

## **DEFSA Presidents Report 2015 – 2017**

### **Presented at the DEFSA AGM 27 September 2017**

In this report, I will highlight the key tasks that the committee has been engaged with since the previous AGM held in September 2015. This report incorporates comments from Kate Chmela-Jones who was kind enough to send them to me. As you know Kate was the DEFSA President from Sept 2015 till May 2017 when she unfortunately stepped down. During her time in office Kate was a committed and active President who contributed to moving the organisation forward and we thank her for this.

### **Committee**

The DEFSA Management Committee consists of volunteers drawn from a number of public and private institutions. The 2015-2017 Committee consisted of Kate Chmela-Jones, Herman Botes, Helen Buhrs, Inge Economou, Rolf Gaede, Sue Giloi, Danelle Heenop, Bianca Le Cornu, Deidre Pretorius, Carmen Schaefer, Mike Swanepoel and Ivor Templar as well as Senate members Amanda Breytenbach and Thinus Mathee. Unfortunately, both Kate Chmela-Jones and Danelle Heenop resigned in 2017.

The 2015 incoming management committee had a number of outstanding issues from the previous period that were flagged as key for finalization during the 2015-2017 period. Amongst these were the finalisation of the DEFSA Trust, the streamlining of the banking system and the re-consideration of the duties of the Secretariat.

### **DEFSA trust**

Legal counsel was retained to assist in the setting up of the DEFSA Trust and the appointment of Trustees. Adrienne Viljoen, Roy Marcus and McLean Sibanda were approached and agreed to be on the DEFSA Trust. Although a great deal of work has been done and the three trustees assisted in providing all of the necessary documentation, the trust is yet to be officially registered with the Master of the Court. This occurred because of various communication and logistical delays in collecting and submitting all of the required documents, inefficiencies at the Master of the Court, as they lost certain documents, and ongoing changes to the trust laws. Given these difficulties, the Committee will re-consider the options available to them before continuing.

### **Secretariat**

A decision was made by the committee to do away with outside secretariat services and to have the position filled by a member of the Committee. Helen Buhrs volunteered and both Kate Chmela-Jones and myself would like to extend our thanks for all that she has achieved over the past two years. As Kate indicates in her report "Despite full time management commitments at Inscape Ms Buhrs took it upon herself to collect and archive years of DEFSA administrative documents, which are now available and continually updated on the members' website. A proposal developed in early 2016 between the President, the Secretariat and the webmaster (Ms Dianne Volek) attempted to address strategic issues related to the branding and marketing of DEFSA in order to ensure increased participation from a broader spectrum of design institutions in Southern Africa. Here, I would like to commend the dedication and commitment of both Ms Buhrs and Ms Volek who applied themselves admirably to the task at hand and managed to execute an updated DEFSA CI and implement a system for the DEFSA

website that enabled ease-of-use and online accessibility for both visitors and existing members especially in relation to collecting and uploading information pertaining to the biennial DEFSA conference. DEFSA membership (especially from private individuals and students) increased significantly during this time”.

In the Secretariat report you will see how Helen Buhrs has streamlined many of the DEFSA processes which make the day to day running of the organisation far more effective. In addition, she has ensured that documentation is kept and made available to the members and to future committee members.

## **Banking**

After some initial challenges the DEFSA bank account is now fully functional with a secure system that requires three signatories.

## **2015 Conference**

The theme of the international conference held in 2015 was Ethics and Accountability in design, do they matter? and the conference was hosted by MGI and VUT. Two international speakers Dr Yoko Akama from Australia and Dr Julian McDougall from the UK participated as keynote speakers and as workshop facilitators. The 2015 conference saw a solid growth in the number of abstracts submitted, papers presented and in the quality of the conference proceedings, edited by Amanda Breytenbach and Kate Chmela-Jones. Many of the DEFSA members were peer reviewers and I thank them for giving up their time to read and comment on the abstracts and papers. The conference remains the highlight of DEFSA's contribution to design education and its significance grows with each conference and related publication.

During the 2015-2017 period the DEFSA committee made the decision to retain much of its focus as an organization on the expansion and publication of the biennial DEFSA conference and proceedings as a means of contributing to the development of design research in the Southern African region. The benefit of the conference cannot be underestimated as the 2015 conference and related publication created the opportunity for approximately R1,800,000 in research funding for public institutions.

## **General**

Thinus Mathee, Amanda Breytenbach and Herman Botes attended the National Design Strategy Meeting. A database of design related organisations has been established which was positive to take away from the meeting.

A presentation by Lufuno Muthubi and Festus Masekwameng from Creative Mzansi called for a collaboration with DEFSA in the Mzansi festival to be held for three days at the end of October. Unfortunately, the festival did not materialize.

The DEFSA stationery was re-branded, printed and is being used for membership certificates and correspondence. We wish to thank Herman Botes for arranging this.

DEFSA established a social media profile on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. These are being used extensively for the 2017 Conference.

## Thanks

I would like to thank the following:

Dianne Volek who designs and manages the DEFSA website. I am sure that many of you have interacted with Dianne and she is always prompt, efficient and a pleasure to work with. The website has become the voice of DEFSA's communication with its members and stakeholders. Each year the usability improves and for the 2015 and 2017 conferences the online system enabled authors to submit abstracts and papers, and reviewers to review and comment. All of these essential for an organisation that draws interest from across Southern Africa and from around the world.

Herman Botes who has worked tirelessly on the 2017 Conference. He and his team from TUT have worked miracles and has achieved a truly spectacular result at this 2017 DEFSA conference. Full reporting on the conference will be done at the next AGM.

Helen Buhrs for her support, efficiency and passion which has translated into building the DEFSA profile and engaging more members.

The outgoing committee for their support, advice and contributions over the past two years.

Dr Sue Giloi