

Rosie's baby: a page to be on

The demise of the written word – at least on hard copy, is a worrying subject. Newspapers are reportedly struggling overseas, even The New York Times, and French president Sarkozy has made headlines by sponsoring newspapers – millions of euro's for the press, and lots of kudu's for him. I wonder if Obama is going to follow suit. And I hope something similar will happen locally. But it is not just about newspapers. At the recent Klein Karoo Kunstefees only three books were launched: AP Brink's “'n Vurk in die pad,” “In Limbo” by Reinet and Jackie Nagtegaal and the “Die Nuwe Kinderverseboek” compiled by Riana Scheepers and Suzette Kotzé-Myburgh. Book promotions at the festival have lamentably been scaled down. Still, there were other platforms like the Suidooster Kunstefees in Cape Town and the Woordfees in Stellenboch, with the Cape Town Book Fair to come. People want to meet authors, to identify with writers and because getting to know them better make their creations more real to the readers. Contact. That is the crux of the matter. However, all writers are not particularly extroverted and all readers do not have the means of travelling around meeting interesting creative people. And here the plot thickens: electronic media, the apparent enemy of paper-based media, is not really the evil usurper it is made out to be. On the contrary. In stead of isolating and making writers extinct, it can be utilised to at least bringing them to the readers' homes – in full colour, accompanied by interesting annotations, lists of publications, etc.

I am referring to the internet, and specifically to web pages. Here in the Boland (Stellenbosch) we have one such very attractive and useful web page, namely Rosie Breuer's StellenboschWriters.com, launched in 2004 and still going strong. Rosie, a children's book author who is adept in German, English and Afrikaans, has created the site on her own, initially with no cost to the authors and no outside funding. Today many of Wikipedia's articles are based on her texts, while much of the information to be found on her site is not available elsewhere - not everybody can be Googled yet. Authors presented on the site are those who live or have lived, work or have worked in Stellenbosch and who have had at least one books published. Rosie published a book, "Stellenbosch Writers" (2005), which was based on information gathered for the site. The book has sold quite well: only 12 are still available of the first edition numbering 300.

Rosie's initiative and constant input to keep the site going and growing deserves the highest praise – and I am not saying this on behalf of the 500 plus strong stable of authors, but because as Rosie has stated repeatedly: this is a one-woman-job meant to be a service to a community. And it is up to the community to recognize this effort and to support it. In doing so, Bolanders will bolster the walls keeping out literacy and help build the education our community needs. People need food for thought as well as food for their bodies – this is all about keeping body and soul together: balance, harmony, progress. What happens in Cape Town and Oudtshoorn may seem far away, but what happens in Stellenbosch in this case impacts on a thousand

readers and potential readers who have access to computers. Sometimes it is necessary to bring the mountain to Mohammed.

So, to all authors with a Stellenbosch connection, as well as the many bookworms educational hubs like Stellenbosch, Paarl and Wellington have helped on their way, I urge you to tap into something uplifting: click a button and turn a page.