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# Esperantic Studies Foundation Annual Report for 2011

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## President's letter

Decisions made in 2010 have allowed the Foundation to move in new directions in 2011 by making a significant investment in efforts to expand the web presence of Esperanto – to embrace not only the learning and teaching of the language, but also the engagement of active speakers of Esperanto in a wide range of social and promotional activities. The Foundation's goal is not only to provide funding for a number of new initiatives in this field, but also to direct that funding in such a fashion that it will lead to self-sufficiency and even the generation of re-investable surpluses. Meanwhile, web activity is increasing by leaps and bounds, not only generated by ESF-funded activities but also following in the wake of what appears to be spontaneous and accelerating international interest. In short, this is an exciting and challenging time for Esperanto itself.

At the same time, a growing interest in the study of aspects of planned languages and interlinguistics is perceptible as well. Less clear is the role that ESF can and should be playing in this academic development. One of the challenges in 2012 will be to move beyond web-based activity to rediscover other activities in other scholarly and pedagogical areas. With more resources, the Foundation could do so much more – and development efforts aimed at raising additional funds have become a high priority. They will undoubtedly form an important part of ESF's planning retreat in Montreal in July 2012.

Humphrey Tonkin President



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## **PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

### ESF-enrete & lernu! (www.lernu.net)

ESF's language learning website lernu.net reached a milestone in 2011, registering its 100,000<sup>th</sup> user in May. Over the following months, that number climbed to 114,000. Now accessible in thirty languages, Lernu offers the most comprehensive online environment for learning Esperanto worldwide. Yet with several years having passed since the last major upgrade, a rethinking of the site's purpose and future had become increasingly urgent.

Over the first half of 2011, ESF vice-president Mark Fettes coordinated a long-term planning process with key Lernu volunteers and programmers that culminated in a formal proposal to the Board of Directors in June. In brief, the proposal charted a course to transform Lernu into a full-fledged online community whose users would have access to a wider range of tools for communicating, collaborating, buying and selling, sharing ideas and materials, and participating in the broader Esperanto movement. The project entails a substantial investment in the initial phases, but is geared towards a steady increase in revenue through advertising, premium user fees, a percentage of financial transactions, sales and donations. In the medium term, the goal is self-sufficiency, generating enough revenue to finance ongoing maintenance and upgrading of a family of websites linked by a common user platform. In the longer term, the project is envisioned to generate a surplus that can be used to expand ESF's other activities.

On the basis of feedback from the Board discussion in June, some important aspects of the proposal were developed in greater detail, and a revised version was approved by the Board in September. Development is guided by a core project team led by Jevgenij Gaus, Peter Baláž and Erin Piateski, with Mark Fettes and Derek Roff providing liaison with the ESF Board of Directors.

The number of visits to Lernu rose steadily throughout the year, from 157,500 in January 2011 to 207,000 in March 2012. The number of pages visited per month has almost doubled, from around 3.5 million in January 2011 to almost 6 million in March 2012. Analytics indicate that visitors to the site are also using it more intensively.

In 2011, another successful convention of creators and users of Lernu took place: the fourth session of Summer Esperanto Studies (SES) in Nitra (Slovakia), with 191



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Website www.esperantic.org participants from 28 countries. SES 2012 will once again be held in Nitra, Slovakia (July 21st-29<sup>th</sup>), and various educational and cultural activities are planned: classes (five levels), exams, excursions, lectures, crafts, sports, work groups, concerts, films etc.

### Lingvohelpilo (lingvohelpilo.ikso.net)

More than two years of research and development led by Danish computational linguist Eckhard Bick, in collaboration with members of E@I, including Bertilo Wennergren and Sonja Petrović Lundberg, culminated in 2010 in the beta testing phase of an automated Esperanto grammar checker, Lingvohelpilo. The software will not only check texts for possible errors, but will also suggest solutions and provide explanations for grammar choices. The project was inspired by the needs of Lernu learners and language tutors, and was developed on the basis of extensive corpus analysis and Wennergren's prior work on a concise modern grammar of Esperanto for Lernu. The next step is to integrate Lingvohelpilo with the language tutor interface in Lernu, and to collect data on typical learner errors to enable its ongoing refinement.

With the help of a travel grant from ESF, two of the project researchers, Bick and Petrović Lundberg, presented papers on their work at the annual conference of the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO), May 2011 in Victoria, British Columbia.

