



ESF (Esperantic Studies Foundation)

Annual Report for 2012

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The year 2012 brought increasing focus and clarity to ESF's ongoing transformation from an organization relying almost exclusively on investment income to fund external projects, to one actively engaged in outreach, fundraising, and the development of its own long-term projects and user communities. Not all of this transformation was readily visible; it took place in discussions and decisions by the Board of Directors, in new approaches to planning and budgeting, and in behind-the-scenes preparations for a major project launch in 2013. Outwardly unspectacular, the year was nonetheless something of a watershed for the Foundation.

Many signs of growth are apparent in this report, from increasing participation in ESF's flagship educational projects to greater involvement of the Advisory Board to a record fundraising campaign. It should be noted, too, that this growth is taking place as ESF goes through a major transition in governance, in areas ranging from investment management to the position of President. As a result, there is an increasingly urgent need for more pro-active approaches to recruiting and training new Board members and volunteers. The old ESF could be run effectively by quite a small group of people, primarily from academia; the new ESF requires a wide range of skills, backgrounds and aptitudes and many different kinds of contributions, from occasional or monthly donations, through volunteer communities for large-scale activities such as tutoring and translation, to creative challenges in communicating, teaching, organizing, and guiding research and development.

If you are reading this report, you may well be the kind of person we need to help develop ESF further. Please consider how you might contribute. While we have already succeeded in attracting an outstanding group of people to work with us in various roles, much more remains to be done. We hope that you will find plenty to inspire you in the following pages, along with glimpses of how your energy and resources might help us to go farther. After all, our common purpose, in the formulation adopted by the Board last July, is a broad and ambitious one: "to further the understanding and practice of linguistic justice in a multicultural world." It is going to take a lot of us to make this a reality that changes lives on a global scale.

Mark Fettes

President

May 21, 2013

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

[ESF-enrete & lernu! \(www.lernu.net\)](http://www.lernu.net)

Following the decision in 2011 to invest in a major redesign of lernu.net, ESF's highly successful language learning website, 2012 was marked by steady progress towards a launch in 2013. In the early months of the year, steps were taken to simplify the existing site by removing outdated materials and condensing many of the explanatory pages. The registration system and course structure were also simplified. These changes undoubtedly contributed to significant growth in the active Lernu community over the course of the year, as illustrated by the charts included in Appendix 1.

Meanwhile, work continued throughout the year on the programming and content for the new Lernu site. The most labor-intensive of these projects proved to be the development of a new course calibrated to the Common European Reference Framework for languages, by an international team of writers, teachers and illustrators. The new site will also host an extensive multimedia library known as the Mediateko, to which many volunteers contributed content during the year. In another enhancement aimed at beginning and intermediate users, the Lernu reference grammar, Wennergren's *Detala Gramatiko*, is being translated into the site's three dozen user languages. Meanwhile, a new technical platform has been created that will enable users to access a wide and growing range of services for the Lernu community.

Lernu's continued growth is posing new challenges and opportunities for ESF. In mid-year the Board decided to proceed with the creation of a wholly-owned subsidiary non-profit corporation, ESF-enrete, to manage the costs and revenue associated with the site and guide its long-term development. As CEO of the new entity the Board appointed Erin Piateski, an MIT-educated mechanical engineer who has been actively involved with Lernu since before its launch in 2002.

Among the other projects to be managed by ESF-enrete is the Esperanto news and information portal aktuale.info, whose development was funded by ESF prior to the current Lernu renewal project. This site has essentially been put on ice pending the Lernu relaunch, reflecting the demands being placed on the team of collaborators involved in both projects. Recruitment, training, and support of volunteers is an increasingly important priority in this area of ESF's work. Efforts to recruit a new volunteer coordinator in 2012 were unsuccessful, although a volunteer strategy was drafted and the first steps taken to put it into practice.

[edukado.net \(www.edukado.net\)](http://www.edukado.net)

The second major web community supported by ESF, edukado.net, was originally aimed at teachers of Esperanto, but is increasingly becoming involved in the direct provision of educational content for Esperanto speakers. This enlargement of the site's mission is reflected in the growth of its membership, which reached 2772 from 114 countries by the end of 2012 and passed the 3000-member mark in April 2013. Nearly 1.3 million page views were registered in 2012.

