

Esperantic Studies Foundation Annual Report 2008

For the Esperantic Studies Foundation the year 2008 was characterized by two apparently contradictory trends. In terms of activity and notable successes, it was a highly positive year. At the same time, it was a year in which expenses rose while resources remained largely static – and it ended with a precipitous drop in the value of the Foundation's endowment which extended into 2009 and seems likely to make 2009 a very different year from its predecessor. In 2008, once again the Foundation continued existing projects, supported a number of short-term activities, and initiated a variety of new projects, while providing funding support to others that were deemed to meet the Foundation's strategic priorities.

Particularly noteworthy during the course of 2008 was the rising recognition of ESF-supported projects and of the foundation generally. For example, of the six annual awards given out by the Universal Esperanto Association in 2008, five were linked one way or another with activities supported by ESF. The Deguchi Prize was given to Dr. Renato Corsetti, in part for his work in Africa, supported by ESF; awards were given to both *lernu.net* and *edukado.net*, projects largely initiated and continued by ESF support; and the Grabowski Prize was divided between Ilona Koutny, director of the interlinguistics program at the University of Poznan (regularly underwritten by ESF) and Andreas Künzli, whose encyclopedia of universal languages in Switzerland received partial support from ESF.

Even before the drop in the financial markets, the Foundation initiated discussion and planning around the need to generate new funds to augment existing resources – a task that becomes more important with every passing day. The board met regularly by telephone throughout the year, and in April it met in person in New York State in connection with the annual conference of the International Linguistics Association. This meeting provided an opportunity for a seminar led by a professional fundraiser, Sandra Wood, with a follow-up telephone conference with Ms. Wood in June.

The broad objectives of the Foundation continue to include focus on: (1) improving the visibility and prestige of Esperanto as a research topic and teaching subject, (2) focusing attention and academic resources on the study of Esperanto and of interlingual communication generally, (3) establishing an intellectual community of teachers and researchers in higher education committed to the above goals, and (4) improving and expanding the operational capacity of the foundation itself.

Each of these objectives was addressed in a number of ways in the course of the year, with varying levels of success.

(1) Improving the visibility and prestige of Esperanto as a research topic and teaching subject. The Foundation's biggest single activity in this connection was the organization of an invitational conference on the study and teaching of Esperanto and

interlinguistics in colleges and universities, in collaboration with the Linguistics Department of the University of Amsterdam.

(2) Focusing attention and academic resources on the study of Esperanto and of interlingual communication generally. The primary activity in this category is ESF's support for the annual North American Summer Courses in Esperanto (NASK). Its support of web-based learning initiatives such as Lernu has similar goals. Clearly the Amsterdam conference, with its emphasis on the teaching of Esperanto in universities, addressed this objective as well. The objective was also addressed through the funding of a number of program initiatives and by the ongoing work of the CED Research Fund, underwritten by ESF and administered by a small committee headed by Dr. Detlev Blanke (Germany).

(3) Establishing an intellectual community of teachers and researchers in higher education committed to the above goals. The participation of ESF in the conference of the International Linguistics Association, and its support of a panel at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Boston in February helped raise the visibility of the Foundation in scholarly circles, as did ESF's support for a panel at the Economic Forum in Krynica (Poland) in September. The revamping of ESF's website (see below) to make it more user-friendly and accessible was also one effort in this direction. But in general this aspect of ESF's work remains elusive and much remains to be done.

(4) Improving and expanding the operational capacity of the foundation itself. For the reasons mentioned above, the raising of additional funds has become a matter of major priority. The Foundation organized receptions in Montreal (at the Pan-American Esperanto Congress) and Rotterdam (at the World Esperanto Congress) in July to thank its collaborators and to attract new supporters into the fold, but these efforts and also efforts to generate lists of potential donors and to develop a research capability are still in their early stages and have yet to register concrete results.

Nonetheless, the projects and activities identified below indicate that in 2008 we made significant progress on achieving these goals, but much more remains to be done.

The projects and activities identified below are each tied to the relevant section of the ESF Medium-Term Plan, 2007-2010, as approved by the ESF Board in November 2006.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

EDUCATION

lernu! (www.lernu.net)

The free, web-based, language-learning environment "lernu!" continued to receive support in 2008. Lernu! is an example of an educational project that supports the

improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.4.

edukado.net (www.edukado.net)

The teaching support site “edukado” received ongoing support in 2008 to help with the continued expansion of its teaching materials and its web-based interface that enables subject matter experts to easily edit and upload content from anywhere in the world. Edukado is an example of an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.4.

