

Genealogical Society of South Africa – President’s Annual Report  
Report to the National Annual General Meeting – 24 February 2007  
For the year March 2006 to February 2007

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Good morning to all the members of the National Council, Fellow Genealogists, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to start off by wishing all a very prosperous 2007, and I hope that you will be able to work towards your dreams in general and your genealogical ambitions in particular.

The year 2006 was no less challenging than 2005. We have just about fully come to grips with the tasks of managing the GSSA, and here special thanks must go to all the members of the NEC and all the branch committees. Without your effort and dedication, very little would have happened during 2006.

There is however a number of areas where the NEC and the branches need to focus.

We should fully embark on getting the processes within each branch established to build and maintain our web site and our web database.

We are still not organising mid-year Strategic planning sessions, and it shows, because we are embarking on very few new initiatives. The NEC also does not get together often enough. We only met four times during the 2006-year.

Although Isabel carried the torch with pride regarding interviews on radio (and I really feel that she did an excellent job in promoting the GSSA), I feel that there is other PR work that also needs attention, which I did not get to. My aim is to use 2007 to strengthen ties with the national archives, societies like the Huguenot Society, Cultural museums and family history societies. Every cultural museum and library should know about the GSSA.

However, better communication should start at home. My impression is that the NEC did enjoy fairly open communication towards the branches, but that the branches could still do more about keeping the NEC in the loop with activities at branch level.

I am certain that there are areas in the country that should be mined more aggressively to see if we cannot establish new branches in areas like Kimberley/Northern Cape, the Far North and Mpumalanga, and even East London and the southern Cape Peninsula. More promotional articles should be written and published in popular magazines and/or newspapers.

On the flip side, I feel we did have a couple of highs during the year:

- The Cemetery CD is being produced again (thank you to Peter Moss and his team)
- We re-appointed a selection committee for looking after allocating our awards.

- The Omnibus has received major attention (thank you to Daan Hamman)
- The second edition of the Member CD is ready for distribution
- The Free State Marriages has been reformatted and is available, although more about that later
- We lived through a full cycle of closing one branch and seeing a new branch come to the fore
- We've seen a new concept regarding our web-site take shape (a huge thank you to Paul Maré in this regard)
- A great effort was put into maintaining contact between the NEC and the branches
  - Bloemfontein was visited by Johann just before the branch was founded as well as by Daan during the 'Volksbladfees'
  - Western Gauteng was visited by Johann
  - Northern Transvaal was visited by Johann
  - North West was visited by Isabel, André and Richard
  - Natal Midlands branch was visited by André
  - The NEC was in regular contact with the e-GSSA
  - The Vaal Triangle attended most of the NEC meetings
  - Johann attended two meetings in the Western Cape

During 2006 our membership has grown from 786 to 877 paid up members. Our flagship *Familia* has gone from strength to strength as well, by increasing the number of pages from 188 in 2005 to 196 in 2006 plus increasing the readership from 918 in to 1029 during the same period – a total increase of 111 (12%) for the year. Here thanks must go to Richard Ford and his team and André Heydenrych for keeping such tight control on the memberships and the moneys.

So, if we did have some measure of success during 2006 it was because the majority of the suggestions that were made by the members of the National Council (NC) were not just made and left for someone else to run with. No, we had enthusiasts who made the suggestion, streamlined the idea with other people's inputs, got approval and then initiated and implemented those ideas themselves. This is what makes an organisation dynamic, vibrant and alive, and this is what I would like us all to carry into the New Year. We should continue to strive to be an organisation that impacts the genealogical world in innovative, grand and exciting new ways.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish us all an enterprising 2007 and may we find at least some of those long lost relatives.

Johann Janse van Rensburg