The new online training course for Esperanto teachers, RITE, saw its first full year of use in 2012, with 31 students from 20 countries. RITE is located in a part of the website called the *Klerigejo*, which now hosts a variety of short courses and single lectures using the same interface, covering topics in Esperanto studies, interlinguistics, language policy and related fields. Older parts of the site remain in active use: the *Katalogo*, which lists and reviews nearly 500 books, DVDs and other materials for teaching and learning Esperanto; a searchable, edited collection of more than 750 downloadable teaching materials; an up-to-date registry of

Esperanto courses around the world; a searchable database of nearly 300 university projects and theses on Esperanto; a collection of some 200 educational videos; and so on.

The greatest innovation introduced by edukado.net in 2012 was the first World Esperanto Exam Day, on June 9, when 360 people at 29 testing sites in 17 countries took one of the accredited tests within the Common European Reference Framework for Languages. The Framework has become the most widely used international standard for testing linguistic competence; some years ago, ESF funded the development of the Esperanto standards recognized by the Hungarian language testing authority ITK, and edukado.net has played a central role in their dissemination and use. The World Exam Day marked the most ambitious coordinated project yet undertaken by the site.

ESF's principal role in edukado.net is to provide a monthly stipend for its editor, Katalin Kovats, who has led the project since its inception in 2001. In mid-2012, conversations began about the possible integration of edukado.net with ESF's new subsidiary, ESF-enrete (see above). Although closer collaboration between lernu.net and edukado.net is clearly desirable, it was agreed that the two projects will remain separately managed for the time being, while steps are taken to increase revenue from the edukado.net community and look for a greater investment in the site from leading Esperanto organizations.

[NASK \(North American Esperanto Institute\) \(www.esperanto.org/nask\)](http://www.esperanto.org/nask)

ESF's flagship educational program in North America continued to develop away from its traditional three-week university format towards a shorter and more mobile program. Following a successful experiment with a seven-day format at the University of California San Diego in 2011, it was decided to hold the 2012 program over the eight days following the US Esperanto convention in Dallas, Texas (June 25-July 4). This proved popular, with enrollment increasing to 31 students from six countries and 13 US states. There were more students in the under-19 age group than usual (six), and Spanish-speaking countries were well represented (Argentina, Mexico, Puerto Rico).

The team of instructors included Spomenka Štimec (Croatia), Tim Westover (USA) and Birke Dockhorn (Germany), with contributions from renowned grammarian Bertilo Wennergren (Sweden). The varied extracurricular program was organized by Hoss Firooznia (USA), who also edited the course newsletter *NASKa Fasko*. The facilities provided by the University of Texas in Dallas were excellent, although the extreme heat rendered outside activities impractical.

The success of the 2012 event has encouraged ESF to try a similar format in 2013, when NASK will take place at William Peace University in Raleigh, North Carolina immediately prior to the US Esperanto convention. The Board is also pursuing a number of ideas for advertising the event more widely and associating it with online talks and seminars throughout the year. The first such initiative, a NASK-related video series coordinated by Board member Grant Goodall, made its debut on YouTube ("ESF-kanalo") in February 2013.

[Interlinguistics Certificate Program](#)

2012 marked the 10th year of ESF's support for students in the Interlinguistics certificate program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. This two-year non-residential program involves short, intensive on-site study sessions in February and September. Courses offered this year included:

- General morphology and syntax (Michael Farris)
- Esperanto grammar (Ilona Koutny)
- Esperanto literature between the wars (Lidia Ligeza, Tomasz Chmielik)
- Communication and cultural norms (Ilona Koutny)
- Interlinguistics (Věra Barandovská)
- Post-war Esperanto literature (István Ertl)
- Semantics and morphology (Michael Farris)
- Esperanto syntax (Ilona Koutny).

The sessions also included a rich cultural program.

At the beginning of the year, 21 students from 11 countries (Brazil, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Ukraine and the USA) were enrolled in the program. Fourteen began the second year of their studies in September 2012.

The Esperanto "Access to Language Education" Award

Since 2004, ESF has sponsored an annual award for an outstanding language learning website characterized by ease and range of access, versatility, and breadth. Inspired by the success of Lernu, the award has become a fixture at CALICO, the major North American conference on computer-assisted language learning. In 2012, as in most previous years, the award was presented in person by Board member Derek Roff. On this occasion it was decided to give two awards rather than one: to the Macedonian Language E-Learning Center in North Carolina (<http://macedonianlanguage.org/>) and to the University of Kansas Collaborative Digital Spanish Project "Acceso" (<http://www2.ku.edu/~spanish/acceso/>).

