatar. Four people have officially not renewed their membership this year.

- Gauteng – 31 members
- Western Cape – 15 members
- Kwazulu-Natal – 4 members
- Mpumalanga – 4 members
- Limpopo – 2 member
- North West – 1 member
- Overseas – 4 members

Only people with paid up memberships have been included in this count.

## Financial Management

The Treasurer's report as well as the 2017-18 Financial Statements can be found in the ROSA 2017-18 Financial Report.

## Local Chapters

ROSA currently has four chapters, based in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. Chapter reports are attached as Addendums to this Annual Report.

## Website, blog & social media

We recently moved the domain registration and mailboxes for the ROSA website ([www.romancewriters.co.za](http://www.romancewriters.co.za)) from Hetzner to The Framework, following a change in Hetzner's offerings which would have meant a threefold increase in our costs. The changeover was done incredibly smoothly, and we are pleased that we have been able to keep these costs at a very reasonable rate.

The website itself is designed and hosted on Wix. In order to keep the Wix costs low, we have opted for a hosting package which places an advertising banner across the page.

The website displays a list of our published members. If you would like to be listed on the website, please email a high quality author picture, a short biography, and a link to your website or blog to [admin@romancewriters.co.za](mailto:admin@romancewriters.co.za). Please note that this service is only available to registered, paid-up members of ROSA.

The blog has had some steady support this year, but we'd love to see it get more active, with more regular content. Our thanks go especially to Cliffordene Norton of Lapa Uitgewers who has contributed a great deal to the blog.

Blog posts are always welcome. We encourage members with new releases to make use of the blog to promote their books, and we are always interested in posts that introduce readers and writers to our members, as well as posts on writing craft and the business and marketing aspects of writing.

Both the ROSA Facebook group and Twitter account have been active during this past year. Thank you to Cliffordene Norton who has managed the Twitter account so incredibly this past year.

## Newsletters

ROSA currently uses the free online Mailchimp service for newsletter distribution. Mailchimp enables us to maintain separate lists for each province, for events such as the annual conference, as well as for official members. Our one issue this past year has been with Mweb and iAfrica accounts which block emails from Mailchimp.

The ROSA quarterly newsletter continues to go out to paid up members four times a year. The newsletter has grown in size over this past year, and we thank everyone who has contributed articles, reviews, and other content. Please continue to send contributions.

## Professional Development

The primary ROSA project aimed at the professional development of South African authors during the 2017-18 year was the **annual conference**, which took place in Johannesburg in October 2017, with US author Jane Porter as the keynote speaker. Though Jane was ill on the weekend of the conference, she still gave two very insightful talks and also made time for one-on-one chats with

many of our attendees. The weekend's program featured 14 other guest speakers, pitches to two US agents, and opportunities for one-on-one mentoring. Unfortunately, the conference had some higher costs than in previous years (namely printing, and covering the dinner costs of several Imbali judges) as well as a lower number of attendees than expected, which contributed to a small financial loss.

In March 2018, the Cape Town chapter hosted the second annual Cape Retreat, which was fully booked well in advance of the event. The two day event featured a day of guest speakers, as well as a writing day. The next Cape Retreat will take place on 8-10 March 2019, and will once again feature literary agent Louise Fury as guest speaker.

A new initiative in 2017-18 was the mentorship program which we attached to the Strelitzia contest for unpublished authors. Each contest entrant was allocated a mentor who assisted them with preparing their entries, and as a result the quality of this year's entries were much higher than the previous year. The feedback from entrants, mentors and judges has been very positive.

Finally, a number of local chapters hosted writing retreats and workshops during the year.

## Quality Control and the Pursuit of Excellence

During 2017 and 2018, ROSA ran an Imbali Contest for Excellence in Romance Writing for published books in both English and Afrikaans. These awards were judged by a panel of independent, external reviewers and book bloggers. The 2017 awards were won by Rae Rivers (English) and Sophia Kapp (Afrikaans). In 2018, we received 10 Afrikaans entries (representing three different local publishers) and 12 English entries.

In 2017 we introduced the Strelitzia award for excellence in an as yet unpublished manuscript, which was won by Melissa Volker, who has subsequently sold her manuscript to Clockwork Books. Following feedback from the judged in 2017, a few changes were introduced into the 2018 contest, with the addition of mentorships for the entrants, and a second round. In 2018, the 10 entrants were coached by published mentors through the first round, and in May the finalists who made it through to the second round were announced as Sumi Singh, Tracy Wilson and Amanda Holly.

