

# ROSA Annual Report | 2024



## Chairperson's Report

In the blink of an eye, yet another year has come to a close for our Exco. And this one is bittersweet. After four years of service as Chair and Vice Chair, Mandy Verbaan and I will be standing down and handing over the reins to a new leadership team.

We've had a successful, productive year of promoting ROSA and raising awareness for both the organisation and the romance genre as a whole. New initiatives have been launched and are finding good traction for our members. Sadly, one or two initiatives have not worked out as hoped, but that is the nature of the beast when trying new things. It does not mean that all is lost; it simply means that we need to try something new in our approach moving forward.

As the majority of this year's Exco step down, I'd like to take this opportunity say a very big thank you to my fellow Exco members for their invaluable support and service over this past year. Your time and efforts are deeply appreciated. I wish you well with all your personal endeavours and that you go from strength to strength in your careers. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve with you.

From the outgoing Exco and I, we'd like to thank all the volunteers – each subcommittee member, chapter leader, event organiser, webinar presenter and contributor – who've contributed to ROSA events this past year. We could not have done it without you and appreciate each and every one of you.

It's been an honour and a privilege to give back to ROSA over the past four years as Chair, but now I look forward to all the exciting new initiatives our new Exco will bring in the year ahead. I wish them every success.

From me, it's so long, not goodbye.

*Dorothy Ewels*

ROSA Chairperson

## Treasurer's Report

Romance Writers' Organisation of South Africa

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 2024.

Activities for the year recognised a surplus of R 2,089.51.

Increases in revenue over the previous year were realised from the following:-

- Increase in membership fees of R 13,100
- Introduction of readers membership R 1,650
- Surplus on the Cape retreat R 22,001.24
- Saving of Webinar cost of R 6443.00

Increases in expenditure were as follows:-

- Bank charges R 2,008.46 the was due to the introduction of Yoco and other remote collection devices.
- Joburg Chapter Costs R 1,178.17
- Travel R 6,800.00 for visits by executive members from Cape Town to Johannesburg.
- Websites and other Admin Costs R 5, 638.07.

The movement on cash including cash held by Paypal at the end of the previous financial year totalled a increase of R 4,058.58.

Rosa Publishers Pty Ltd has sufficient funds to repay the loan account.

*Peter Barker*

ROSA Treasurer

**Romance Writers Organisation of South Africa (ROSA)**  
Income and Expenditure statement for the year ending 30 June 2024

	June ZAR 2024	June ZAR 2023
<b>REVENUE</b>	<b>123 170,00</b>	<b>56 850,00</b>
Membership dues - Authors	26 920,00	13 870,00
Membership dues - readers	1 650,00	
2022 Conference Fees		8 350,00
2023 Mini Con Revenue	4 700,00	
2023 Comic Con Revenue	15 850,00	
Cape Retreat Revenue	68 850,00	34 430,00
Book faire	750,00	
Imbali Revenue	4 000,00	
Webinar revenue	450,00	200,00
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>121 100,49</b>	<b>84 119,50</b>
Administration & Marketing	7 132,06	6 986,96
Bank Charges	3 845,29	1 836,83
2022 Conference Costs	-	6 522,87
2023 Mini Con Expenses	2 164,00	-
Comic Con Costs	40 203,78	907,24
Cape Retreat Costs	46 848,76	48 555,99
Entertainment	1 000,00	2 000,00
Joburg Chapter net costs	1 173,17	-
Travel	6 800,00	-
Webinars	1 507,95	7 950,95
Website and other admin costs	10 425,48	4 787,41
Trophies and Prizes	-	4 571,25
ACCUMULATED RESERVES - for the year	2 069,51	(27 269,50)
ACCUMULATED RESERVES - opening year	94 560,93	121 830,43
ACCUMULATED RESERVES - end of year	<u>96 630,44</u>	<u>94 560,93</u>

**Romance Writers Organisation of South Africa (ROSA)**  
Assets and Liabilities Statement at 30 June 2024

	June ZAR 2024	June ZAR 2023
Accumulated Reserves	<u>96 630,44</u>	<u>94 560,93</u>
Represented by		
Cash FNB Account	104 486,20	100 474,47
Paypal Account	45,85	
Share Investment 1000 shares Rosa Publications Pty Ltd	1 000,00	1 000,00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>105 532,05</u>	<u>101 474,47</u>
Loan Rosa Publishing Pty Ltd	<u>8 901,61</u>	<u>6 913,54</u>
	8 901,61	6 913,54
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<u>96 630,44</u>	<u>94 560,93</u>

Notes

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

## Membership

Building on the previous year, ROSA membership grew to a robust number of members. However, with the advent of the new membership year, we've had a number of members "retire" as they felt, at their age, it was time to step back from and other activities. A few others have not renewed theirs. Overall, though, I am happy to report that membership is looking good, and we've had quite a few new members join in recent months.

