

LLLkzn Annual Report 2015

Our first event after the AGM last year, was the very successful seminar, "Living off the Grid", organized by Ginny Porter. This attracted over a 100 attendees, which gave us a huge morale boost and the determination to carry on.

At our AGM last year we started our subscriber scheme. This helped ease our cash flow problem of how to pay our admin expenses in the lean months at the start of the year. We received about 30 subscribers last year, and hope for more this year. It works like this: Pay R100 before March 31st and you get a R20 reduction on each event you attend. Note, if you attend more than 5 events, you have got yourself a bargain! Furthermore, all the names of the subscribers are thrown into a hat and in April we have a lucky draw with the winner being allowed to attend all courses for the rest of the year, free of charge. Last Year Desi Halse was our lucky winner.

In March, we successfully organized two events about Sibudu, the archaeology site near Tongaat. This is about to be made a grade 1 national heritage site, and eventually a world heritage site. First there was an evening lecture at Ike's by Manuel Wells, one of the archaeologists from the team, attracting about 45 people. Manuel told us what the finds reveal about early humans who occupied the cave more than 77 thousand years ago. Then, on the following Saturday morning, a large group of about 50 went on a walk to the actual site led by one of LLL's members, Derek Nicholson. We listened to the lead archaeologist, Prof Nick Conard, tell us how they excavate. Since then a group of us have formed Friends of Sibudu in order to take forward further issues concerning the development of the site for education and tourism. If you want to know more about it, look up its website, www.sibudu.net, and join the FOS.

At the last AGM we made a plea for volunteers to assist with the running of some events. Our thanks to Charlotte Fuller (helped by Jabu Msomi) who volunteered to run the Savvy Seniors series of lectures on Saturday mornings. She organized and facilitated 3 successful seminars. Thanks also to Lyn Sumner who volunteered to run programmes around World War 1.

Finding suitable venues, both comfortable, well equipped and cheap, for LLLkzn events remains a challenge. Charlotte Fuller was

successful in being able to use the church hall at the Glenwood Christian School in Umbilo to present 3 successful and interesting “Savvy Senior Seminars” which were well attended.

The other Charlotte (me) identified a venue at the British Heritage centre in Glenwood which has proved most convenient and suitable for showing films on weekday mornings. We ran a 4 week series on the “Lost Kingdoms of Africa” which was well attended. This was followed by a 6 week series on World War 1, thanks to Lyn Sumner. This attracted many new faces as well as men. We continue to use the Musgrave Library room (in Glenwood Spar complex) for monthly TED talks. Rochelle linked us to Beth Shalom as the venue for a lecture on the Hebrew language of the Psalms by Prof Fisher.

Another Emeritus Professor who gave a LLLkzn lecture this year is Prof George Devenish. He helped us commemorate the 800 year anniversary of Magna Carta by telling us about the making of the South African constitution. This was held at UKZN in collaboration with the Department of Law. Retired professor Mike Kahn gave a most interesting illustrated talk on growing Bonsai. Three lectures have been made into DVDs – that of Manuel Wells, Profs Fisher and Prof Devenish. So if you want to borrow the DVDs kindly let us know.

Brendon Hatcher has continued with his popular IT courses of technical expertise, having presented 12 very affordable and expertly presented courses. He has just got back results from a survey of our members; so hopefully we will see his offerings successfully scheduled again soon.

In June we received the wonderful news that the Victor Daitz Foundation had responded positively to our application of December 2014 for funds(our coffers were then down to almost nil) by giving us a generous amount of R80000. Here are some of the financial benefits:

The effect on our programme was to make it easier for us to offer free or subsidized courses. Now we need to plan carefully with regard to what can be offered free and what needs to generate income. Let me give you my thoughts on this, as someone who has worked for many years in public education systems, with salary coming from the public fiscus, as well as a TEFL teacher working at the sharp end of teaching for fees – if you don’t have cash in hand you can’t enter the classroom. “ *Fees must fall*” sounds great – let’s de-commodify

education. Problem is – who is then going to pay the teachers and repair the classrooms ?

In a “free” system, this means most of the money comes from taxes and the government controls the system – and in countries with declining economies, this could mean less and less money available for teachers’ salaries, as happened in some post-colonial African countries. What then happens, with declining trust in the public schools and Universities, those families with money opt for the fee-paying schools and colleges, with the result that the under-resourced public schools decline further. It is important to preserve and strengthen institutions of social cohesion that run with multiple sources of money, like Universities, and cross-subsidize between rich and poor, fee-paying, grant-receivers, bursaries and so on

Now how does this apply to Lifelong Learning kzn ?

We ran LLL successfully for six and half years with no subsidies whatsoever, until, in July 2015, we were fortunate to receive a generous grant from the Victor Daitz Foundation.. How did we do that? By the fees that you pay for courses, on the voluntary input of the committee members, and on the underpaid part-time administrators

But it is not only a matter of covering costs. Some of our lecturers have to earn a living, and charge commercial rates for their presentations. Some lecturers from our local Universities are prepared to lecture for free because they know they are already paid from the fiscus. Other offerings are kept low because they are aimed at pensioners. We are always seeking out free or affordable venues. We need to retain this mixed finance model. We cannot move over to a grant-aided addiction which will encourage expectations that all lifelong learning should be free.

The Victor Daitz grant, however, did enable us to launch a project that had been suggested to us three years ago – a project to teach Music Staff Notation to primary school teachers. This was a 6 week course offered free of charge to attendees, together with the generous incentives of muffins and travel money. With the help of Barbara Trimfsyk, an experienced contract lecturer from UKZN music school, we recruited a Zulu-speaking Music graduand, Kwazi Buthelezi, to teach on 6 consecutive Sat mornings. We attracted about 7 primary school teachers per session. As a pilot project it has

been successful and we hope to continue offering this Music Notation course during 2016. We, unfortunately, have run into problems of finding a suitable venue.

Late in the year, we successfully organized an evening at the Alliance Francaise around the ideas of the economist, Thomas Piketty, on "The Economics of Inequality". One bonus of that venue is that Shaun, of Fusion Cookery, has now taken over the café there. So we hope for more collaboration at the Alliance Francaise in future.

Now comes thank you time:

First to Rochelle Puterman who this year took over the administration from Justine. Not only has she had to acquire new skills in using LLLkzn IT systems, but also do all sorts of logistical follow-up including preparing for this AGM. Also she volunteers her home every month as hostess for our committee meetings

Next - our committee, still only has about 6 people, and sometimes only 4. This is not enough to arrange a varied and full programme. The work is time consuming, involving not only discussing but also arranging the venue and lecturer. This cannot all be done by our part-time administrator alone. So we are calling for volunteers to assist us., however much you can. Every little bit helps. If you have a good idea for a lecture, workshop or course – help us find the lecturer and the venue. At the end of this report we will run through some ideas we have for the 2016 programme. If you like this programme, come and help us make it happen by joining the committee – elections will be held before we go for refreshments..