

President's report Swiss Society AGM 2016

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Dare I say it: We have finished our very last Helvetia magazine and therefore our four year term is up! Even though I have been waiting for this moment, I feel a

twinge of sadness as it completes another chapter in my book of life.

With a very good conscience, I'm proud to say that we have achieved a lot while the Swiss Society was managed by the Auckland Club. Our very first project was the new swiss.org website – it was a joint effort between all the clubs and well worth the trouble. It's smart looking and yet simple to navigate. Thank you to the secretaries and everyone who updates it on a regular basis and of course a big thank you to David Latham who still maintains and supports it.

A year later we introduced our online database, which is a great tool for all the secretaries as it makes managing our addresses a lot easier. After all, if the addresses are messy, the Helvetia magazines won't arrive.

Three years ago we elected two new delegates for the Swiss Abroad - Peter Ehrler and Peter Canziani. They both regularly attend the ASO conferences held in Switzerland. Peter Ehrler has been doing a tremendous job supplying us with very interesting articles and he has really put himself out there to fight the current pension system in New Zealand. Fingers crossed, we will see some parliamentary initiatives in the near future.

A couple of years ago, we welcomed the new Swiss Ambassador David Vogelsanger, who is currently the Patron of our Swiss Society. I am very pleased to say that we have built a much tighter relationship with the Embassy over the last 4 years. They in turn have much closer ties to all the Swiss clubs in New Zealand, which is really good news. It's very positive to now regularly have newsworthy Embassy articles included in our Helvetia magazine.

After quite a lot of discussions and negotiations, 2015 saw the launch of the OCEANIA – the regional news insert of the Swiss Revue. Now the regional news from Australia and New Zealand are combined and located inside the

printed version of the "Swiss Revue" and on a separate link in the online version. It still looks to me as all our articles get cropped a lot due to space but we keep fighting for more.

The biggest and main part of the Swiss Society though is our wonderful Helvetia magazine, which is now, believe it or not, in its 82nd year! I was personally very excited to cover the 80th anniversary of our Helvetia and we published a really special edition in celebration of the magazine's birthday. I spent many hours at the Turnbull National Library archives in Wellington to research and photograph interesting articles from way back. In every issue that year, we published old articles to reminisce about the past. The highlight though was the complete and first ever Helvetia edition from October 1935, which we printed in its full length in our 80th anniversary edition.

It took a few issues to really get the wheels greased and sort out all the nitty gritty about printers, mailing houses and publishing, but we eventually had it down pat. Even so, we spent hours and hours coming up with ideas, writing articles, requesting interviews, getting permission for photos to use and so on and so fourth... we lived and breathed the Helvetia magazine and even needed to schedule holidays around its deadlines. Dare I say, if you haven't been part of the Helvetia team, you have no idea how much work it is to put it all together as professionally as we did. We are very proud of our interesting, high standard magazine that we produced for the Swiss living in New Zealand over the last four years.

We have had an amazing Helvetia team which consists of a dozen wonderful people contributing articles on a regular basis. I would like to acknowledge and thank Susie Wood, Nelly Steinemann, Alex Beskid-Jung, Adrian Blaser and Family, Edith Hess, Melissa Lanz, Luzia Sauer, Trudi Fill-Weidmann, Victoria Egli, the Secretaries of all the Swiss clubs, the Embassy in Wellington and Peter Ehrler, Delegate of the Swiss Abroad, who all regularly contribute articles and reports for our Helvetia. There are also a few others who have submitted articles every now and then, which is much appreciated. We couldn't have done it without such an outstanding team effort.

Our six proof readers also played a rather important and time consuming

part, taking hours of reading through the draft Helvetia magazine with a fine tooth comb to eliminate those little mistakes, errors and typos, before the final version goes off to the printers. Thank you proof readers!

The Helvetia wouldn't look as professional as it does without a great publisher like Peter Deutsche. He does the entire layout for us and supports the whole team in a great way. Thanks very much Peter.

I would also like to thank our Swiss Society committee members Nelly Steinemann, our Secretary, Carmen Fitz-Gorden our Treasurer, Ernst Lanz our Riflemaster, Susie Wood and Marcel Ruedi very much for their contributions to the Swiss Society over the last four years.

As you can see, we have been very busy during our term and had countless hilarious meetings. They started off with tea and coffee – towards the end we didn't even bother boiling the kettle anymore and went straight to the wine. It was a fantastic experience all up and well worth the effort.

It will be a pleasure to hand over the reins to the Hamilton Club who has, over the last few months, come up to speed with how it's all done and what's involved. They are so excited to start putting pen to paper and I'm sure they will leave their own mark within the Swiss community in New Zealand.

My successor Hans Vetsch will no doubt do an outstanding job leading the new Hamilton team and I'm looking forward to once again reading a Helvetia that I didn't produce – I will definitely look at it with different eyes now - that's for sure.

That leaves me to thank all of you for the trust and support you have given me during my term as President for the Swiss Society. I really enjoyed working so closely with the Swiss community but the most special aspect of it all was the amount of amazing and inspiring people I have met on the way.

Thank you very much.

Yours,
Tanja Latham-Zurbrugg

President of the Swiss Society of
New Zealand until 5th June 2016