

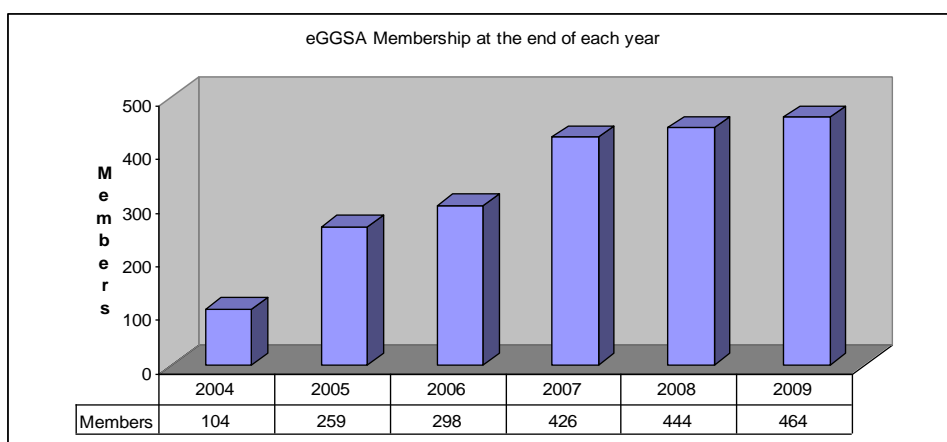
# EGGSA ANNUAL REPORT 2009

## Membership

Membership at the end of 2009 stood at 292 eGGSA branch members and 172 members of other branches who have subscribed to genesis and the other eGGSA services. As could have been expected a number of members did not renew at the end of 2008 but their numbers were more than made up by new members.

The ratio of male to female members is pretty consistent over the years and stands currently at 256 male and 207 female members. The ratio of Afrikaans to English speakers is also much the same from year to year, currently 238 Afrikaans speaking members to 225 English speaking.

The great majority of our members, 364, are South African residents but we have substantial minorities from elsewhere in the world: 34 from Australia and New Zealand, 33 from Europe and 29 from North America.



## Archive Photographic Service

Although the ban on photography at the Western Cape Archives is still in place, our service provides many document copies to GSSA members and others from the Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg and Pretoria Archives. During 2009 we received 319 orders for document photographs via our web site. The vast majority of these document copies will be suitable for making available in our [eGGSA Library](#) on the web site once volunteers have captioned them.

## Bibles Project

This project was started in 2007 and has prospered fairly well. During 2008 eGGSA arranged for the Family Register pages in the Bibles of the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria to be photographed and these photographs currently form the main part of the online collection. There have also been many individual contributions from members and others. These records are unique and, particularly in private hands, are very vulnerable. Photographing them will not only preserve the information in them but, contributed to the [eGGSA Bible Collection](#), the photographs will make that information available to everyone.

## BDM Project

This project was begun during 2009. A start was made in trying to establish where church and other registers may be found and consulted, as well as photographing and transcribing those where the custodians are happy for us to do this. We hope that this project will blossom during 2010. For more detail please see [The eGGSA BDM project](#) on the web site.

## The Gravestone Photo Project

The project exceeded all expectations in 2009! Our aim was to add 50 000 new photographs to the web site – by the end of the year we had added 77 000.

Apart from the thousands of photographs contributed by individuals, the project was also supported by the following GSSA branches during 2009: GSSA Cemetery DVD Project, GGSA Vaal Triangle, GGSA Kwazulu-Natal, GGSA Western Cape and GGSA Northern Transvaal.

The huge influx of photographs led to a number of issues which had to be addressed at various levels, bandwidth limitations, back up facilities and web space. Bandwidth continues to be a problem but large uploads are generally sent to a member or members outside South Africa with large allocations of bandwidth. Backups are maintained by the web manager. The web site facility was greatly extended at the start of 2009 which led to an immediate improvement in the speed of access and editing within the photograph collections.

