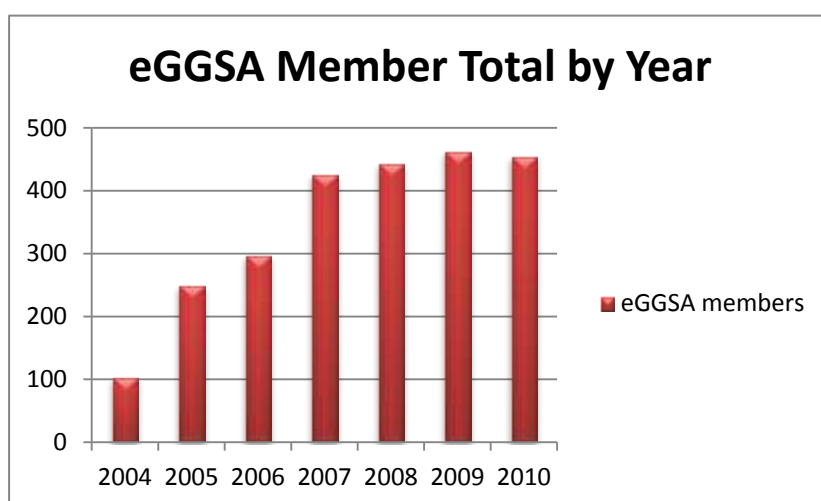


The eGGSA Branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa Annual Report – year ending 2010

Membership

Membership at the end of 2010 stood at 280 eGGSA branch members and 175 members of other branches who have subscribed to Genesis and the other eGGSA services. This is a slight drop on the previous year. The reason for the reduction is unknown, but it could be due to financial constraints.

The ratio of male to female members is pretty consistent over the years and stands currently at 251 male and 204 female members. The ratio of Afrikaans to English speakers is also much the same from year to year, currently 224 Afrikaans speaking members to 226 English speaking.



The great majority of our members, 354, are South African residents but we have substantial minorities from elsewhere in the world: 32 from Australia and New Zealand, 38 from Europe and 27 from North America.

The GSSA Voters Roll Project

To support the GSSA Voters Roll project, the eGGSA Branch was allocated the letter S, with 300 000+ names and details to transcribe. Our initial plan was to put the photographs on the web site for the transcribers to do their transcriptions from there but we had to re-think our strategy once the DVD of photographs arrived, and we had recovered from shock!

We gathered volunteers from everywhere; nobody with any interest in an S-surname was safe, nor indeed, family members. We also gave our part of the project a name, Project-S, so that people can more easily identify with us.

Six months on we have completed about 35% of the transcriptions. This is equivalent to approximately 110 000 names.

The ID-validity test, introduced rather late in the project, caused a bit of a hiccup but we overcame that. Some of our volunteers withdrew from the project, but the rest are typing away.

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 2010 we received 386 orders for document photographs via our web site. The vast majority of these document copies will be suitable for making available in our [eGGSA Document Library](#) on the web site once volunteers have captioned them. Volunteers for this particular job are wanted badly. I hope that during 2011 this project will be re-organized and many of the files we have in reserve will be moved to the public Documents section of the web site.

Bibles Project

This project was started in 2007 and has prospered fairly well. During 2010 several photographing projects were set on foot by various branches of the GSSA, notably Durban and Coastal at the Old Court Museum, Natal Midlands at the Msunduzi Voortrekker Museum and at Sinodale Centre, North West at the Potchefstroom Library, West Gauteng at the Africana Library Johannesburg, and eGGSA at the Cory Library and Albany Museum. None of these projects has as yet been completed, but we hope that during 2011 all will appear in the web site Bible Collection.

There have also been a number of 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. During 2010 the transcription of a number of Grahamstown Anglican parish registers was undertaken, as well as the Tulbagh NGK registers up to 1830. These transcriptions are nearing completion and a number of other transcriptions have been contributed by private individuals. For more detail please see [The eGGSA BDM project](#) on the web site.

1820 Settler Correspondence

Sue Mackay has donated her collection of correspondence by and about the 1820 Settlers preserved at the UK National Archives at Kew, England. These several thousand letters were transcribed by volunteers from the ZA-IB and ZA-EC Rootsweb mailing lists from digital photographs taken by Sue Mackay, Rowena Watrus and Tessa King at the UK National Archives, Kew. To all of these our grateful thanks are due for this invaluable archive.