Documentary Film Project: The Universal Language

Sam Green's 30-minute documentary on Esperanto, *The Universal Language*, premiered at film festivals in 2011, with the DVD version (including subtitles in 19 languages) launched at the end of that year. It has been well received, both in the United States and internationally. ESF provided a grant to Mr. Green for production of the film, as well as an interest-free loan for production of the DVD. The film is available for sale at www.esperantodocumentary.com (\$4.99 for a digital download, \$20 for a DVD with subtitles available in 19 languages) or from the book service of the World Esperanto Association, katalogo.uea.org.

Interlinguistics Support Fund

This fund is intended to provide small grants for publications, conferences, and similar activities, and is administered by an international three-person committee independently of the ESF Board. In 2012 Osmo Buller (Finland/Netherlands) stepped down from the committee and was replaced by Nikola Rašić (Croatia/Netherlands); Detlev Blanke (Germany) and Christer Kiselman (Sweden) continued to serve. Only two grants were made in this year: 1000 EUR to Federico Gobbo (Italy) for his research in interlinguistics, and \$1000 towards the publication of the proceedings of a conference on "Language and the United Nations" organized in May by the New York office of the Universal Esperanto Association.

The lack of good proposals to the Fund in recent years is a source of concern, highlighting the need for ESF to invest strategically in a long-term research agenda – an issue to be taken up by the Board in 2013.

Research Grants

No significant new research grants were awarded in 2012, but two long-standing projects reached a significant milestone.

One such landmark was the publication of a 78-page booklet coming out of the Springboard to Languages Project, a five-year study of the effects of introducing Esperanto in selected primary schools in the UK. The booklet, *Esperanto as a starter language for child second-language learners in the primary school*, was edited by doctoral researcher Angela Tellier and presents the theories and evidence behind the claim that a “propaedeutic” language such as Esperanto may have a positive and lasting effect on the learning of other languages. ESF provided funding for the external evaluation of the Springboard project, to which Board member Timothy Reagan also contributed his expertise, and has offered to help distribute the booklet in North America when a new or electronic edition is available.

On July 4, 2012, French scholar Christian Lavarenne defended his thesis on the ethical basis of Esperanto at the University of Paris 13, under the direction of Prof. Jean-Claude Lescure. ESF had earlier provided Dr. Lavarenne with a grant to support his documentary research for the thesis, titled “*Espéranto : Son idée interne dans ses origines et quelques-unes de ses expressions et manifestations (aide ou obstacle à la diffusion de la langue ?)*” [Esperanto: Origins of its internal idea together with a few of its expressions and manifestations (aid or hindrance to the spread of the language?)]. The thesis was passed unanimously, receiving excellent reviews from the examining committee.

Conferences

Former president Humphrey Tonkin was the main organizer of a symposium on “Language and the United Nations” on May 1, 2012, in New York. While not directly involved, ESF has provided financial support to the local office of the Universal Esperanto Association, which hosted the event in cooperation with the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems, and the scholarly journal *Language Problems and Language Planning*. Two other Board members, Bonnie Fonseca-Greber and Timothy Reagan, also took part. The symposium was announced as “a review and exploration of how languages affect the work of the United Nations family” and it brought together a wide range of contributions. Among the nearly 100 people attending were ambassadors, United Nations officials, academics, and NGO representatives.

President Mark Fettes guided a session on ESF’s activities at the World Esperanto Congress in Hanoi, Vietnam, July 28-August 4, 2012.

Newsletter Information for Interlinguists

As in previous years, ESF provided a small grant to support publication of the hardcopy version of the newsletter *Informilo por Interlingvistoj (Ipl)*, published by the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems under the editorship of Detlev Blanke. ESF also hosts the newsletter’s web archive: <http://www.esperantic.org/en/communications/ipi/archive>.



The Wikitrans Project

At the University of Southern Denmark, the machine translation project Wikitrans, which provides automatic, high-quality Esperanto translations from English-language Wikipedia pages, continued to develop throughout 2012 with the help of a 32-kernel processor array donated by ESF. An editing interface enables human editors to correct the translated pages, which retain the HTML formatting and preserve as much of the Wikipedia syntax as possible; the result can be copied and posted as a new article in the Esperanto Wikipedia. The project has occasioned much discussion in the Esperanto Wikipedia community; as of early 2013, plans were underway for a training seminar on its systematic use.