### edukado.net (www.edukado.net)

Edukado.net, an initiative of ESF, was developed as a global instructional resource site for teachers and learners of Esperanto. The site is now in its third iteration, having been redesigned and reconstructed (by Yevgeniy Gaus) in 2010 with the aid of financial contributions from users. ESF funding assisted in editorial work and in the compilation of data for new elements, among them a bibliography of dissertations relating to Esperanto and interlinguistics. An international team of educators and programmers has expanded edukado.net to include an interactive catalog of approx. 450 publications related to the teaching of Esperanto, a database of more than 700 downloadable resources (for example, different types of exercises at various language skill levels, tests, and sound files) contributed by participating educators. The site now (2011) also includes RITE, a training site for teachers with a collection of on-line course material consisting of 100 study units in seven broad fields. Its goal is to improve teaching methodology using both pre-programmed material and also the active support of



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Website www.esperantic.org experts in the field through distance learning. It requires an ongoing and intensive commitment by participants. So far, 20 students are enrolled.

The site's "reading room" contains a rich collection of articles related to pedagogy and teaching methods. Edukado.net also includes a calendar of courses, a list of schools where Esperanto is taught, and a "workshop" where colleagues can exchange ideas, course materials, and lesson plans. The correspondence service is also popular for those seeking contacts with Esperanto speakers from other countries and/or cultures. There is a notice board, a discussion forum, and a service for providing responses to questions about methodology or grammar. Several additional elements are planned for 2012.

Edukado.net cooperates with the Universal Esperanto Association and has become the designated agent for the conducting of examinations using the Common European Framework of Reference (http://edukado.net/ekzamenoj/ker).

Edukado.net has a 2000-member "community" whose participants (currently from 108 countries) can request notification about newly published materials, maintaining current knowledge of available resources. Edukado.net also maintains a high profile in Esperanto meetings and activities. At international meetings and congresses the team of edukado.net regularly teaches popular language courses at various levels. Dr. Katalin Kováts, a native of Hungary resident in the Netherlands, directs the site.

On average, the site receives about 400 visitors a day, with between 2000 and 3000 pages visited. The most frequently visited pages are those containing teaching materials (20,000 downloads in the past year).

### NASK (North American Esperanto Institute) (www.esperanto.org/nask)

ESF has been supporting this unique immersion program since 1998 and it has become a core educational priority for the foundation. NASK's 2011 session took place in July at the University of California San Diego – the fifth year of its return to the West Coast after several years in Brattleboro, Vermont. Because of difficulties attracting students for a three week program and the rising costs of for-credit courses, the institute decided to try a shortened non-credit session in 2011, namely an eight-day program with seven days of instruction at three levels: post-beginner, intermediate and advanced. The program included morning class sessions and afternoon and evening programs. The



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Website www.esperantic.org program enrolled 23 students. The students along with the program staff represented ten different U.S. states and six other countries. This helped provide a truly international atmosphere.

ESF's underwriting of the program (\$10,000) allowed the institute to offer reduced rates for students and teachers and cover all additional costs not covered by student fees. Five students received additional scholarship help (\$2,211.50) from the Esperanto-USA NASK Fund. The institute's administrator is Ellen M. Eddy, to whom the Foundation is particularly grateful for her continued service.

The NASK program is an example of an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto, with a specific North American focus. With its new non-credit status, NASK no longer needs to be tied to a single location and in 2012 it will migrate to Dallas, Texas, the location of the annual convention of Esperanto-USA. In future years it may continue to move with the convention city.

### Esperanto Aktuale (aktuale.info)

Completion of this comprehensive informational site has been delayed because of pressure of activities in other areas, but work is continuing.

### Interlinguistics Certificate Program

ESF continued to provide scholarship support for students enrolled in the Interlinguistics certificate program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. Now in its thirteenth year, the two-year non-residential program involves short, intensive study sessions twice yearly.

The academic year 2011-2012 saw the enrollment of 19 students from 10 countries (five from Brazil, three each from Hungary and Switzerland, two from Poland, and one each from France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, and USA. They were greeted on their arrival by the vice-dean of the Modern Philology Faculty Professor Jerzy Kaliszan.

Faculty members this year included the director of the program, Professor Ilona Koutny, Professor John C. Wells of University College London, and Drs. Vera Barandovská-Frank (Germany), Aleksander Melnikov (Russia), Lidia Ligeza (Poland), and Tomasz Chmielik (Poland).



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Website www.esperantic.org Four students completing the program were examined, along with ten students in the one-year teacher training program organized as a cooperative effort between the University of Poznan and the International League of Esperanto Teachers, with assistance from edukado.net.

The interlinguistics session was followed by an Interlinguistics Symposium (22-23 September, 2011), also under the auspices of the University. Entitled "Interlinguistics and Esperanto Studies and the Challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," this was the second such symposium: the first was organized in 2008. Approximately fifty people from fifteen countries participated in the symposium, which consisted of some twenty lectures grouped in four sections (methodology, linguistics, Esperanto movement, literature).