Sue has also added her own research into the origins of these settlers in the UK using various sources that have recently become available online, such as the actual images of parish registers held at the London Metropolitan Archives, non-conformist registers at the National Archives at Kew (RG4), online parish registers at Medway (Kent) Council Archives Service, the London Gazette, from the original images now available on the Latter Day Saints web site, as well as from original images of Scottish old parish registers and Wiltshire parish records which she has personally researched.

This collection is not unique to the eGGSA web site but we have tried to devise a convenient format for accessing the material, relating one letter to another, and searching the whole. Users of this site have the option of browsing the names of the letter writers and following any links to post 1820 letters or additional information on that settler, or of searching all names mentioned in the correspondence by using the Search facility. [1820 Settler Correspondence](#)

Exhibitions - Promoting Genealogy

eGGSA once again worked together with the Western Cape branch to promote genealogy!

On 1 April we gave a cemetery talk to the Over Sixties Club in Rondebosch.

On 27 April we were at Hermanus for the Show Case of Hobbies

And in September we went to Oudsthoorn to take part in the Genealogy workshop held by the Dorpshuis Le Roux museum. A talk was given about the cemeteries and together with a group of the museum supporters we went the Sunday to photograph the Condor Street cemetery.

Stamouers.com Web Site

The Stamouers.com web site was created by André van Rensburg about ten years ago. When he found himself unable to continue to maintain it, André passed it into the trust of eGGSA for maintenance.

The web site as it exists requires specialist software and knowledge to update and therefore, during 2010, we have been working on a new version of the Stamouers.com web site with Johan Hefer as editor. The new web software will make it easier to add new entries and update current entries with any submitted information. The work is just about finished and the new web site should be launched in early 2011.

The web site attempts to provide genealogical and other information on all those immigrants who founded a family in South Africa. It is entirely dependent on contributions from those who have the required information. So, if you have research on a South African founding family, please submit your information for inclusion. All immigrants are eligible for inclusion including arrivals up to the late nineteenth century.

Johan Hefer, editor@stamouers.com

Publications – Genesis

During 2010 Genesis underwent a metamorphosis, in an attempt to give it a more genealogical and historical look. The front page now displays old family photographs.

The new column Japsnoet Juds gives readers the opportunity to short, interesting articles or links of genealogical value to farm. This column has many good and positive response elicited.

In the last quarter of 2010 the editor of the Newsletter, Gina Shepherd, resigned and the decision was taken to combine the Newsletter and Genesis in one publication. Genesis will, in future, be published ever two months.

We have been very to get two new team members - Wynand du Plessis and Leith Woodall. . They will be our proofreaders; Wynand for Afrikaans and Leith for English articles. Our editorial team now consists of five members.

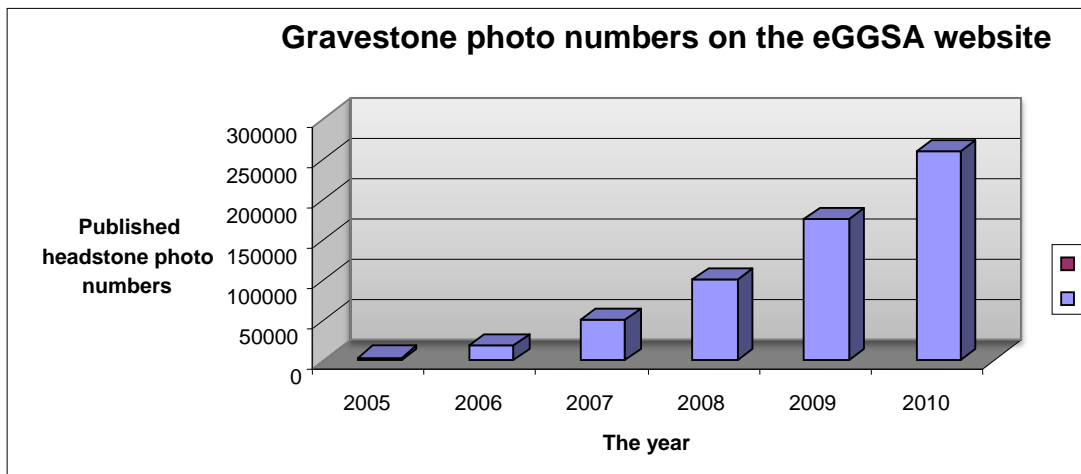
Contributions are not as numerous as we would like but among ourselves and the regular support and contributions from our members, we always manage to come up to the mark.