**PHOTOGRAPH CAPTIONING.** This has to be done after the photographs are uploaded by a band of volunteers. During 2009 more people made themselves available to assist us with the captioning and our volunteer numbers increased from four to eleven. These volunteers spend many hours on line reading and labelling the gravestone photographs despite suffering from flooded basements, broken arms, holidays, personal commitments and farming on Facebook's Farmville.

If a volunteer is up to speed it will take at least 2 minutes to read and caption one photograph. Complicated and difficult gravestones can take much longer.

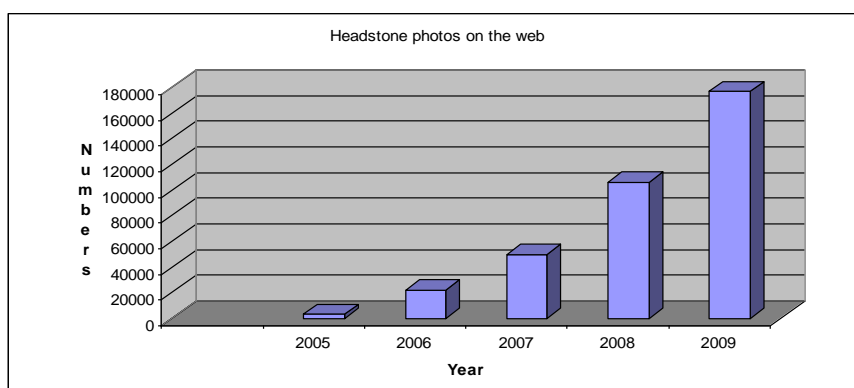
Although we try hard not to make mistakes they do sometimes happen. Contributing factor are typing errors, difficulty interpreting the inscriptions, language barriers and the quality of the photographs. But the errors can easily be rectified if we are informed of them.

**GSSA CEMETERY DVD PROJECT.** The eGGSA Gravestone Project and the GSSA Cemetery DVD Project are working together to:-

- ⊕ ensure uniformity of the cemetery names between the two projects;
- ⊕ have all the eGGSA Photo Project cemeteries indexed in the Central Cemetery Index, managed by the DVD project;
- ⊕ add the collection of Cemetery Overview photographs collected by the DVD project over the 20+ years onto the web
- ⊕ get the eGGSA cemeteries plotted on the Google Earth Project.

A working method has been established between the two projects. Communication mostly occurs via email. To get ONE cemetery listed on the Index takes at least three emails. With GPS and cemetery name queries the number can easily go up to six or more emails between all the parties. The process is time consuming and on-going. The GSSA Cemetery DVD Project is very patient with the eGGSA Photo Project!

For 2010 we have set our target once again at 50 000 new photographs but, given the rate the photographs are currently coming in, we may well reach 100 000! The challenge will be to process all those photographs within a reasonable time!



## Hobby promotion

eGGSA is still aiming to promote Genealogy as a hobby. This is done in co-operation with the Western Cape branch. During 2009 eGGSA was represented at the following exhibitions:

24 – 25 March – What is in a name? Held at the Goodwood museum,  
where we spoke about graveyards in South Africa.

1 May – The Hermanus Showcase of Hobbies

18 – 22 May – Cape Archive and Record services - poster display

6 June – Genealogy workshop at the Goodwood Museum

26 September – Family Research Exhibition at Paarl

29 September – Cemetery talk at the Goodwood museum

31 October – Pioneer Wiele Fees at Worcester

As for 2010 we have already received invitations to the Hermanus Showcase of Hobbies and a request for a Graveyard Talk to the Over 60 Club at Rondebosch scheduled for March.

We could not determine if the requests for Graveyard Talks are because the people are desperate for speakers; but you cannot help to wonder why they are there! You sort of know why you are there! But it was fun and well received!

## Newspaper Extracts

During 2009 the very valuable extracts made by Sue Mackay from the Cape Newspapers kept at the British National Archives in Kew were added to the web site in our [Newspaper Library](#) and new extracts added through the year as they were completed. This collection is now virtually complete so far as the newspapers in the National Archives are concerned but all these newspapers continued beyond 1850, when the Colonial Office ceased to be interested in the Cape which had become self-governing and if someone in South Africa were able to continue any of these to add to this valuable collection it would be a great service indeed, and they could easily be added to the web site collection.