### **Documentary Film Project: The Universal Language**

In 2006 ESF provided limited funding to support a documentary film project on Esperanto produced by Sam Green, whose earlier documentary *The Weather Underground* was nominated for an Academy Award. A second grant was awarded in 2007. Mr. Green and his team visited the 2006 World Esperanto Congress in Florence and the 2007 Congress in Yokohama. *Utopia in Four Movements*, the first of two planned documentaries, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. The second documentary, *The Universal Language*, premiered in 2011 and has been well received, both in the United States and internationally. <u>www.esperantodocumentary.com/</u>

### Interlinguistics Support Fund

This fund was established, under the leadership of Detlev Blanke (Germany), in 2007 to provide small grants for publications, conferences, and similar activities. The sum of \$7,000 was approved for this fund in 2011. Proposals are reviewed and recommended by a three-person committee consisting of Dr. Blanke, Dr. Christer Kiselman (Sweden) and Mr. Osmo Buller (Netherlands). A grant in 2008 to Alexander Korzhenkov (Russia) for his biography of Zamenhof helped bring about its publication in 2009, to much critical acclaim. An abridged English-language version can be read on the ESF website at <u>http://www.esperantic.org/en/communications/articles</u>.



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Website www.esperantic.org Grants made in 2011 were as follows:

- For development of a course on interlinguistics and Esperanto studies, to Frederico Gobbo, University of Insubria, Italy
- For publication of *Sprachraum Europa Alles Englisch oder …?* a volume edited by Ines-Andrea Busch-Lauer and Sabine Fiedler (University of Leipzig), published in Germany by Frank und Timme, to Sabine Fiedler
- For historical research, to Marian Vochin
- For publication work, Eldonejo Espero
- For an Esperanto Symposium, to Interkultura Centro Herzberg (Germany)
- For library support, to CDELI, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland (Claude Gacond)
- For publication of the proceedings of the Sarajevo Round Table on "The European Union, linguistic and cultural aspects yesterday, today, tomorrow, to the Esperanto League of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **Research Awards**

No new research awards were made under this program in 2011, though several earlier awards supported research that continues to produce new material. One such fruit of the program is the book *Loĝi en homaj lingvoj* by Indian linguist and philosopher Probal Dasgupta (Mondial, 2011). An English-language version of the book has subsequently appeared as *Inhabiting Human Languages: the Substantivist Visualization* (Samskriti & Indian Council of Philosophical Research).

### Conferences

(1) In February, ESF once again organized a session on Esperanto literature at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900. Following the conference, ESF arranged a seminar on Esperanto literature for speakers of the language, beginning on the afternoon of the final day of the conference and extending into the following day. The seminar was led by Ulrich Becker, poet, Tim Westover, short story writer, and Duncan Charters and Humphrey Tonkin, scholars of Esperanto literature. Some twenty people participated, most of them from the region.

(2) ESF continues to fund an award presented at the annual conference of CALICO (Computer-Assisted Language Instruction).

(3) ESF provided partial funding for a symposium at the University of Copenhagen on "Language Policy and Language Rights in Education and Scientific Communication" organized by the International League of Esperanto Teachers. Some 65 participants from fifteen or more countries heard presentations from Professors Karsten Fledelius



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Website www.esperantic.org and Frans Gregersen, of the University of Copenhagen, Professor Robert Phillipson, of the Copenhagen Business School, Professors Lászlo Marácz and Wim Jansen of the University of Amsterdam, and numerous others.

### Newsletter Information for Interlinguists

The Foundation continues to support publication of the hardcopy version of the newsletter *Informilo por Interlingvistoj (IpI)*, published by CED under the editorship of Detlev Blanke (a web version appears on the ESF web pages: http://www.esperantic.org/en/communications/ipi/archive).

### The Wikitrans Project

In early 2011, ESF provided a \$10,000 grant to enable the purchase of a parallel computing network in support of the work of Dr. Eckhard Bick of the University of Southern Denmark. Dr. Bick, who also led the Lingvohelpilo project, is responsible for the machine translation project Wikitrans, which provides automatic Esperanto translations from English-language Wikipedia pages. The additional processing speed has reduced the time for translation of the complete English-language Wikipedia from nine months to ten days, allowing the Esperanto version to remain more-or-less up-to-date. Bick has also created a 1 Gb corpus of English-language texts for use in testing the translation software.

## **OPERATIONS**

### Administration

In 2011 Joel Amis completed his first year as administrator of the Foundation. Joel has regularized our meeting schedule, improved our contacts with the scholarly community and with the Esperanto-speaking community, and updated our financial management and other essential administrative functions.