We can always do with more articles and snippets for publication and we would like to encourage our members to use this source to publish their research and news. The editor also hopes that all GSSA project leaders will send in regular reports of their progress.

The Gravestone Photograph Project

EVALUATING THE TARGETS WE SET FOR OUR PROJECT IN 2010.

Our original target was to increase the photograph numbers with 50 000 new photographs, to give us a total of 225 000 photographs by the end of December. This target was reached by the middle of May in 2010! The final photo count for 2010 was 258 594 photographs - a total of 83 594 new photographs.



Apart from the individual people contributing in 2010, we also had a number of GSSA branches who supported us during the year:

Western Cape

North West

Vaal Triangle (which included photographs from Northern Transvaal)

Natal Durban and Coastal

Free State

Natal Midlands

Our second goal was to continue working with the DVD Cemetery Recording project. Working together with this project has certainly made our Gravestone Photograph project stronger, although it has increased the workload for both the DVD and Photo project. The DVD project will provide the detailed statistics at the AGM.

The numbers change daily, but at least 60% of the eGGSA cemeteries are now appearing on the Cemetery Index with GPS coordinates. This is a vast improvement from 0% in 2009.

The DVD project donated Overview pictures to the Photo Project in April 2009. These pictures, of the various cemeteries on the DVD, had been collected over many years, before the days of digital cameras. 99% of these photographs can now be viewed on the eGGSA website. The shortfall came about because the odd cemetery picture was missed in the original upload and a couple of photographs did not want to open up on the original DVD. This will be corrected during 2011.

The eGGSA Branch also joined forces with other GSSA branches during 2010 to photograph cemeteries.

In October we teamed up with members of the Western Cape Branch to take over 5000 photographs of the Parys cemetery in Paarl.



Team members taking a break in the Paarl Cemetery

In December we met up with the Durban and Natal Coastal Branch and over 3500 photographs were taken of the gravestones in the Stellawood cemetery in Durban.



The only fun part of these outings is meeting the members from all the other branches- as for the rest it is all hard work!

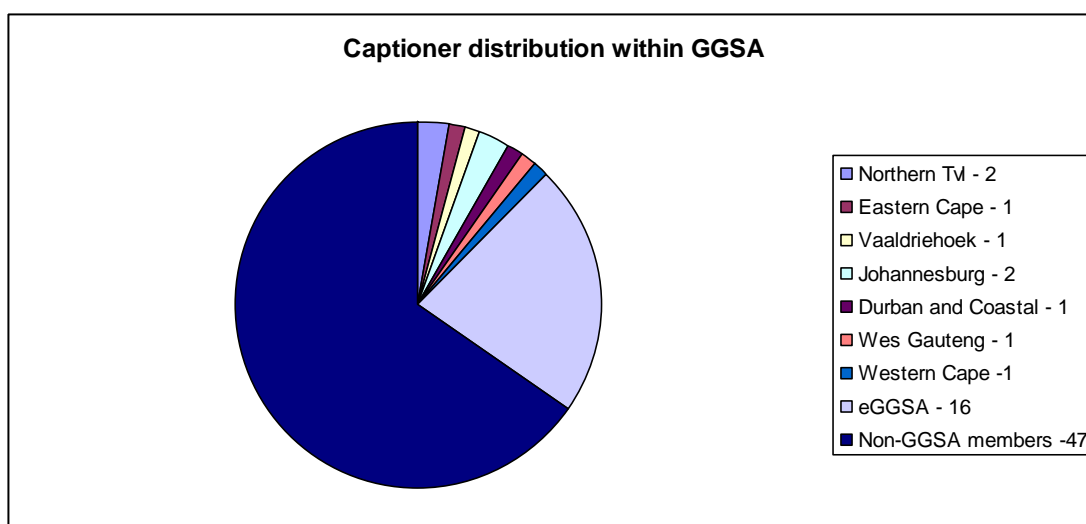
Team members at the Stellawood Cemetery in Durban. Going home time!

2. THE VOLUNTEERS

Without the volunteers our project would be nowhere! This includes all the people taking the photographs and the captioners labelling them on the web site.