Please note that the membership sign up/renewal process is now fully automated and available through the website. We have also moved over to an anniversary renewal system. In other words, going forward, your membership is up for renewal on the anniversary of your sign up or the date you renewed for the first time on the new system. (e.g. If sign up or renewal took place on, say, 12 August 2024, your renewal date will be 12 August 2025). You are also able to set your renewal to automatically process via the new system and you will no longer need to worry about remembering to renew. We no longer accept EFT payments for membership as this by-passes the system and causes issues for the membership administrator. Should you experience any problems, please contact [membership@romancewriters.co.za](mailto:membership@romancewriters.co.za) to request assistance.

*Dorothy Ewels*

Chairperson

obo ROSA Membership

## Social Media & Newsletters

A big thank you to Collette Merritt and Tanya Hoeksema for their contribution to our social media, and Dawn Rae for the monthly newsletter. Dawn is standing down from this portfolio and we wish her well with her writing.

*Dorothy Ewels*

Chairperson

obo this ROSA Portfolios

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

### **Website**

When taking over the portfolio with Kim, I implemented Exco's decision to migrate the site from the Wix Content Management System to Wordpress in order to make the website maintenance easier, all while saving ROSA money. The Wordpress Content Management System does not charge a monthly system fee while Wix does. The move also allowed Kim and I to add new features to the website, and easily update the information on the site while keeping it looking professional.

Some of the features which we added to the site were things like a membership management platform, an events calendar, and a ticketing system to sell tickets to any ROSA events that are happening. The benefit of these features is that it is all automated and instantaneous. We are currently experiencing some minor teething issues, as all new systems experience, but once those bugs have been ironed out, the system will run smoothly without any manual intervention required.

The Membership platform was set up in response to years of requests we've received for an automated system. This new platform was implemented to allow for automated system, with online payments and auto-renewal options for both local and international members, and to make the administrative side of the memberships easier to manage/track.

The events calendar and addition of the ticketing system linked to it allowed us to show case all of ROSA's events while allowing ROSA to sell tickets to said events directly from the ROSA website. This has the added benefit of driving traffic to the ROSA website and allowing ROSA to see more of the profits from tickets sales. ROSA members have also benefited from this as they can link their google calendar to the ROSA events calendar.

As my last act as website co-administrator, I have migrated our website hosting from XNeelo to Domains.co.za. This is due to extremely poor service from XNeelo, as well as increased website speed with our new service provider. To

expand on the poor service from XNeelo, we had an issue which the plugin developers was unable to assist with. The developers stated that it is a server-side error, which when reaching out to XNeelo, they could not and would not assist. In the end, after extensive research on my own, I managed to resolve the error myself.

*Grant Ewels*

Website Co-Administrator

This year saw the ROSA ExCo decide to revamp the website. A clean, fresh look was introduced when the site was moved from WIX to a Wordpress site. All the information was transferred to the new site along with a few extras! We introduced the option for members to have their own author page on the website. This has been partially successful as not all members submitted the required information. This was requested several times via the various WhatsApp groups as well as being included in the newsletter.

Along with author pages, the ExCo agreed to move to a more efficient events ticketing system via the website. This is linked to the all-new calendar where anyone can access information on upcoming events. During this process, a streamlined membership plugin was added. This allows members to renew their membership via the website. Each member will receive several reminders to renew prior to their membership being cancelled. This addition has reduced the amount of time spent on administration significantly.

The final change has been a change in hosting companies. Zero support from Xneelo made it impossible for us to maintain our website and hosting has been moved to Domains. which has a proven track record of up-time and quick support request response time.

*Kim Hunter*

Website Co-Administrator

## **Imbali Awards and Strelitzia Mentorship Programme**

### **Imbali Awards**

The 2024 Imbali Awards launched in April 2024 and were open to any Romance Author who published a book in 2023. Once the Terms and Conditions were updated, we'd hoped the awards would be more inclusive with separate awards for Afrikaans entries and debuting authors.