## Feedback

Being online means it is easier for our members to give us feedback. The feedback is encouraging and helps to keep us motivated:

- ✦ Many thanks for the prompt delivery of the documents – and the data is a mammoth breakthrough for my current research project. Thanks for this amazing service it is a true help for those doing SA research
- ✦ Baie dankie vir al jou harde werk
- ✦ Thank you for the super Newsletter. Thank you to all of you for the wonderful work, the website, etc. of our cyber branch. I shall always retain my membership.
- ✦ Kan jy my dalk sê wanneer my fotos gelaai sal wees?
- ✦ Someone told me about this website of gravestones, and I was amazed to find the gravestone of my grandparents ... I just wanted to say a big “thank you” to the person who took this photo. I was absolutely blown away by it.
- ✦ Die hele graf storie pas my soos 'n handskoen
- ✦ This is a fantastic idea and a convenient way of making archive documents available to many of us living overseas.

## eGGSA Web Site

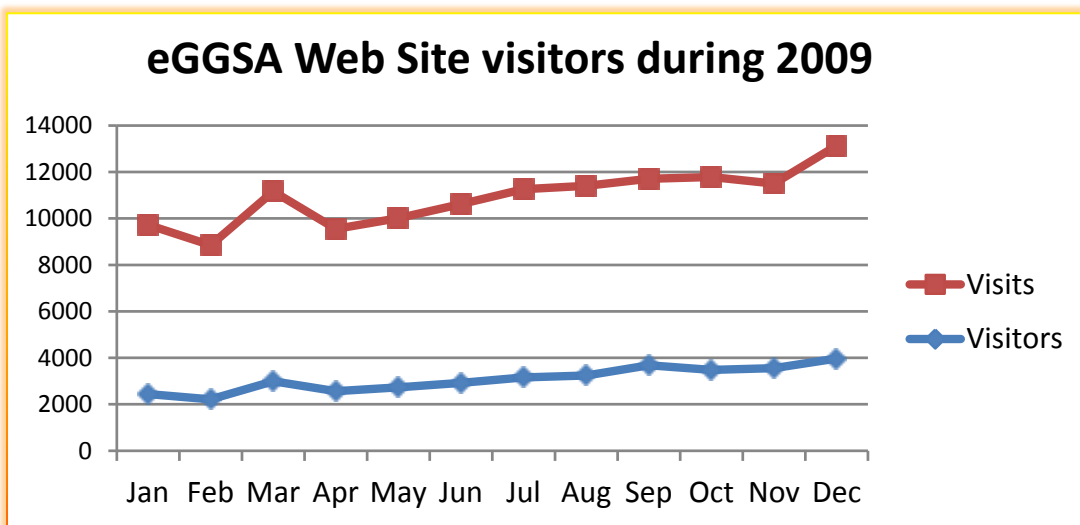
The eGGSA web site occupies about 35 Gigabytes of disk space, the vast majority of this being used by our picture library consisting of Gravestones, Archive documents, Bibles, postcards and some books.

The average number of visits (one session of variable duration by one user) is around 300 per day.

Most visits are to the Picture libraries.