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

ESF has been supporting this unique 3-week immersion program since 1998 and it has become a core educational priority for the foundation. NASK’s 2008 session took place in July in San Diego, California (at the University of California San Diego) – the second year of its return to the West Coast after several years of operation in Brattleboro, Vermont. The program this year was very successful in spite of a rather low enrollment of eighteen students. Among them, however, were more young people than usual, and the session was particularly lively. Conflicts caused by the timing of the All-Americas Esperanto Conference in Montreal (TAKE) and the Esperanto-USA congress during the same period probably had a negative effect on enrollment.

The NASK program is another example of an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), with a specific North American focus, and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.4.

Interlinguistics Certificate Program

ESF continued to provide scholarship support in 2008 for students enrolled in the Interlinguistics certificate program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. This program reached its tenth year of operation in 2008 and a symposium to mark the anniversary took place in Poznan in September with ESF support. Although the Interlinguistics Certificate Program is an educational project, and hence falls under Strategic Area 2 (Strategic Area 1), it also has clear implications for the building of an intellectual community (Strategic Area 3).

Conference of Universities Teaching Esperanto and Interlinguistics

ESF underwrote the costs associated with a conference on this subject held in July 2008, hosted by the University of Amsterdam and organized by CED (the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems). Objectives of the conference included the exchange of information and ideas, planning for the exchange of personnel, and cooperation in curriculum, libraries etc. The conference, chaired by Prof. Wim Jansen of the University of Amsterdam and Humphrey Tonkin of ESF, brought together some 50 academics from 30 universities in 23 countries: Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, UK, USA, and Venezuela. Its concluding document contained 24 recommendations grouped under the above three headings: programs of study, exchanges, and administration. Many of these

recommendations are now being pursued, in part by ESF, in part by CED, the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems (which is affiliated with the Universal Esperanto Association), and in part by other individuals. The website Edukado.net has established web pages for the exchange of information and the initiation of activities. This is the first time such an effort of this kind has ever been attempted, and it bodes well for what has hitherto been a fragmented field largely lacking in coordination. This project supports both Strategic Area 2 (education) and Strategic Area 3 (scholarly community building). Follow-up events are planned for 2009 in Krakow and Bialystok, Poland.

Springboard to Languages Project

The Springboard to Languages Project is an effort to introduce Esperanto in selected primary schools in the UK as part of the country's new language policy. An important component of the project is the evaluation of students' language learning, with an emphasis on the propedeutic effects of Esperanto language study preceding French language study. ESF continues to provide funding to support the evaluation of this four-year project. A further grant to Springboard was made in 2008, this time to augment funding already received from the Comenius program of the European Union (this funding was received in part by using ESF funds as leverage). Board member Timothy Reagan is providing the benefit of his expertise in the area. This is an educational project, and hence falls under Strategic Area 2, but it is also relates to the building of research on the propedeutic value of the study of Esperanto.

GIL (Gesellschaft für Interlinguistik) Program (Leipzig)

In 2007, the ESF Board approved 9000 euros to support a teaching effort at the University of Leipzig aimed at the ultimate establishment of a program in interlinguistics and Esperanto studies, under the direction of Dr. Sabine Fiedler and the sponsorship of GIL. A report on this project appeared in the Fall 2008 issue of the journal *Language Problems and Language Planning*. This project is best seen as a combination of Strategic Area 1, Strategic Area 2, and Strategic Area 3.

Documentary Film Project

In 2006 ESF agreed to provide limited funding to support a documentary film project on Esperanto produced by Sam Green, whose earlier documentary on 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 Congress in Florence and the 2007 Congress in Yokohama. The project continues. Mr. Green's project is an example of how public discourse with respect to Esperanto and interlingual communication can be encouraged and improved, and is thus an activity that falls under Strategic Area 1.

INTERLINGUAL RESEARCH

EPAK Project (Spoken Esperanto Project)

Phase I of the Spoken Esperanto Project (for the compilation of a spoken corpus of Esperanto) was completed by Christer Lornemark in 2007, and Phase II continued

throughout much of 2008. The corpus is currently unavailable online; however, it is hoped that it will become publicly available in late 2009 or 2010. This project clearly falls under Strategic Area 1 (Scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication), and is further identified under Objective 1.5 in the Medium Term Plan.

