

eGSSA Annual Report 2007

Introduction:

2007 was once again a very busy year for eGSSA, a year with challenges and highlights. We have made excellent progress with the photo project as well as the archive document preservation project, but have also faced major obstacles in those areas.

As a branch it is important for us not only to continue expanding our membership base but also to provide the best possible service to our current members. In 2007 we were extremely successful in gaining new members, but it was especially heart-warming to see how many of our members resubscribed to our services – it is always a pleasure to welcome back “old” members.

At the time of writing this report, eGSSA has 264 members and 168 subscribers, representing growth of 43% and 47% respectively. The number of subscribers (i.e. people who are members at other branches but also sign up for eGSSA’s web- and other electronic services) rose from 114 to 168 while those members who were members only of eGSSA rose from 184 to 264. Many of the new members had not been involved with the GSSA or other branches at all.

Our member distribution is as follows:

	2005	2006	2007
Members:			
RSA	: 81	108	146
USA	: 25	22	40
Aus/NZ	: 31	26	33
Europe	: 26	28	45
Subscribers:			
RSA	: 102	114	165
Europe	:		2
USA	:		1

Based on the above it is clear that we still have a large number of members and subscribers resident in South Africa, which is what one would expect, and it is also a healthy situation. However, it is also quite satisfying to see that the numbers of members resident outside South Africa has grown by 59% in the past year – it seems that at least some of our marketing efforts are bearing fruit.

Our male members account for just more than 55% of the total membership. In contrast with the situation in 2006 and possibly due to the increase number of overseas members, the number of Afrikaans and English speaking members has almost reached parity.

Projects:

Archive document preservation project

This project, launched in 2006, has as its purpose the preservation of specific archival volumes- those volumes which have either been withdrawn or which are already damaged and may be withdrawn. The intention was to photograph these volumes and make them available electronically to both the public and the archives. The first volume Mooc 13/1/1 was completed in 2006, and in 2007 Mooc 13/1/2 as well as a number of others were completed – these are in the production process at present. However, the situation at the Cape Archives has hampered our progress in this regard. We are working on a number of volumes in the VAB and the TAB.

Gravestone photo project

The provision of indexed/cross-referenced gravestone inscription photos in our Download Library has proved to be a huge success. At the end of 2007 we had just more than 50,000 items in this database, compared to the ±17,500 at the end of 2006. The project leaders (initially Gail Röthlin and currently Alta Griffiths) and their band of volunteers deserve a round of applause for their hard work.

Photo service

Our photo service was also extremely successful in 2007, but the banning of cameras at the KAB caused a bit of a setback. The service is continuing at the other archives and has also been expanded

to a few Master's Offices. At the end of 2006 we had approximately 4,000 death notices and related documents in the download library and during 2007 a further 10,000 documents were added.

Transcription project

The 13 registers of cremations at the Cambridge Crematorium in East London – covering the period 1959-1996 – contain approximately 30,000 names. These registers are being transcribed by Brian Barrett in association with Alta Griffiths. Approximately 9,500 names are already available in a searchable online database on eGSSA's website. Brian has also donated a large number of photos of the plaques at the crematorium and the aim is to link these photographs – which already appear in the download library – to the transcription database.

eGSSA webpage:

As in 2006, this year was characterised by substantial expansion of the website, the main reason being the growth in the databases listed above. We had to again purchase additional storage capacity and memory to cope with this increase. In the past month we also moved the website to a new webserver which will not only give us an increased capacity but also allow faster searches. We view the quality of this service as extremely important and this is also the area to which we allocate the most financial and human resources. Our webmaster continually investigates new options to improve the website access speed and facilities.

Apart from the expansion of the gravestone photo and archive documents databases a number of articles, books and transcriptions have been added to the website this year, including:

- a number of additional articles made available to members and non-members
- muster rolls of the Cape settlers
- The Basroo family of Mauritius and the Cape
- The Brill Family Chronicle

We have recently also added the following two new sections:

- Family Bibles, where we hope people will place digital copies and/or transcriptions of their family Bibles
- Postcards, mainly of historical buildings and places.

genesis:

A number of interesting articles appeared in *genesis* this year, including:

- Unlocking the Vault: Conversion to Digital Records
- Weesmeisies
- The Gilstain Story
- Obsessie met CLJ de Villiers in die vreemde
- Searching for Philip Morkel in 17th century Germany

The first issue of 2008 is almost complete and includes some quite interesting items.

We hope to appoint an editor for *genesis* early in 2008, and look forward to receiving a number of applications from our members for this important position.