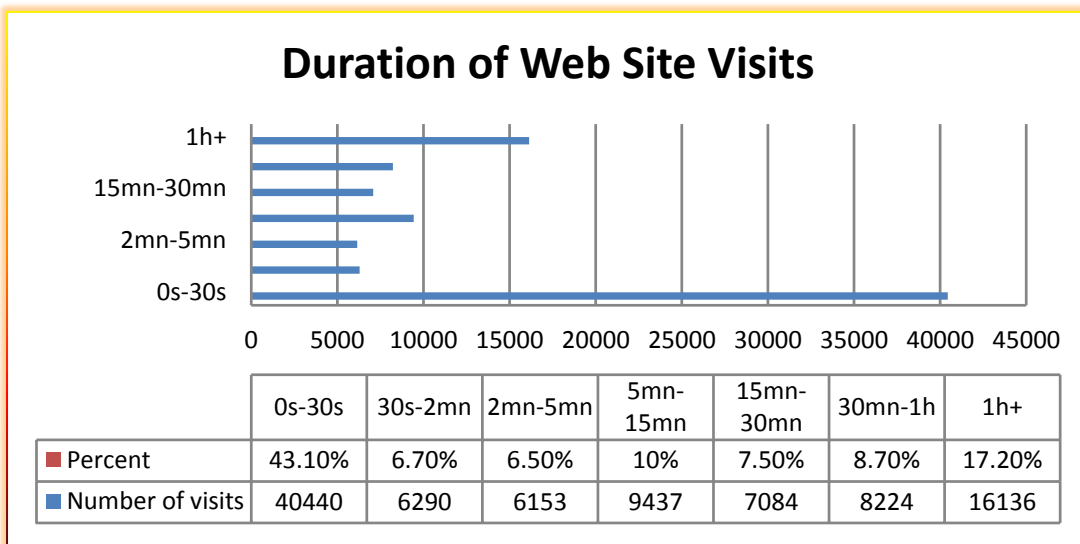
By far the vast majority of visitors are accessing the site from South Africa (70%), next are Australia (8%), Canada (8%), Great Britain (4%), USA (2%), Netherlands (2%) and New Zealand (1%).

When looking at web site statistics, the important ones are the number of visitors and the number of visits. A visitor is you or me accessing the web site. A visit consists of one session of whatever duration where a visitor stays looking at the web site. During 2009 the eGGSA web site had a total of 36,936 visitors who made a total of 93,764 visits to the web site.

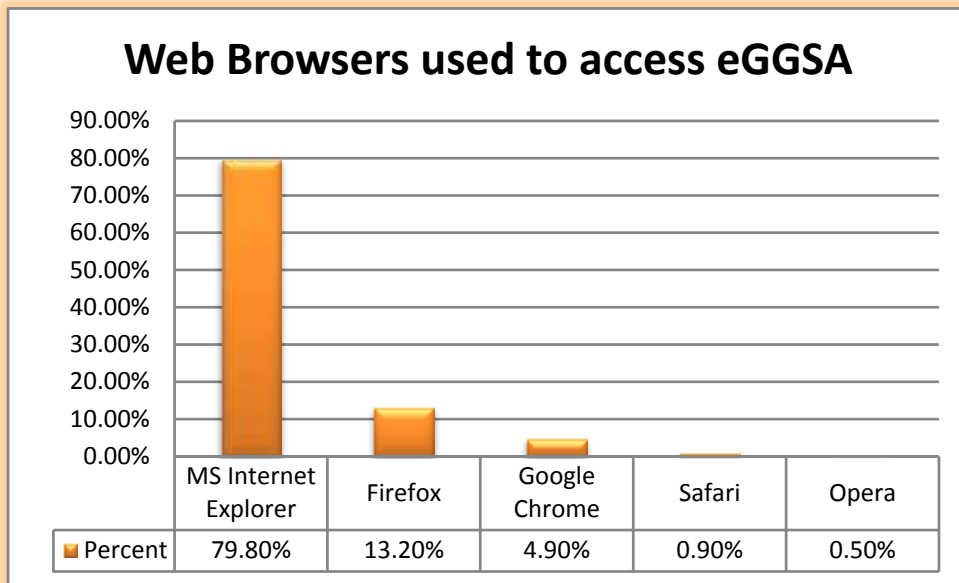


From the chart below it can be seen that business has grown slowly during the year.