Interlinguistics Support Fund

This fund was established, under the leadership of Detlev Blanke (Germany), in 2007 to support small grants for publications, conferences, and similar activities. The sum of \$10,000 was approved for this fund in 2008. Proposals are reviewed and recommended by a three-person committee consisting of Dr. Blanke, Dr. Christer Kiselman (Sweden) and Mr. Osmo Buller (Netherlands). Grants awarded in 2008 included funding to Alexander Korjhenkov for his projected biography of Zamenhof, and support for the creation of a museum of Esperanto in the Czech town of Česká Třebová, to provide exhibition space for the large collection of Esperanto materials already housed in the town library. The Czech grant helped leverage additional public funds. A similar initiative approved in 2007 but funded in 2008 supported the publication of the catalogue of the Fajsz Collection at the National Library of Foreign Literature, Budapest. Also in 2008 a grant to the University of Poznan (Ilona Koutny) supported a symposium and publication on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the university's Interlinguistics Program.

The Interlinguistics Support Fund was established as an alternative way of commissioning and supporting research (Strategic Area 1).

The Nitobe Process

The 5th Nitobe Symposium took place in Tokyo in August, 2007, with funding from ESF. This symposium explored the linguistic dimensions of Asian integration and globalization, a further step in the ongoing Nitobe process. A trilingual report on the symposium, *Towards Equitable Language Policy in Asia*, was published by the European Institute, Sophia University, in 2008, and a selection of its papers appeared in the inaugural 2008 issue of the *Sophia Journal of European Studies*. ESF has been a supporter of the Nitobe process from its inception, and it clearly fits well with our overall mission.

Discussions were carried on late in 2008 on the possibility of establishing a regular seminar or symposium every second or third year at the University of Geneva, with some support from ESF, the balance being sought through grants. The hope is that the United Nations might also be tied in in some way. The series might replace the Nitobe Symposia or supplement the Nitobe Process. No final decision has been reached.

The Nitobe Process is relevant with respect to the Medium Term Plan in terms of its implications for Strategic Area 1 (Scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication), as well as for Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

Research Grant Awards

(1) In 2008 the Foundation provided a grant in the amount of \$10,000 to the Center for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University for a residency by Afrikaans poet Antjie Krog in connection with the Center's interest in translation. This was its fourth award to the Center.

(2) Dr. Sho Konishi, of Oxford University, formerly of the University of Illinois, completed work on his project on "The Emergence of the Esperanto Movement in Japan: Interlingualism and the Vision of Cooperatist Anarchist Modernity," approved by ESF in 2005.

(3) Dr. Nancy Schweda Nicholson completed work on her project on interpretation at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague.

(4) The foundation allocated funding for research connected with a project for translating children's books into Bengali and several European languages, using Esperanto as a bridge. Project leaders are Probal Dasgupta, Spomenka Štimec, and Zlatko Tišljär.

(5) The foundation awarded a grant to Dr. Christian Krägeloh (Auckland University of Technology) for a project entitled "Revitalization of Te Reo Maori: Lessons from Research in Interlinguistics." The goal of the research is to investigate the extent to which language revitalization of Te Reo Maori can benefit from the already existing literature in interlinguistics.

(6) A travel grant to Prof. Probal Dasgupta (Indian Statistical Institute) will allow him to continue work on his project "Developing a kernel-theoretic approach to lexicography."

Conferences

(1) ESF organized a panel at the conference of the International Linguistics Association at the College of Old Westbury, New York (April 11-13).

(2) ESF continues to fund an award presented at the annual conference of CALICO (Computer-Assisted Language Instruction). This year's award was presented to the group behind the website *Arabic Without Walls* at CALICO's Annual Conference in San Francisco from March 18-22.

(3) Funding was provided to support a symposium organized by former board member Dr. E. James Lieberman at the 2008 conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science on February 15 in Boston. The symposium addressed linguistic inequality in the scientific community and featured three speakers: Dr. Jose Antonio Vergara (Chile), Dr. Ulrich Ammon (Germany) and Dr. Humphrey Tonkin (USA). The symposium caused a considerable stir among scientists who had hitherto failed to recognize such language discrimination in their ranks, and reports appeared in newspapers across the world, including *Die Welt* in Germany and newspapers in Belgium and Pakistan. The April 2008 issue of the US periodical *The Scientist* ran an editorial on the subject stimulated by the symposium (Richard Gallagher, "Speaking Your Mind").

