

# ROSA Annual Report | 2020



## **Chairperson's Report**

This past year has been a challenging one for all of us, on so many levels, but it has also been inspiring to see how those challenges have brought change and growth to us, both as an organisation and as individuals.

During 2020, with in-person meetings curtailed, we initiated webinars and online chats, and the WhatsApp groups became a lifeline for many members. With both the annual Cape Retreat and Johannesburg conference unable to take place, we instead innovated and created a new online conference, a conference that is proving to be bigger and better in so many ways, not least of those being our ability to access international expertise, and to make the conference accessible to even more of our members.

There were some initiatives, such as our intended library outreach program and anthologies, that either had to be put on a backburner or delayed, but we know that ROSA will rise from this difficult time stronger and more active than ever before.

2020 has also been a year of huge successes. More of our members are publishing than ever before, and it has been a bumper year for member new releases. Our membership numbers topped the 100 mark early in the year, and we've welcome many new members. Despite the setbacks, the future is bright!

Thank you to all the volunteers who contributed to ROSA's success this past year, including the ExCo and sub-committee members, chapter leaders, mentors, contest judges, event organisers, webinar presenters, and newsletter and blog contributors.

*Romy Sommer*

ROSA Chairperson

## **Treasurer's Report**

The most significant movement for the year came from the increase in membership fees. This was the result of an increase of membership which boosted this item by 83 percent.

Another source of income was fees paid to the organisation for the 2019 conference which took place during this financial year.

It is with regret that we record the cancellation of the Cape Retreat and re-engineering of the 2020 Conference due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Revenue expected from the Cape Retreat did not materialise. Revenue expected for the re-engineered 2020 Conference has only started to arrive in the new financial year.

A new item that has emerged this year is the fees charged for Webinars. This has provided a new source of revenue.

On the expense side the bulk of the 2019 Conference costs came through during this financial year. Added to this is the cost of Webinars and additional costs for Scholarships and Trophies and Prizes.

All these factors have contributed to a deficit for the year of R4,574. It is envisioned that the new 2020 conference at which venue and travelling costs have been excluded as well as the increase in membership fees of 20 percent, should contribute positively to our financial performance during the current year.

Our cash reserves of R91,886 have remained consistent with the prior year.

*Peter Barker*

ROSA Treasurer

## Membership

We opened the 2019–20 year by initiating a new online membership application system, which enables us to capture updated membership information as well as making the application process more accessible.

By the end of the 2019–20 year we had topped the 120 member mark. The renewal process began again in June 2020, and at the time of this report, we have 103 members who have renewed/joined, and a further 9 members who have renewed but not yet paid their membership dues.

Of the 112 members registered to date, 37,5% are unpublished (up from 32% last year) and 62,5% are published (including traditional, self and hybrid). Since a few of our previously unpublished members have now joined the ranks of the published in 2020, this suggests that the majority of the new members joining are as-yet-unpublished authors.

As we start the 2020–21 financial year, our members were spread across 8 provinces (up from only 6 provinces last year). The breakdown per province is listed below. We also have 8 members who live outside of South Africa (two in Canada, and one each in Mauritius, New Zealand, UK, Qatar, Belgium and Namibia).

- Gauteng – 54 members
- Western Cape – 29 members
- Kwazulu-Natal – 6 members
- Eastern Cape – 4 members
- Free State – 4 members
- Mpumalanga – 3 members
- Limpopo – 2 members
- North West – 2 members
- International – 8 members

Thank you to our membership administrator, Kristien Wolmarans, for volunteering her time to manage this portfolio over the past year.

We welcome all our new (and old!) members and hope you enjoy a long and satisfying journey with ROSA.

## Vision Statement

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 2019-20 year we furthered these aims through the following initiatives:

## Local Chapters

ROSA currently has five chapters, based in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Garden Route and Durban. We are looking to create a chapter in Bloemfontein in the 2020-21 year. Chapter reports are attached as Addendums to this Annual Report. Thank you to all our volunteer chapter leaders.

## Website, Blog, Newsletters & Social Media

The [www.romancewriters.co.za](http://www.romancewriters.co.za) domain is maintained via The Framework, and the website is hosted by Wix. The [blog](#) has been rejuvenated this year, with thanks to Melissa Volker, Therese Beharrie, Alissa Baxter and Chris Hall.

Our newsletter mailing lists remain hosted by Mailchimp on their free package. The ROSA quarterly newsletter is distributed via email to paid up members four times a year. Thank you to everyone who has contributed content to the newsletter over the past year.

We ran a survey this year to ensure that the newsletter content remains relevant, and offered a draw for an Amazon gift card to encourage members to take part. The random draw winner was Vash Karuppa. Thank you to everyone who completed the survey, and to everyone who has volunteered to help provide content in the coming year.

