

Editorial

This issue of *Natalia* looks much the same as usual, albeit on a sparse diet, but it represents a turning point. As noted in a fiftieth anniversary celebratory essay, the original vision of Ron Brown and Colin Webb, sustained by subsequent editors, proved both durable and valuable.¹ In short, the contents of *Natalia* reflect any aspect of the history of KwaZulu-Natal (Natal and Zululand as they once were) in contributions of varying length from a short note to full-length article. And the contributors range from academics to journalists and history enthusiasts. What they have in common is engaged writing free of meaningless academic jargon. *Natalia*'s publisher is a public benefit organisation so its entire contents are available *gratis* on its website. There is no pay wall as is the case with an increasing number of journals. It's part of the commons.

However, finding the people committed to this approach to research and publication is increasingly difficult. The only reward for involvement in *Natalia* is personal satisfaction, a seemingly sparse commodity these days. In January 2024 a meeting took place with staff of the Natal Archives which seemed to hold considerable promise, but time will tell. There is also a question mark over the printing of *Natalia*. Issue 52 sold the princely sum of five copies.

Whatever the logistics and processes, the main objective of the trustees of the Natal Society Foundation Trust is to remain faithful to the legacy of Brown, Webb and those who shared their aims, and worked hard to maintain them. For the short term that legacy is secure. Beyond that is up to the community committed to documenting the history of this region.

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1 Christopher Merrett, 'Natalia at 50: an overview and appreciation', *Natalia* 50 (2020), pp. 59–63.