OPERATIONS

Administration

Joel Amis completed his second full year as ESF's part-time administrator, working an average of 50 hours/month. He worked closely with the Board's Operations Committee, which met weekly by phone for most of the year. His responsibilities included organizing and documenting meetings, ensuring implementation of Board decisions, keeping track of expenditures and revenue, managing the website, and writing and issuing press releases. In the second half of the year he was also actively involved with fundraising.

Following the election of Anna Bennett as Treasurer in 2011, the Board reviewed its accounting and investment practices, leading to some significant changes in 2012. On the recommendation of a consultant, the Board shifted the management of ESF's investments from a broker-managed account to a self-directed account consisting of a number of Exchange-Traded Funds (both with TD Ameritrade). This arrangement preserves ESF's long-standing commitment to a diverse and secure investment portfolio while reducing the costs of managing that portfolio to near zero. The Board also switched accountants from a firm in Victoria, BC to one in Boise, Idaho, in order to facilitate communication with the new Treasurer.

A significant bequest to ESF by Brian Kaneen (Canada), while still awaiting the settling of the estate's affairs at year's end, led the Board to initiate the founding of a Canadian sister organization. The purposes of ESF Canada are essentially identical with those of the US foundation, and recognition of the organization's charitable status has been requested from Revenue Canada. The extra workload associated with a second organization will be more than outweighed, it is hoped, by the ability to issue charitable tax receipts to Canadian donors.

Following the Board retreat in Montreal in July, Yevgeniya Amis was hired as a part-time Development Officer to coordinate ESF's fundraising and communications strategy. Her initial months in the position culminated in a highly successful fundraising campaign in December that brought in more than \$13,000 in donations, many from new donors.

The Board

A significant transition process got underway in April, when Humphrey Tonkin stepped down from his position as President. Tonkin has been on the Board since ESF was established in 1968, and has overseen its period of greatest growth. He remains on the Board as a member at large, and continues to contribute actively to Board discussions and initiatives.

As Tonkin's successor, the Board elected Mark Fettes, who has worked closely with Tonkin throughout his time on the Board. No new Board members were added. Derek Roff was elected Vice-President, joining Grant Goodall in that role. Anna Bennett and Bonnie Fonseca-Greber remained on the Board as Treasurer and Secretary respectively, along with Board members Geoffrey Greatrex and Wally Du Temple.

One Board member resigned. Timothy Reagan, a former Executive Director of ESF, stepped down in preparation for his new job as Dean of a new graduate school of education at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan. Reagan will continue to serve on ESF's Advisory Board; he has recently also been named as the new Managing Editor of *Language Problems and Language Planning*, replacing Tonkin in that role.

The Board held monthly teleconferences throughout the year. From July 9-11 it met face-to-face in its annual retreat, this time in Montreal. This meeting focused on a number of strategic issues confronting ESF, including an articulation of the Foundation's central purpose that could guide its communication strategy with a variety of audiences. As one outcome of those discussions, the Board adopted the following Statement of Purpose, replacing the previous vision and mission statements:

ESF works to further the understanding and practice of linguistic justice in a multicultural world. We aim to develop and support excellence in scholarship, education, and interlingual communication. Our priorities and values are shaped through engagement with the worldwide community of Esperanto speakers, as well as with researchers, educators and activists in many language-related fields.

As noted under "Administration," the day-to-day management of ESF was delegated by the Board to its Operations Committee, consisting of Fettes, Tonkin, Bennett, Du Temple and Roff. Erin Piatetski was included in these meetings following her appointment as CEO of ESF's web projects subsidiary ESF-enrete.

Advisory Board

ESF continued to expand and develop its Advisory Board in 2012 by the appointment of three additional members with strengths in various fields.

From academia, Drs. Esther Schor (Princeton) and Dr. Sho Konishi (Oxford) both bring a broad set of scholarly interests in which Esperanto plays a significant role. Dr. Schor is a poet and literary historian who is currently working on a cultural history of the Esperanto movement; Dr. Konishi has published on a broad range of themes in Japanese and global history, from agriculture, art and aesthetics, science, to world order, revolution, anarchism, entomology, and religious thought and practice.

