

## NSFT 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2018 the Trust regained momentum despite limited human resources. It held its regular four meetings to review major projects and monitor operational matters. The number of trustees stood at six and usual meeting attendance was three, with two members now living far from Pietermaritzburg. Thanks are due to Shona Wallis for her generous provision of a meeting venue. After Phila Msimang's resignation as Administrator, the post was abolished in favour of outsourcing of book distribution to Michelle Bartlett at Ladybean Books. This proved successful and economical.

*Natalia*, now under the editorship of Debbie Whelan, appeared just after Easter 2018 and subsequent events suggested that issue 48 would also be delayed. One book was published during the year: *The People's Hospital*, Julie Parle and Vanessa Noble's history of Durban's McCord Hospital. Strong support from the McCord-Nixon Trust enabled a healthy print run of 200 and the MNT organised a very successful launch-cum-reunion at Killie Campbell Library in early April. This was the tenth monograph publication the Trust has published (or played a leading role). All of them bar one are available free on the website. As in 2017, a lack of organisational resources prevented a Book Day, but this has not been ruled out for the future.

A major change in approach to publication and sales continued to be effected. Primary delivery is free, online consistent with the Trust's public benefit organisation status. Print runs have been cut drastically to avoid long-term storage costs. And authors have become involved in sales based on an honour system. Softcover binding is now the norm to avoid unnecessary expenditure. All of these measures proved effective and towards the end of the year plans were being put in place to distribute free copies to local high school libraries. In a very positive move, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) accepted a donation of 200 copies of Bill Guest's history of the Agriculture Faculty for public relations purposes.

At the end of the year Bill Guest's *Stella Aurorae* volume 3, with a 2018 imprint, was at the printers. Incremental layout had begun of *Born out of Sorrow*, a collection of contributions on Pietermaritzburg under apartheid. Problems with authors blocked progress on two further titles; while one new publication proposal was accepted in principle.

The website was accessed consistently by an international audience and understandably reached peaks when subscribers were informed new material had been loaded. Visits ranged from 170 to 380 per month with an average of 220.

There was occasional communication with the Alan Paton Centre, but the Trust is no longer represented on its committee. The usual annual donation was made for accommodation of the Trust's book collections with an adjustment of timing to avoid problems associated with the UKZN's financial practices.

The Trust's financial position remained strong in spite of turbulence in financial markets. Its Investec holdings produced a satisfying trading account balance that suggested that the publications programme and *Natalia* were secure for the foreseeable future. An audit took place as usual at the end of the year. The Trust was compliant with all legal requirements.

Warm thanks are owed to all trustees for their support and interest in keeping the work of the Trust moving forward in line with its remit of 1851 to '[encourage] ... habits of study, investigation and research'. A special word of thanks is due to Pauline Hazelden at Hay & Scott for her efficient administrative support, especially regarding financial matters.

**Christopher Merrett, December 2018**