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### The Board

At the beginning of the year, board membership consisted of Wallace du Temple (Treasurer), Mark Fettes (V. P.), Geoffrey Greatrex, Bonnie Fonseca-Greber (Sec.), Grant Goodall (V. P), Timothy Reagan, Derek Roff, and Humphrey Tonkin (Pres.). In the course of the year, we were pleased to welcome Anna M. Bennett, of Boise, Idaho, as our new Treasurer, replacing Wallace du Temple, who remains a member of the board.

### **Operations Committee**

An Operations Committee was established by Board action in May 2008, and is in telephone contact on a regular weekly basis with Joel Amis, who administers the finances of the foundation and conducts other administrative business. He, in turn, works closely with the foundation's Treasurer, Anna Bennett, to manage accounts payable and receivable and the organization's financial reporting requirements. The current membership of the Operations Committee is Anna Bennett, Wallace DuTemple, Mark Fettes, Derek Roff, and Humphrey Tonkin.

### **Advisory Board**

An advisory board provides occasional advice and counsel on the work of the Foundation. In 2011 Lee Miller (Columbia, Missouri) and Normand Fleury (Montreal, Canada) were added as members

### **Banking and Investments**

In 2011, the Foundation's account at the Commerce Bank of Washington was closed and banking business was transferred to TD Bank in New York, which is now also handling the Foundation's investment portfolio.



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## PROSPECTS

Thanks to the devotion of its board and other collaborators, and thanks to the financial support that it receives from many sources, the Foundation is moving ahead with its work with much energy. Indeed, it is limited only by limitations of human and financial resources. Able to move more quickly and more nimbly than membership-based organizations and educational institutions, it is continuing to pioneer new approaches to the organizing and networking of Esperanto enthusiasts across the world – most of them young, energetic, and willing to get involved. If the Foundation's traditional activities are receiving relatively less attention, steps should be made to remedy that situation, not by redividing a finite pie, but by bringing about expansion on both fronts, through imagination, hard work, and wise decision-making.



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## Appendix: The Foundation's Advisory Board

Ghuzal Badamshina, Ph.D. Independent Scholar, Author. Areas of Interest: multimedia non-fiction narratives; latest neuroscience findings in multilinguality and human translation processes; nomadism in its current practices and forms; cultural diplomacy, science diplomacy; the diverse phenomena of jazz influences beyond the music idiom.

Duncan Charters, Ph.D. Professor of Foreign Languages, Principia College. Areas of interest: Spanish language and literature, teaching culture and listening comprehension, developing proficiency in language skills, and using technology in teaching.

Probal Dasgupta, Ph.D. Professor of Linguistics, Indian Statistical Institute; President, Universal Esperanto Association.

John Edwards, Ph.D. Professor of Psychology, St. Francis Xavier University. Areas of interest: social psychology of language; language and group identity.

Alvino Fantini, Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics, SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont. Areas of interest: language education, intercultural communication.

Normand Fleury, arboriculture and horticulture technician, graduated from Algonquin Technical College in Ottawa (in horticulture and landscape planning), followed by two years of training in Europe. He was a co-founder of the Quebec Esperanto Society (1982) and a lead organizer of the Pan-American Esperanto Congress in Montreal in 2008.

François Grin, Ph.D. Professor of Economics, University of Geneva, Switzerland. Areas of interest: language economics, education economics and policy evaluation in these areas.

David K. Jordan, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of California San Diego. His academic interests center in cultural and psychological anthropology, sociolinguistics, and the cross-cultural study of religion. Regional interests focus on Chinese society, especially in Taiwan, with a secondary interest in pre-Columbian Mexico.



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#### **Advisory Board**

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Website www.esperantic.org Katalin Kovats, Ph.D. Language educator, director of the program edukado.net, holds a doctorate in Esperanto and applied linguistics from Eötvos Lórand University, Budapest, and now lives in the Netherlands.

Lee Miller, after a career as a manager with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, became certified and began working full time as an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter. He is an expert in Esperanto and has for a number of years helped to coordinate the North American Esperanto Institute.

Jonathan Pool, Ph.D. President of Utilika Foundation & Co-Founder of ESF. Areas of interest: universal interactivity; obstacles to human-human, human-machine and machine-mediated human communication and collaboration arising from the diversity and limitations of languages.

Ian Richmond, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus, Université Sainte-Anne. Areas of interest: second language learning, computer-assisted language learning, literary studies, translation.

Klaus Schubert, Ph.D. Professor at Universität Hildesheim, Germany; specializes in preparation of technical translators and specialists in international communication. Particular interest in technical translation and machine translation.

Nancy Schweda Nicholson, Ph.D. Professor, Dept. of Linguistics & Cognitive Science, University of Delaware. Areas of interest: sociolinguistics, language planning, language and the law, court interpretation, interpretation theory and practice.