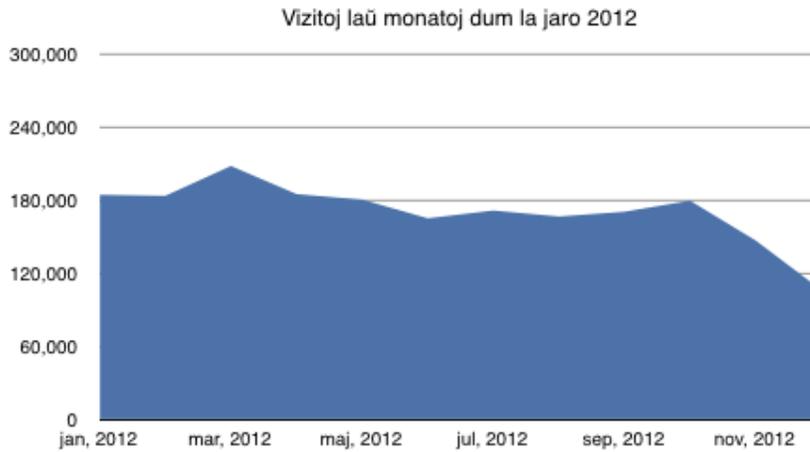
In a different vein, the appointment of Martin Schäffer (Germany/Mexico) to the Advisory Board reflects ESF's commitment to broadening access to high-quality resources and opportunities for teaching and learning Esperanto. Mr. Schäffer is a key leader in the expansion of Esperanto teaching in Central America and Mexico, and is expected to contribute to the ongoing development of NASK, lernu.net, and ESF's other initiatives in global education.

Two Advisory Board members, François Grin and Jonathan Pool, contributed to the Montreal retreat in a session dedicated to ESF's research agenda. Many Advisory Board members responded to a subsequent letter from Humphrey Tonkin asking for their perspectives on current issues and domains of inquiry relevant to ESF. These ideas were a valuable stimulus to Board discussions and have provided a basis for the development of ESF's research agenda in 2013.

APPENDIX 1: The activity of lernu.net in 2012

Statistiko pri lernu! por la jaro 2012

1. Vizitoj

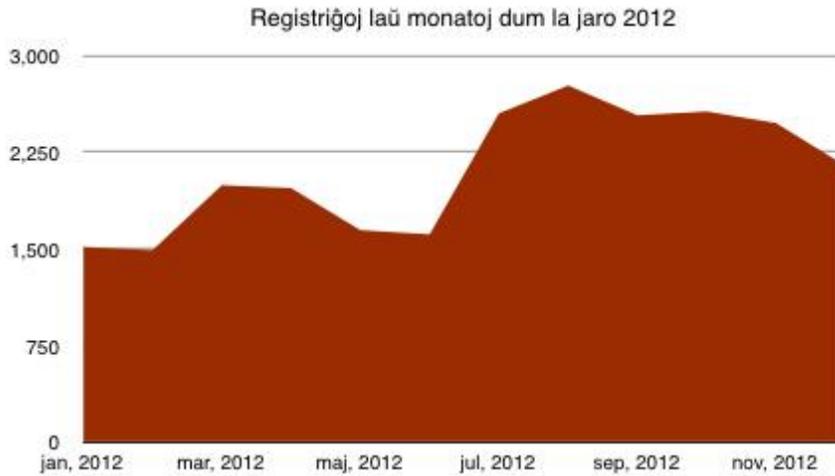


Entute dum la jaro 2012 lernu! vizitis **2 043 304** personoj,
kiuj trarigardis **54 770 441** paĝojn.



Detala statistiko pri vizitoj laŭ monatoj troveblas ĉe:
http://lernu.net/pri_lernu/statistiko/vizitantoj_monate.php