Finances:

Our growing membership and subscriber base and the success of our photo service is of course very welcome – not only has it been very positive for our overall financial position but has allowed us to continue to expand our services. It also enabled us to photograph a number of additional documents which will be made available in the future. It is also important to note that the positive cashflow made

the further upgrade of our web services to a faster server possible . We will continue to give these services priority given the substantial increase in the number of documents we are hosting.

A summarised financial statement is attached hereto.

Sales of GSSA products:

Our sales of GSSA products was given a boost by the release of the updated Cemetery cd. eGSSA sold GSSA products worth just more than R17,400 this year of which the cemetery cd contributed approximately R8,200. The other “best sellers” were the Familia and Omnibus 3 cd’s. The income from the sale of individual volumes or back issues of Familia also showed firm growth.

Sales of non-GSSA products:

The sales of non-GSSA products declined slightly this year, mainly due to the fact that few new products came onto the market and those that did had limited market penetration. Notwithstanding this we had a fairly healthy margin of just more than 18% on sales of R14,490.

All our marketing agreements were renewed this year and we concluded new ones for the following products:

- Electronic versions of certain editions of *Capensis*
- Electronic editions of the *Bewaarders van ons Erfenis* series
- A Weenen Childhood
- Persoonsindeks tot *De Kaap de Goede Hoop*

A few additions are being investigated at present.

The year ahead:

In last year’s annual report we highlighted a few items which we thought would hamper our service delivery in 2007, one being the lack of volunteers. While our faithful band of volunteers again contributed more than their fair share with regards to the photo and gravestone projects, the shortage of other volunteers prevented us from tackling smaller projects and/or tasks. These include the making available of a number of books in electronic format, books donated by members as well as non-members. If more volunteers do not step up to the plate we will still need to limit the making available of new products and services, especially with growing membership and subscription numbers.

As far as the photo project is concerned, it is likely that 2008 will be a bit quieter, specifically as a result of the issues at the KAB. The amount of work required to be done by our photographers and webmaster to make the photos available is huge. One of the challenges we face – now and in the future – is the timely completion of all photo-orders. While our photographers are normally able to photograph the documents quickly, a fair amount of post-production work needs to be done – the photos need to be sorted, labelled and made available to the purchaser and then uploaded to the website. The sorting and labelling are two areas where we will certainly need assistance this coming year and we trust that we will have the required number of volunteers.

The situation regarding the archive documents preservation project is quite fluid at present. Late in 2006 we made available the first volume (Mooc 13/1/1), which was quite popular. We have since acquired Mooc 13/1/2 plus a few other complete volumes which we wanted to make available. We are also looking at the photographing of certain volumes at the TAB and VAB.

A project which will need to be attended to is the making available on the website of a number of registers which have been provided to us (under the proviso that it be made available on the website without charge). Again, a number of volunteers will be required to handle this project.

On a personal note I wish to thank those in the management team and the hardy band of volunteers for the input and hard work during the past year. Last year I said that you were “bittereinders” and you again deserve that title (with its accompanying laurel wreath) – thank you once again for your input, dedication, willingness to help and co-operation.

I trust that 2008 will again be a year of growth, development of new products and ever-improving customer service

Colin Pretorius

eGSSA Income and expenditure statement 2007		
	Rand	Rand
Income		109,919.28
Membership fees: 2007	7,020.00	
Membership fees prepaid for 2008	4,135.40	
Additional income from sales	744.64	
genesis subscriptions	9,675.00	
Donations/subsidies	4,896.42	
Interest received	937.32	
Project Income:	50,560.50	
Archive volume project	2,000.00	
Photo sales	48,560.50	
Income from sales of GSSA products	17,460.00	
Income from sales of non-GSSA products	14,490.00	
Expenditure		90,633.32
Bankfees	211.40	
Internet banking fees	1,024.42	
Postage	868.41	
Marketing costs	262.13	
Website and other internet fees	11,721.49	
Other IT Costs	2,436.44	
Telephone fees	1,187.39	
AGM subsidy	2,699.10	
Project expenses	42,237.55	
Archive volume project	1,764.00	
Photo project	38,983.55	
Cemetery project	1,490.00	
Cost of sales: GSSA products	16,195.00	
Cost of sales: non-GSSA products	11,790.00	
Nett Income:		19,285.96

eGSSA Assets & Liabilites statement 2007		
	Rand	Rand
Assets:		51,160.24
Cash in bank on 31/12/07	25,600.24	
Investment account	25,000.00	
Stock	0.00	
Debtors	560.00	
Liabilities		-6,801.00
Creditors:		
GSSA National	1,270.00	
Photographers	3,830.00	
Suppliers of products	1,701.00	
Nett Assets		44,359.24