We do not keep statistics of who among the contributors of pictures are GSSA members and who are not. A list with all the photo contributor names has been published in *Genesis*. But just by looking at the names on the GSSA member list, it would be fair to say that a very large number of our photographs come from non-GSSA members.

After calling for volunteers to help us with the captions in November, we now have 73 captioners on the books, of which only 26 are GSSA members.



The six volunteers (or movers) who assist the co-ordinator in uploading and moving the graves into the public area of the Gravestone Library, all have crucial roles. Not only are they keeping the photograph numbers up, but they are being trained to fulfil the tasks of the project co-ordinator.

These six volunteers spend many hours checking and moving gravestone pictures. Moving the pictures eats bandwidth, so many of them have had to upgrade their personal bandwidth accounts to accommodate our project.

Two of the six are eGGSA members, the other four are not GSSA members.

3. INTRODUCING OUR TARGETS FOR 2011

We are hoping to have a total of 350 000 photographs published on the web by the end of 2011. This will mean around 90 000 new photographs.

We also want to reduce the turnaround time for publishing the photographs onto the web to about 4 months (from receipt, through organising and captioning, to public Gravestone Library). Currently the turnaround time is about 5 months. Keep in mind that all the photographs are currently being optimised and uploaded in Canada, to which destination the post from South Africa takes about four weeks.

A more challenging obstacle we need to address is the last step of our process and that is 'opening the graves up to the public'. Our aim is to make public at least 10 000 grave photographs a month, instead of the current average of 5000. This will also help to reduce the backlog of grave photographs waiting for transfer.

Transcriptions - Passenger lists

eGGSA would like to announce a new project for 2011 which it is hoping to set in motion - the transcription of the old passenger lists. These passenger lists are housed at the Western Cape Archives, filed away in boxes and envelopes, not easily accessible to the public and we believe that by doing the transcriptions we will address the needs of many genealogists.

With the assistance of Petro-Coreejes Brink, we have approached the KAB, requesting their cooperation and permission. On our side we have appointed a project co-ordinator, and are hoping to commence with the project soon.

Thank you to both Petro and Hendrik for their support.

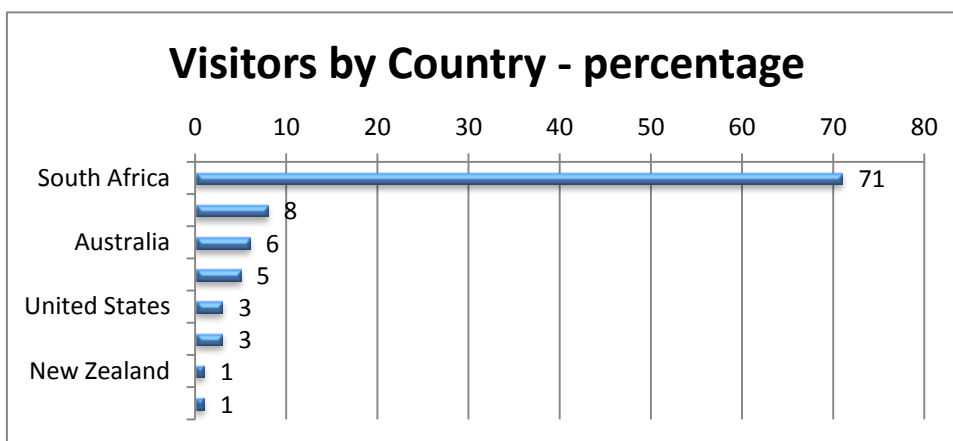
eGGSA Web Site

The eGGSA web site occupies about 40 Gigabytes of disk space and is housed on a dedicated server located in Chicago, USA. The vast majority of this disk space is taken up by our picture library consisting of Gravestones, Archive documents, Bibles, postcards and books.

The average number of visits (one session of variable duration by one user) is around 700 per day.