Winners of both the 2018 Imbali and Strelitzia awards will be announced at the ROSA gala dinner and awards ceremony in Johannesburg on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2018.

## Outreach

ROSA has not yet initiated any projects to reach out to and develop new writers from disadvantaged communities, however in the 2018-19 year we would like to look at initiating a library outreach program as well as investigating ways to expand awareness of ROSA.

Thank you for your time and your support.

The End.

## Addendum – Chapter Reports

### Chapter Report – Johannesburg

#### Report by Mandy Verbaan

The Johannesburg Chapter has grown substantially in numbers amongst the unpublished authors over the past year mainly due to the fact that we've had some stellar plotting workshops presented by Suzanne Jeffries as well as a very informative evening where we met a real live US Marine. Although we started the year full of good intentions to have regular meetings, the latter half of the year was less active. We plan to improve on this by setting up more writing sessions for the members to attend both in evenings and during the weekend.

The Johannesburg Chapter is lucky to have our Chairperson Romy among us as she has hosted coffee mornings on a monthly basis. These are a great way for unpublished and published authors to exchange ideas, and are extremely popular.

### Chapter Report – Pretoria

#### Report by Marie Dry

The Pretoria mailing list is sent out to about fifteen people, though meetings tend to number only around four people at a time. The chapter has had regular meetings at Waverley Library, and also a Picnic in the Park, as well as a celebration for Francine Beaton's new release. Most communication is through WhatsApp, where links are shared etc.

### Chapter Report – Durban

#### Report by Kathy Bosman

The Durban ROSA chapter is still struggling to find days that work for everyone to meet. We are keen to organise a writers's workshop later in the year or possibly in the new year.

Congratulations go to Yvette Farinha, whose books are now available in Exclusive Books' Online store, and who has signed three more book contracts, and also to Pravina Maharaj (non-ROSA member) who has been shortlisted for the Minara Aziz Hassim Literary Award.

#### Added by Romy Sommer:

An especially big "well done" goes to chapter organiser Kathy Bosman for obtaining a contract with Black Opal Books for her sweet romance / women's fiction novel, *Cat Therapy*.

## Chapter Report – Western Cape

### Report by Dorothy Ewels

When I was chapter leader in 2014 we used to have a maximum of 4 people show up to a get together off a list of about 12 people. Between 2015 and 2017 the chapter's growth seemed to stall but from the last quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018 our membership has literally doubled. The current mailing list stands at 37 but only 28 seem to be active.

Rae Rivers and I plan alternate get togethers. As we are so spread out, we've agreed that it's only fair that one get together be held peninsula side and the next in the Helderberg, and so on. That way there isn't a single group having to travel a distance to attend. We've had quarterly writing days where everyone gets together, has a good natter and catch up session before getting down to writing. We break for lunch and then get back to writing for the rest of the afternoon. It seems to be quite popular. We will be doing our Christmas/last quarter event in November as our final one for this year. But I have been wondering about how to bring more value to the chapter going forward. So, recently I sent out an email asking for suggestions from members on what they'd like to seeing going forward. I've had some really good feedback on workshop ideas and will look at them for 2019. The current plan for 2019 is the March retreat, 3 quarterly writing days and some interesting workshops that the members are asking for.

It was very exciting to see that four of the 10 Strelitzia entrants were Capetonians – lovely to see our beautiful province represent. J And even more exciting that two of our ladies are in the finals! It just makes it all the harder on who to cheer for so we've decided to cheer for all three.

A huge thank you to Tracy Wilson for getting our WhatsApp group up and running, and doing a phenomenal job of staying on top of birthdays and release days. Tracy's also the mastermind behind the RoNoWriMo concept, which we launched in March 2018, and she was a big help, along with Therese Beharrie and Collette Kelly, in getting blog posts up. It is almost time to get the momentum going again for next year's one. I am looking for volunteers who can help with growing the concept going forward. This event had a small beginning but there was wonderful camaraderie between those taking part. Here's to growing.

It seems the majority of our membership are still unpublished but with exciting prospects in the year ahead for some. We're working on our Strelitzia entrants to either submit their manuscripts to publishers or self publish – whichever is a better fit for them. In terms of our published authors, Natasha Anders, Elsa Winckler, Malene Breytenbach and Dani René have had a wonderful year of new releases. Some have even snagged "Best Seller" status this year. Elsa Winckler has branched out a bit and released her debut children's book this year too. Therese Beharrie, our resident Harlequin/Mills and Boon author, releases her first Carina Press book in November.

2018 has been a wonderful year of growth for the chapter and I'm looking forward to 2019 being another good one.