Unfortunately, with only 5 English entrants, 3 Afrikaans entrants, and no debut authors, we decided to combine all the entries. The decision was not taken lightly but it was practical. In the future, unless we see a need to separate by language, this would be the way to go.

Each judge read a book in a genre they were familiar with to ensure that the book was judged against the correct market. The exception was the Afrikaans entries where readers were familiar with the genre and understood the language as a first language. The result was that some of the judges had actively looked for Afrikaans books after judging.

The only disqualifying factor was whether or not a book concluded with a Happily Ever After and stories were weighted more if the Romance was a central part of the book. I am pleased to announce that no one was disqualified this year.

My only hope is that in future years, the competition grows to be the award everyone wants.

This year's judges: Rachelle Winter; Natasha McClear; Nadia Duvenage; Sanri Du Randt; Wesley Wessels; Bec Marshal; Jane McDougall; Kirsten Rolston

This year's winners: Meg Chronis - The Seven Day Switch

*Bailie Hantam*

Strelitzia Contest Administrator

## **Strelitzia Mentorship Programme**

This year we decided to make some changes to the Strelitzias and make it a full, paid-for mentorship programme. However, after a healthy amount of interest, three enquiries and one attempt to sign up after the closing date, the Strelitzias did not go ahead.

*Dorothy Ewels*

Strelitzia Mentorship Administrator

## **Looking Forward**

With a new Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and almost completely new Exco, there is nothing to report on this front yet. I'm sure the in-coming Exco will update members in the weeks and months to come.

*Dorothy Ewels*

ROSA Chairperson

## Chapter Reports

### Chapter Report – Johannesburg

Chapter leaders: Mandy Verbaan, Peter Barker & Bailie Hantam

The Joburg chapter WhatsApp group has been a lot busier this past year as we've had more in person events and members have come out of their pandemic slump. It's great to be able to get together to chat about our books and trends we're seeing in the romance book publishing industry.

As per usual, we've seen members come and go and it's always sad to say goodbye to them, but in the same breath it's lovely to welcome new members and watch the group dynamic shift.

Our Christmas event last year was a Murder Mystery which was great fun! We matched this event up with Siana Claven's Meet the Expert – a detective in the SAPS. We could have done with his help to solve the murder! It's always fascinating to find out how things work behind the scenes and our detective was a treasure trove of information for our romantic suspense authors.

The WIP IT Wednesdays, organised by Bailie are a great success and a shining example of what happens when people organise events within the group. If anyone has further suggestions for events, please pop them into the WhatsApp group so we can get them going.

Bailie has been a busy bee this past year as she also organised the first Romancing the Reader event for ROSA Johannesburg and Pretoria members at EB Rosebank. This was a wonderful evening where our indie authors were given the opportunity of seeing their books on the shelves at EB!

ROSA MiniCon which took place last year was a clear indication the Joburg members were ready for another in-person conference, and we managed to pull one out of a hat during September this year. ROSACON 2024 officially falls in next year's success stories, but details about it have been shared on our social

media platforms and judging by the positive feedback we received this year I have no doubt there will be another on the horizon for 2025.

ROSA took part in Comic Con Johannesburg at the end of September 2024. It was our second year attending this event, and we had more authors participate this year which was great to make the shift hours shorter and also a fabulous opportunity for these authors to expose visitors to the work that ROSA does, as well as the books published by the authors in attendance. Again, based on the success of this year's event, I have no doubt we will be participating in the 2025 event as well.

*Mandy Verbaan*

Johannesburg Chapter Coordinator

### **Chapter Report – Western Cape**

Cape Town chapter's WhatsApp group is, as always, a hive of activity. Administered by the lovely Tracy Wilson, she is efficient at keeping the group up to date on all the birthdays and book releases that take place throughout the year. There's plenty of humorous memes and videos shared in the group, but also an exchange of ideas and robust discussions around questions that come up.

The chapter held their first Christmas market at Exclusive Books in the Waterfront. It was lovely to get out into the public and chat to people interested in books. A range of sub-genres were available for purchase and a decent number of sales were made – enough to make the weekend market worthwhile. Later that month, we had an amazing Christmas event at the ever-beautiful Lalapanzi Guest Lodge in Somerset West. We were spoilt rotten by the lovely Rose and her team, who hosted us for the Cape Retreat in March. And, as always, we were spoilt, once again.

We launched the very first Romancing the Reader event at Exclusive Books

Waterfront and were thrilled to have three of our Johannesburg members able to join for this inaugural reader event. A wonderful time was had by all – especially not only seeing our books displayed on shelves but watching them sell and be signed.