ROSA's most active social media platform remains Facebook, with a private group for members and a public page. The Twitter profile has not been so active, and we welcome volunteers to manage both this account and to create an Instagram profile for the organisation in the coming year.

## **Professional Development**

ROSA successfully achieved its aim of providing professional development for its members during the past year through ROSACon 2019, the Strelitzia mentorship program, workshops offered by the local chapters, and a series of webinars.

In 2020 the mentorship phase of the Strelitzia Contest was re-vamped, in part due to a shortage of mentors, and in part due to a desire to provide more educational opportunities and a level playing field for all entrants. A private Facebook group was created, in which entrants received weekly lessons, and where weekly Q&As with mentors and judges were held. A series of 5 webinars was provided free of charge to Strelitzia entrants.

It was with huge regret that we cancelled the Cape Retreat 2020 at the start of lockdown. While it was an easy decision in order to keep our members safe and to do our bit to prevent the pandemic's spread, we acknowledge what a disappointment this was to everyone who had booked to attend, and especially to the organisers, Dorothy Ewels and Rae Rivers, who had put in a great deal of effort to make this a special event. The venue kindly refunded our deposit, and all bookings were refunded in full.

## **Quality Control & the Pursuit of Excellence**

During 2020, ROSA again ran the 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 number of entries dropped in 2020, and it is of concern that only 4 entries were received in the Afrikaans category. Thank you to Mandy Verbaan and Annemarie Gaertner for organising this contest.

The Strelitzia award for unpublished authors again included a mentorship phase. The judges have noted that the quality of submissions has improved year on year. The number of entrants was increased to twelve, enabling more members to benefit from the mentorship phase. This year's second round finalists are Marianne Lomborg, Kim Hunter and Kirsty Macfie. Thank you to Romy Sommer and Suzanne Jefferies for organising this contest and the mentorship program, and to all the mentors and judges.

Winners of both the 2020 Imbali and Strelitzia awards will be announced at the online awards ceremony on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

## **Outreach**

Due to the pandemic, our planned library outreach program, intended to connect with and develop writers in disadvantaged communities, was unable to get off the ground. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, and we hope that you will still be willing to get involved when this program is finally able to launch.

## **Anthologies**

In late 2019 it was necessary to register a company, ROSA Publishing, in order to receive the royalties from Amazon for ROSA's first anthology, *Wedding Season*. ROSA Publishing is 100% owned by Romance writers Organisation of South Africa.

In early March 2020, ROSA made a donation of R12,000 to the Read to Rise literacy charity, which promotes reading amongst primary school children in townships. These funds were raised by the publication of the *Wedding Season* anthology in 2019. Thank you to all our authors who contributed stories to this fundraising anthology.

## **Vision Statement & Constitution**

A survey was conducted to ensure that the vision statement remains true for the organisation. As a result, a few small updates have been made which will be voted on in the run-up to the AGM in September 2020. To encourage participation in the survey, a random draw for a \$10 Amazon gift card was offered, which was won by Karen Wilding.

During the 2019-20 year, the policy committee re-looked the ROSA Constitution, which was originally created in 2014, to ensure that it remains appropriate to the organisation's needs and is legally compliant. The updated Constitution will be checked by the new incoming 2020-21 Executive Committee, then will be shared with the membership in order to be voted on. Thank you to all our members who served on this committee, especially to the committee's chairperson, Marianne Lomborg.

## Looking Forward

As I conclude my time as Chairperson of this organisation, I look back with pride on everything that has been achieved. The growth since the creation of that first ROSA Yahoo group in June 2009, with just four members, to the organisation that exists today, has been phenomenal. In October 2010 we held our first in-person meeting, when a group of Johannesburg romance writers met for coffee and cake, and though I dreamed then already that one day we'd be big enough to have chapters and hold our own conference, I don't think any of us at that first get-together could have predicted how much would happen in just a decade. The past ten years have been filled with more ups than downs, and with more successes than setbacks, and I am excited to see what wonderful new adventures the coming decade brings.

I encourage all members to get involved in ROSA in any way you can, because as a volunteer-run organisation, ROSA's success is only made possible by your involvement. This organisation can only continue to grow, thrive and offer value to its members if everyone contributes, whether in big or small ways. We are stronger together, and I truly believe in the saying that a rising tide lifts all boats. Whether we are at the peak of our careers, or just starting out, we all have something to offer and we can all lift each other up.

The time and energy I have invested over the years has been rewarded many times over in the friends I've made and the things I've learned. I hope that the next generation of leadership will be just as blessed as I have been, and I wish them well.

Thank you for your support, and happy writing!

