

14. STAFF

Probably the rank and file members do not realise how much labour goes into running an organisation like SAAFoST. In the 1960s, before the days of computers and photocopy machines in the offices, the secretaries (both national and branch) had to address notices or invoices and receipts by hand. Can you imagine today having to type notices on an old mechanical typewriter? Electric IBM typewriters in the 1980s were a great help and they could even type labels from memory.

It was only in the 1990s that electronic office machines were widely available and many of us could invest in our own computers with hard disks and floppy discs that could remember a membership register and type invoices, and labels almost automatically. There was a conference in Durban (probably 1989) where two branch secretaries were heard telling of the computers and printers provided by their employers and what they could do. SAAFoST was very fortunate to be born at a time when people were very generous with their time and, by and large, all the labour of running the organisation and its branches was provided free of charge.

However, come the 1980s and SAAFoST was growing to over 1 000 members. The first mention of payment for secretarial services is in 1983 when Sharon James in the offices of *Food Review*, was paid for secretarial services. Before that, however, SAAFoST paid *Food Review* a fee for sending the magazine to members, so that possibly included some payment for the secretarial services they provided.

For the first forty or so years of SAAFoST's history, secretarial and administrative services were largely provided by volunteers who, at times, used their subordinates and colleagues to assist with SAAFoST tasks often with the blessing and support of their employers. The Council held a series of strategic planning meetings and decided in 2000 that the workload had become more than could be provided by the willing volunteers and this, together with the desire for future expansion, needed permanent staff. An Executive Director post was established and advertised widely and several applications were received. Mr Owen Frisby was appointed and charged with the task of managing the future development together with the day to day activities of the association.

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Executive Director



The first full time Executive Director of SAAFoST was Owen Frisby who officially started work on 15 January 2002 from his home in Pretoria. He was a member of long standing and a well-proven provider of volunteer service, having joined the Northern Branch committee in 1976. His first objectives were to oversee the implementation of the recently adopted strategic

plan, to drive professionalism through the introduction of Custodian membership and set up an independent professional secretariat. It was also important to have an experienced spokesperson available for media liaison and to represent and promote the association, at all levels of government and, with NGOs, universities and the public. The first venture which Owen undertook was to organise an ingredients exhibition with parallel workshops, called "The SAAFoST Expo and Talk Shop" (the first one of which was held in October 2002 and subsequently in 2004 and 2006). These Expo & Talk Shops were intended for the years when there was no Biennial Congress. Since then, a number of workshops & symposia have been successfully organised by the Executive Director. The position of Executive Director and staff is unique in that they are the only people in the association whose sole obligation is to SAAFoST.

National Secretary

In 2003, with the need for SAAFoST to register for VAT, Maurice Kort's workload became excessive, despite support from a paid part-time membership assistant, so the search for a SAAFoST National Secretariat was initiated.

Van der Walt & Co in Randburg was found to be providing these services to a number of other NGOs or associations and they added SAAFoST to their clients in 2003. Having been used to the dedication and efficiency of Maurice who created extremely high standards which the new secretariat was unable to match, resulting in termination of the arrangement in 2008.

Turners Conferences and Conventions Pty Ltd, which had organised the 2001 and 2007 congresses in Durban with admirable efficiency, were a natural choice for the organisation of the 2010 IUFoST congress in Cape Town. In view of the good working relationship and their track record they were asked if they could provide secretarial, administrative and website services to SAAFoST to which they agreed and commenced duties in 2008.

Membership Secretary

SAAFoST's greatest asset is its members and, therefore, the association decided to appoint a membership development officer to address the wide spectrum of membership needs. Beatrix van der Linde (working from home) was appointed in January 2006 and, subsequently, Irene Burke replaced her in September 2007. Irene started to work from an office in the CSIR complex in Pretoria. Her main function being to maintain the accuracy of membership records, handle all membership questions, particularly those pertaining to non-payment of membership fees and generally to promote and facilitate membership. She assists with a number of other projects including bursary and award administration and attends branch and council meetings.