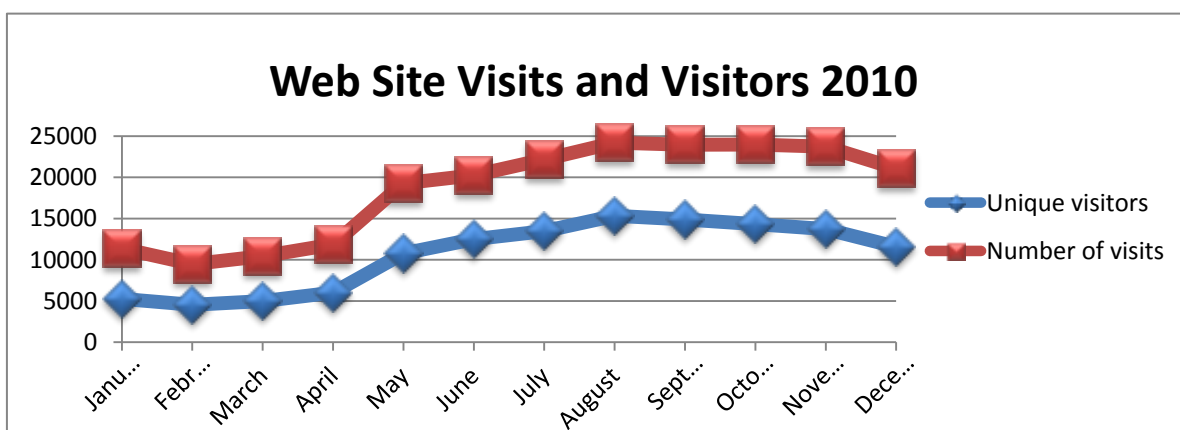
Most visits are to the Picture libraries.

By far the vast majority of visitors are accessing the site from South Africa (71%), next are Great Britain (8%), Australia (6%), Canada (5%), USA (3%), Netherlands (3%), New Zealand (1%) and Switzerland (1%).

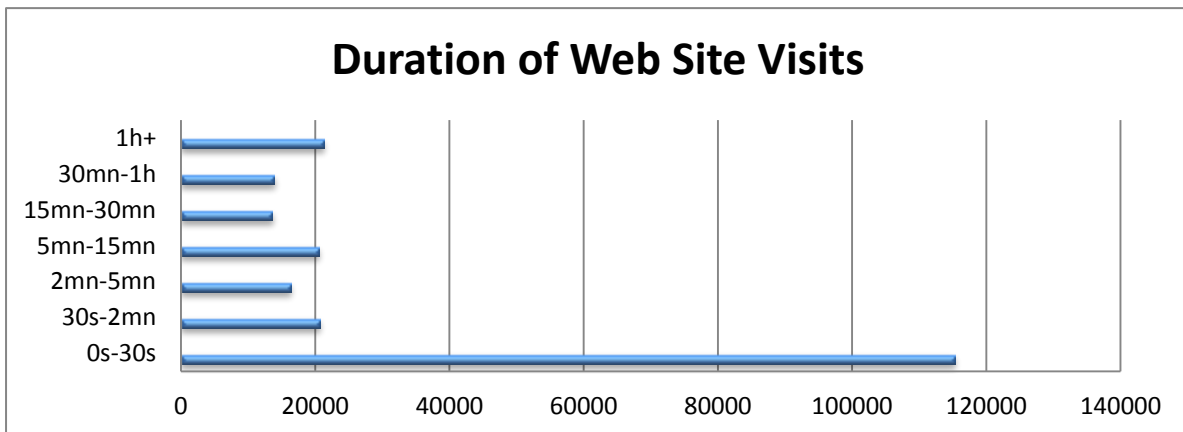


When looking at web site statistics, the important ones are the number of visitors and the number of visits. A visitor is you or me accessing the web site. A visit consists of one session of whatever duration where a visitor stays looking at the web site. During 2009 the eGGSA web site had a total of 127,405 visitors who made a total of 221,756 visits to the web site.

