

Esperantic Studies Foundation President's Report 2004

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The past year was a very productive one for ESF. The Foundation better defined its mission and vision for the future and proved to have one of its most active years in terms of lending guidance and/or financial support to a broad range of interlinguistic projects. ESF's new mission statement reads as follows: "The Esperantic Studies Foundation promotes research and teaching on Esperanto and on related issues of interlingual communication, especially in the context of higher education in North America." To achieve this mission, the directors of ESF have established the following four strategic priorities for the foundation:

1. Improve the visibility and prestige of Esperanto as a research topic and teaching subject in the North American scholarly community;
2. Help to focus attention and academic resources on the study of interlingual communication, including but not limited to Esperanto;
3. Foster an intellectual community of North American teachers and researchers in higher education who can contribute to both of these objectives;
4. Continue to expand the operational capacity of ESF itself.

Operating within this framework, the foundation was able to support several noteworthy projects which included the expansion of a number of innovative websites focused on interlingual learning and teaching; the continued development and expansion of an electronic corpus of nearly five million words of Esperanto texts; support for a number of innovative Esperanto teaching initiatives; the issuance of grants for compelling interlingual research projects; as well as the development of a multi-featured administrative portal for the foundation that will enable it to expand its operational capabilities. Overall, 2004 saw the foundation achieving all of its goals for the year. ESF has set an ambitious agenda for itself in 2005 and we look forward to capitalizing on the momentum established in 2004.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

EDUCATION

lernu! (www.lernu.net)

The free, web-based learning environment "lernu!", whose development was initiated by ESF, came online in December 2002, and by September 2004 had attracted roughly 9,500 registered users and 42,000 site visitors. Lernu's development in 2004 focused on redesigning its website architecture to accommodate greater numbers of concurrent users. Improvements were also made to site security and many of the unique multimedia teaching and entertainment features. Near the close of 2004, the ESF Board of Directors resolved to commission an independent research evaluation of the Lernu technology

system. This evaluation will be conducted in 2005 and will be focused on assessing the site's effectiveness as a teaching and learning tool as well as comparing its design and approach with other Internet-based language learning tools. The results of this independent review may be featured in future issues of this newsletter. Lernu continues to expand its user base at an impressive rate and we look forward to its gaining greater market awareness in 2005.

edukado.net (www.edukado.net)

The teaching support site "edukado.net", continued to increase both its range of materials and its community of users over the course of the year. In addition, 2004 saw the much of the site programming updated and enhanced to better accommodate a growing user base. Edukado.net provides reviews of over 160 published textbooks and other teaching materials, and now offers over 300 exercises, games, tests and other classroom materials formerly unavailable to Esperanto teachers. The edukado.net team is also actively involved in promoting the site's resources worldwide. The group attended the 2004 World Esperanto Congress in Beijing, China in an effort to increase Asian awareness and usage of the site.

Interkulturo (www.interkulturo.net)

Interkulturo was initially conceived to support intercultural learning among classrooms in different countries and continents using Esperanto as a bridge language. In its initial phase, the project established 97 classes in 28 countries around the world and has brought together more than 2000 students between the ages of 4 and 18. In 2003, ESF supported the piloting of a new phase of the program, involving the redesign of its web-based "virtual school" environment and its expansion into less formal educational settings. The project was presented at international conferences on intercultural learning in Finland and Italy and has received support from a variety of organizations including the Council of Europe and European Commission as well as ESF. In 2004, ESF continued its support of the project by providing financial resources to assist with the expansion of the project to enlist participants from new schools and countries throughout the world. Part of the support was also used to update and enhance the Interkulturo web portal for increased global usage.

Summer Esperanto Institute (NASK)

(www.esperanto.org/nask)

The 35th North America Summer Esperanto Institute (NASK) was again held in July at the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont. The faculty for 2004 included Dr. Duncan Charters (USA), Lee Miller (USA) and Dr. Katalin Kovats (HUN). The NASK curriculum features a three level program of study which emphasizes the active use of Esperanto in intercultural communication, and the creative application of the language in literature, theatre and song. The 2004 Institute was held from July 7 - 23. A special seminar for Esperanto teachers featuring the most modern instructional methods in teaching languages was also offered. Individuals interested in learning more

about NASK or enrolling for the 2005 session are invited to visit the NASK website. Additional information is provided elsewhere in this newsletter.

Berkeley Student Program

Last year marked the sixth year of ESF support for the student-taught Esperanto course at the University of California at Berkeley. This free program continues to thrive and is led by a new instructor, Mr. Josh Brandt-Young. ESF support provides funds for teaching materials as well as a modest scholarship for the teachers.

Interlinguistics Certificate Program

ESF continued to provide scholarship support in 2004 for students enrolled in the Interlinguistics certificate program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. Awardees come from Russia, Germany, Lithuania, France and Iran.

INTERLINGUISTIC RESEARCH

Esperanto Corpus (<http://www.ikso.net/%7Ebterilo/tekstaro/>)

ESF continued to support the development of the Esperanto research corpus in 2004. By year's end, the corpus had grown from two million words at the end of 2003 to approximately five million words, encoded following the guidelines of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). ESF plans to continue supporting the expansion of the corpus and has set a target of ten million words as the next phase in the project's development.

Nancy Nicholson Proposal

ESF recently approved a research grant to Dr. Nancy Nicholson for an investigation of linguistic human rights at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and language policy and planning in multinational judicial systems. The research project will commence in spring 2005 and be concluded by summer 2006. The results will likely be published as a monograph in 2006.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Hodler Library

In 2004, ESF continued to assist the Universal Esperanto Association in developing a comprehensive plan for the safeguarding of the invaluable holdings of the Hector Hodler Library and for ways to make them more readily available to researchers. The Hodler Library is one of the foremost sources for documentary research on Esperanto and planned languages.

New ESF Administration Website (www.esperantic.org)

ESF recently completed the development of a multi-featured, website administration portal. The new portal was designed to improve the foundation's operating efficiencies and better facilitate the exchange of information between members of the Board of Directors and foundation administrators. The site was designed by the foundation's Executive Administrator, Jason Clark.