March saw the Cape Retreat take place at Lalapanzi. It was a lovely break from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, immersing ourselves in all things bookish. The only hiccup in an otherwise lovely event, was having a presenter notify us he was unable to make it a few hours ahead of his presentation.

Following the success of Comic Con Johannesburg 2024, ROSA participated in Comic Con Cape Town at the end of April 2024. As it was the first time we were attending the Cape Town event, we weren't sure what to expect. There's no denying that it was a little different to the one we attended in September at Nasrec. The energy and feel of the event was somewhat different, with attendees showing more interest in ROSA as an organisation than the books themselves. However, we did do a decent trade. All-in-all, a success despite the differences.

*Dorothy Ewels*

Western Cape Chapter Coordinator

## **Chapter Report – Pretoria**

### **1. Introduction**

In 2024, the Pretoria Chapter of ROSA focused on fostering community engagement, strengthening ties with local libraries, and supporting member authors through various in-person events and outreach efforts. Despite some challenges, the chapter successfully hosted a range of activities and celebrated significant member achievements.

### **2. Chapter Activities**

- **Romance Book Fair**

The Pretoria Chapter held its first **Romance Book Fair** in collaboration with the Johannesburg Chapter at **Waverley Library on 10 February 2024**. This event brought together authors and readers, providing an enriching platform for interaction. The fair was a great success, with significant turnout and enthusiasm from the local community.

- **Library Outreach Programme**

As part of our efforts to strengthen relationships with local libraries, the chapter continued its **Library Outreach Programme**, hosting multiple events across the city:

- **Waverley Library** (twice)
- **Moot Library**
- **Glenstantia Library**

These events were well-attended by both authors and readers, allowing local romance authors to share their work and connect with a broader audience.

- **Paint a Brick Project: Waverley Library**

The chapter aimed to support the library's fundraising project as part of our continued library engagement. Unfortunately, the event could not take place due to unforeseen circumstances on the library's part. However, this experience opened up opportunities to brainstorm new initiatives for 2025.

- **Sensory Writing Workshop: Hazelwood Food Market**

Five members from the Pretoria and Johannesburg Chapters participated in this fun and interactive event, which included sensory-based writing exercises combined with tasting and discussion.

- **Sensory Writing Workshop: Waterkloof**

This event, hosted by Francine Beaton, is scheduled for **19 October 2024** and will be attended by 10 members.

- **Vision Board Workshop: Waverley Library**

This workshop took place on 20 January 2024 at Waverley Library and was attended by 5 members.

- **Vision Board Workshop: Waterkloof**

This workshop will take place on **23 November 2024**, also hosted by

Francine Beaton, focusing on helping members visualize and plan their writing goals for the coming year.

### 3. Member Achievements

Several members of the Pretoria Chapter published new works this year, showcasing the thriving creativity within our group:

- **Mariette Wenholdt** published her debut romance novel, *Bosnimf*, and was awarded second place in the **Imbali Awards 2024** for Best Published Novel.
- **Lydia de Jager** released the second book in her *Sonneblom Series*.
- **Francine Beaton** had a highly productive year, publishing **7 books**—4 in Afrikaans and 3 in English.

### 4. Membership Growth

Unfortunately, membership growth stagnated during 2024 despite concerted efforts to attract new members. This will remain a key focus for the coming year as we work on strategies to engage more local romance writers and increase participation.

### 5. Challenges and Adaptations

Like many chapters, we faced challenges hosting in-person events due to scheduling conflicts and limited resources. However, we remained dedicated to keeping our events running and sought new ways to maximize participation.

### 6. Future Plans

Looking ahead to 2025, the Pretoria Chapter is committed to revitalizing its membership base and continuing to support local authors through a mix of events and outreach:

- We plan to host **5-6 training events** focusing on writing craft, marketing, and self-publishing.

- We will continue our **Library Outreach Programme**, organizing **5-6 library events** alternating every other month to maintain consistent engagement.
- Additionally, we are excited to organize another **collaborative book fair** with local authors, building on the success of this year's fair.

## 7. Conclusion

The success of the Pretoria Chapter in 2024 is a testament to the dedication of our members and volunteers. As we move into 2025, we remain committed to growing our membership, supporting our authors, and fostering a strong, inclusive community of romance writers.

*Francine Beaton*

Pretoria Chapter Coordinator