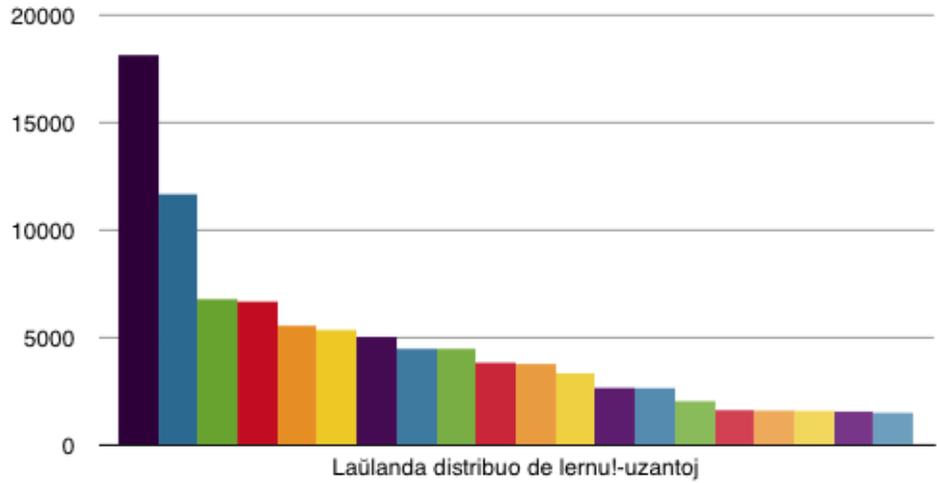
2. Registrîoj



Entute dum la jaro 2012 ĉe lernu! registrîgis **25 235** personoj.



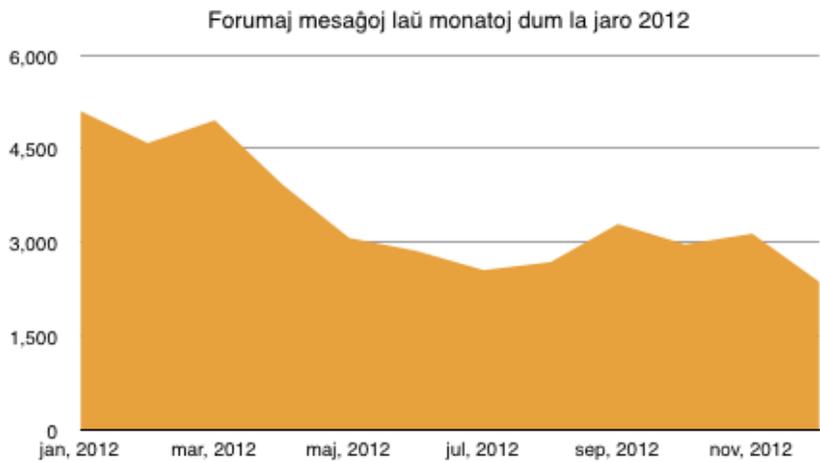
Detala statistiko pri registrîoj dum la jaro 2012 troveblas ĉe:
http://lernu.net/pri_lernu/statistiko/uzantoj_monate.php?jaro=2012

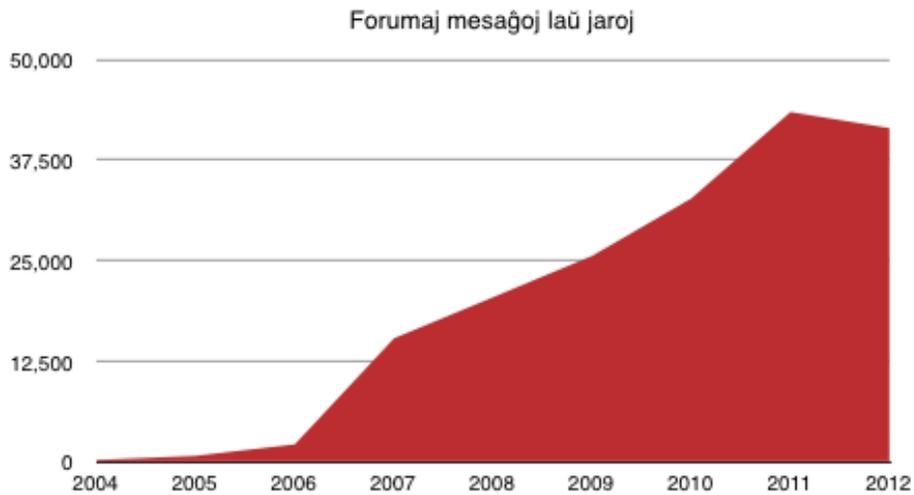


lernu! uzantoj loĝas en **224** diversaj landoj.

Detala statistiko pri lernu!-uzantoj laŭ landoj troveblas ĉe:
http://lernu.net/pri_lernu/statistiko/lernu_landoj.php

3. Forumoj





Detala statistiko pri forumaj mesaĝoj troveblas ĉe:
http://lemu.net/pri_lemu/statistiko/lemu_forumoj.php

4. Kursoj