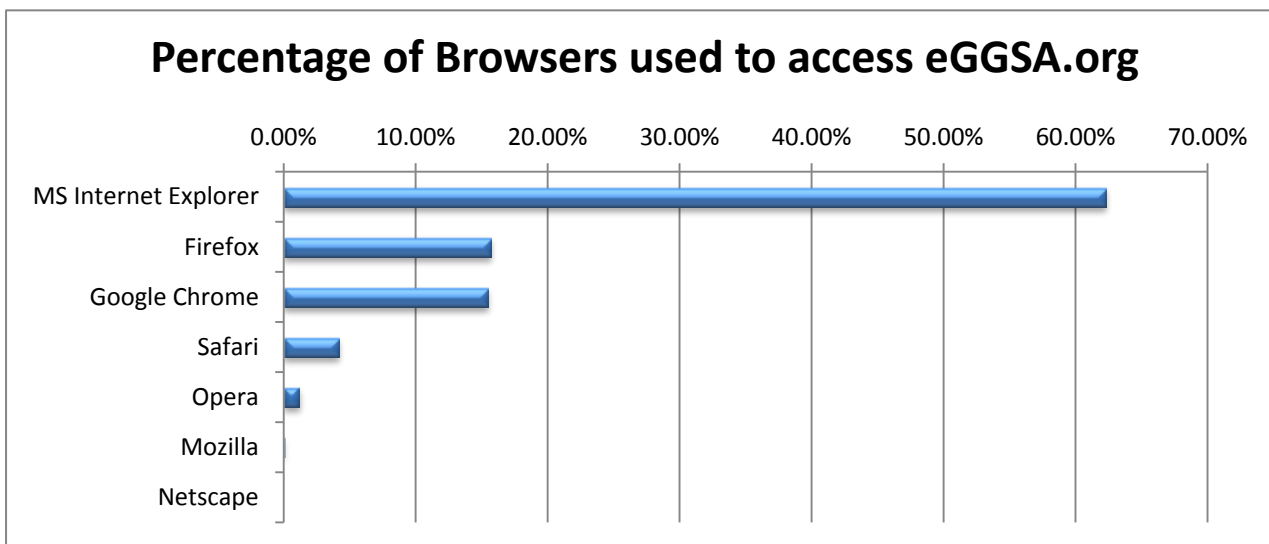
From the chart below it can be seen that the number of visitors and visits increased considerably during the year.



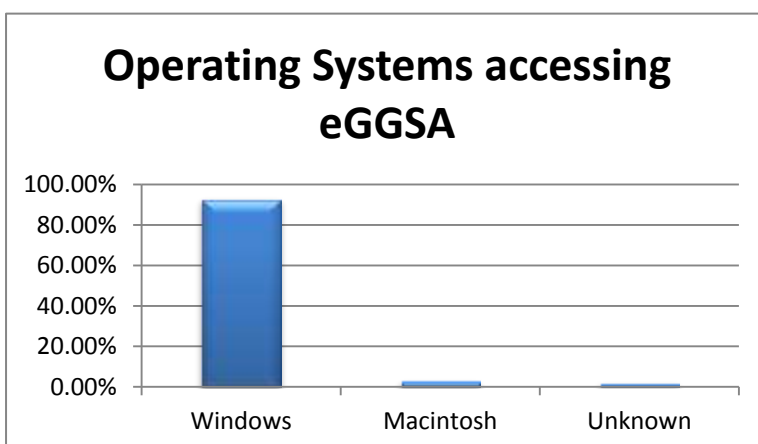
The duration of visits is very variable as can be seen from the chart below. One wonders about the large number of visits that lasted less than 30 seconds, but it is encouraging to see that at least a third of all visits last longer than 15 minutes.



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

Finances

The financial report covers the period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010. The books are still to be audited. The income of eGSSA declined somewhat during 2010 while expenses remained at approximately the same level.

Sale of GSSA and eGSSA Products:

GSSA products to the value of R36 060.00 were sold during 2010. The 10% commission on GSSA products has brought in a substantial amount.

eGSSA CD products to the value of R18 763.00 were sold. A large amount of stock was purchased with the result that a loss is reflected for 2010 book year. We do, however, have the stock.

Archive photos to the value of R31 928 were sold and we thank our photographers who made this possible.

It must be kept in mind that we purchase the majority of eGSSA products for resale at a 10% commission. In some cases we act as a retailer selling genealogy products of private individuals and they do the packing and shipping of the items. We also reimburse the archive photographers for their work done.

Web Site: The eGSSA web site cost R13 233.00 for the year. This is a very small increase to the 2009 cost. This is a small amount considering that the web site is the back bone of eGSSA.

Budget: The budget for 2011 is the same as for 2010 with provision made for additional expenditure provided for the web site and IT hard and software to maintain the quality of the web site.

Membership fees: It is proposed that no increase in eGSSA branch membership fees for 2012 need be considered.

Conclusion:

eGSSA has again demonstrated during 2010 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 we therefore 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.

Richard Ball, Chair and Technical Matters

Daan Hamman, Treasurer

Lynn Couperthwaite, Membership and Communications

Alta Griffiths, Gravestone Photo Project

Judi Meyer, Editor of Genesis

Johan Hefer, Editor of Stamouers.com