*Romy Sommer*

ROSA Chairperson

## **Chapter Report – Johannesburg**

The Johannesburg chapter has been exceptionally busy this past year. Where we managed to squeeze in a couple of “real life” events before the Covid-19 pandemic hit our country, we have shown how resilient we are as a group and as an organisation by moving our events online. During the extreme lockdown levels we had the pleasure of regular craft and industry webinars hosted by our favourite ROSA experts, and we also took advantage of the LiveWebinar platform to host several coffee&chat and winsome-wine sessions.

The WhatsApp group has been a lively one this past year and members have rallied around each other offering support and encouragement as well as sharing publication successes, industry news and light hearted entertainment. It’s been an inspiration to be around these wonderful people.

*Mandy Verbaan*

Johannesburg Chapter Coordinator

## **Chapter Report – Western Cape**

The Cape Town chapter had a bumper-packed events schedule for 2019, meeting once a month for workshops, writing days and rounding the year out with the annual Christmas party. We covered a range of topics from craft to self-publishing. With the advent of COVID and the subsequent ban, our in-person get togethers were put on hold and we took the workshops online. The ladies also took to WhatsApp more regularly to stay in touch. I’d like to thank Tracy Wilson for the phenomenal job she does of managing the group, never forgetting a birthday or book release.

Our ladies have been quite prolific with their releases, with a number of them releasing multiple books through the year. Therese Beharrie and her husband, Grant, welcomed twin boys and we’re excited to welcome our “ROSA” babies.

*Dorothy Ewels*

Western Cape Chapter Coordinator

### **Chapter Report – Pretoria**

The Pretoria chapter had meetings in the Waverley library, hosting a few craft classes and guest speakers before lockdown ended our in-person meetings.

*Marie Dry*

Pretoria Chapter Coordinator

### **Chapter Report – Durban**

Unfortunately the Durban chapter hasn't hosted any meetings or activities this year. There were plans to meet but first it was the festive season with people on holiday and then we went into lockdown.

*Pravina Maharaj*

Durban Chapter Coordinator

### **Chapter Report – Garden Route**

The Garden Route chapter started out with only two members and has since grown to seven members and two non-members that have not yet joined. Our first official Chapter meeting was 30 November 2019 as a meet and greet. We have not met up yet in 2020 as a group and will set a date once COVID has run its course.

*Tanya Hoeksema*

Garden Route Chapter Coordinator

**Romance Writers Organisation of South Africa (ROSA)**

Income and Expenditure statement for the year ending June 30, 2020

	ZAR 2020	ZAR 2019
<b>REVENUE</b>	90 445,00	130 924,69
Membership dues	26 500,00	14 486,84
Cape Retreat Fees	-	26 780,00
2018 Conference Fees	-	60 190,00
2019 Conference Fees	48 295,00	21 175,00
Awards Entrance Fee	7 700,00	8 500,00
Webinar revenue	7 950,00	
Revaluation of Foreign account	-	(207,15)
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	95 019,10	58 784,25
Administration & Marketing	830,00	
Annual General Meeting	1 618,18	1 870,00
Bank Charges	1 441,82	1 217,69
Cape Retreat Costs	-	26 241,66
2019 Conference Costs	67 935,40	-
2018 Conference Costs	-	26 314,33
Scholarship	2 225,00	-
Webinars	9 192,75	
Website and other admin costs	2 799,20	1 994,26
Trophies and Prizes	8 976,75	1 146,31
ACCUMULATED RESERVES - for the year	(4 574,10)	72 140,44
ACCUMULATED RESERVES - opening year	93 954,46	21 814,03
ACCUMULATED RESERVES - end of year	<u>89 380,36</u>	<u>93 954,46</u>

**Romance Writers Organisation of South Africa (ROSA)**

Assets and Liabilities Statement at June 30, 2020

Accumulated Reserves	<u>89 380,36</u>	<u>93 954,46</u>
Represented by		
Cash FNB Account	88 631,19	88 856,45
Paypal Account	3 255,26	5 098,02
Share Investment 100 shares Rosa Publications Pty Ltd	<u>100,00</u>	
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>91 986,45</u>	<u>93 954,47</u>
Membership Dues in Advance	1 750,00	-
Loan Rosa Publishing Pty Ltd	<u>856,09</u>	-
	2 606,09	-
NET ASSETS	<u>89 380,36</u>	<u>93 954,47</u>

Notes

The accounts are set up on the cash based system, whereby revenue and expenditure relevant to the organisation is not reflected in the accounts until it has been entered in the bank account

Correspondingly the conference revenue and expenditure is work in progress as transactions relating to them span consecutive financial years.

The balance on the Paypal account is USD 232,26. This has been converted to ZAR at the rate on June 30, 2020