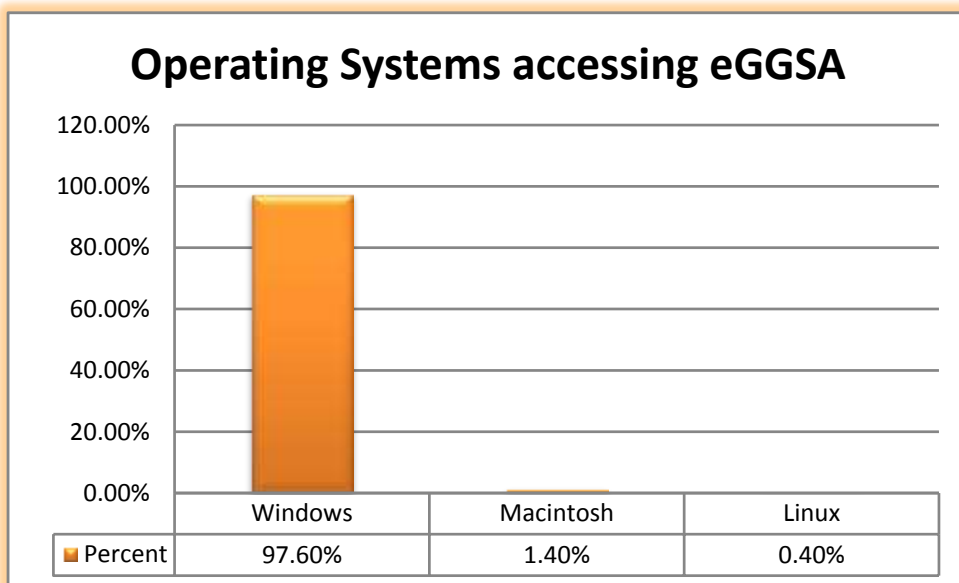
The duration of visits is very variable as can be seen from the chart below. One wonders about the large number of visits that lasted less than 30 seconds, but it is encouraging to see that at least a third of all visits last longer than 15 minutes.



There is often discussion about which web browser is better than another. Whatever may be the answer to that question it is clear which browser most of those who access the eGSA web site are using,



And also which is the operating systems they use:



Together with Genesis and the Newsletter, eGSA's web site is one of the branch's main means of communication with its members and also the area in which our members are most easily able to contribute by providing photographs of gravestones, whole graveyards, documents, Bibles and Postcards and also by captioning those photographs once uploaded, for the use of the whole genealogical community.

## **Publications: *genesis* and the eGGSA Newsletter**

We welcomed a new editorial team in 2009 - Johan Hefer, Judi Meyer, Gina Shepherd and Louis Venter. This team has provided fresh ideas as well as a new look to the magazines.

**Genesis:** Four editions of Genesis were published during the year. As with any publication of this nature it is never easy to come by suitable submissions and the editorial team was very grateful to receive a number of excellent contributions, with a good balance of Afrikaans and English articles.

The eGGSA newsletter has always sought to inform members about goings on and supply them with information that may be of use to them. Since 2009 we have tried to make the newsletter not only informative but entertaining as well. The newsletter is now, on average, longer and contains stories submitted by members. The more informal nature of the Newsletter enables members to have their first articles published, thus giving them the confidence later to submit stories for Genesis and perhaps Familia. The more serious and longer articles are reserved for Genesis which the Newsletter complements.

Feedback from our members has been very encouraging.

## **Finances:**

The income of eGSSA increased during 2009 while expenses were approximately the same as during the previous year. The increased subsidy of R10.00 per branch member together with the 10% commission on GSSA product sales contributed much to this state of affairs.

**Sale of GSSA and non-GSSA Products:** eGSSA sold GSSA products to the value of R25 245.00, eGGSA products to the value of R15 323.00 and archive photos to the value of R33 959.00. It must be borne in mind that eGSSA collects only 10% of the sales on GSSA and eGSSA products and also pays the photographers visiting the archives to photograph estate files.

**Web Site:** The cost of hosting the eGSSA web site increased considerably in 2009 due to the ever increasing demand for more space as well as high quality bandwidth. This is acceptable as the web site is the flagship and the main contact with the genealogical fraternity and members of both the virtual branch and the GSSA.

**Budget:** The conservative budget for 2010 will be maintained and further expenditure on the capacity on the web site has been provided for.

## **Conclusion:**

eGSSA has again demonstrated during the previous year that it has not only an important role to play within the GSSA, but also within the genealogical community at large.

eGSSA and its projects and functions are run by volunteer from its membership. Currently about thirty of our members help in this way and therefore we say a very big Thank You to all the volunteers who have given so generously of their time during 2009. Without you the eGSSA branch would not exist. Thank you for your hard work, perseverance and co-operation.