(4) ESF provided support to the European Esperanto Union for a panel at the Economic Forum in Krynica, Poland, in September. The session, entitled "United in Diversity? Language learning and European identity," featured Barbara Pietrzak (Poland), Zlatko Tišljär (Slovenia), Georgo Handzlik (Poland), and Peter Balaž (Slovakia).

These activities can be identified with Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

Interlinguistics Bulletin

The Foundation continues to support publication of the hardcopy version of the *Informilo por Interlingvistoj*, published by CED under the editorship of Detlev Blanke (a web version appears on the ESF webpages). The publication activities of ESF are concerned primarily with Objective 1.4, although they are also relevant with respect to the overall concerns of Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

Esperanto Aktuale

To assist in the development of a comprehensive website on all aspects of Esperanto and its context, the foundation has provided support to the team E@I, which is developing the site. Esperanto Aktuale is intended to be a multilingual information portal about Esperanto and the global Esperanto movement. The website will focus on providing news and information to the non-Esperanto public. The conceptual design and building of the website continued throughout the year and will proceed throughout 2009 and 2010. Progress on this project is documented on the Aktuale Wiki which is located here: <http://aktuale.info/>.

The Hodler Library, Rotterdam

As part of its support for the research capability of the Hodler Library, the foundation agreed to fund the restoration of two early Esperanto films held by the library, one on an international youth meeting in the Netherlands in 1938 and the second on the World Congress of Esperanto in Warsaw in 1959.

Language and People

The Foundation awarded a small grant to the Italian Esperanto Federation to support publication of an Italian translation of Humphrey Tonkin's book in Esperanto *Lingvo kaj popolo* (2006). The translation, entitled *Una lingua e un popolo - Problemi attuali del movimento esperantista*, will be published by the Italian-language publisher EVA in May 2009. The book was edited by Carlo Minnaja and translated by Elvia Belluco.

OPERATIONS

The Executive Director Position and the Operations Committee

This position, which in the past has greatly contributed to the smooth operation of the foundation, and particularly to the expansion of its activities, remained unfilled following the resignation of board member Timothy Reagan. An Operations Committee consisting of Mark Fettes, Timothy Reagan and Humphrey Tonkin was established by Board action in May, and is in telephone contact on a regular weekly basis with Jason Clark, who has continued to administer the finances of the foundation and to conduct other administrative business. He, in turn, works closely with the foundation's Treasurer to manage accounts payable and receivable and the organization's financial reporting requirements. This arrangement partly compensates for the lack of an Executive Director.

Spending Policy

Although the adoption of a formal spending policy for the foundation by board action in September has been in part overtaken by the recent stock market decline, the foundation has taken steps to better manage and monitor expenditures that should serve it well in the present straitened circumstances.

Streamlining of Accounting System and Financial Reporting

In mid-2008, the foundation's Executive Administrator, Jason Clark, proposed that the organization switch over its accounting procedures to a professional accounting management system, *Simply Accounting*. This proposal was adopted and implemented during the 2nd half of the year. The accounting software has improved our record keeping and financial reporting efficiencies tremendously. A variety of detailed financial reports can now be generated on demand and the year-end tax return preparation has been greatly simplified. The documentation produced by the system has also enabled our accounting firm in Washington, DC, RAFFA, to prepare our returns more efficiently and in less time than they have needed in years past. The Simply Accounting software also allows us to enter an annual budget and monitor spending against that budget on demand.

Board Membership

Membership of the board remained unchanged in 2007: Wallace DuTemple, Mark Fettes, Bonnie Fonseca-Greber, Grant Goodall, Timothy Reagan, Ian Richmond, and Humphrey Tonkin. Dr. Geoffrey Greatrex, of the University of Ottawa, was added to the foundation's Advisory Board.

Looking Ahead

The decline in ESF's investment capital has accelerated its plans to strengthen its supporter base and improve its operational capacity as it seeks funds to replace its significantly reduced resources. Less attention will be given to new initiatives and more attention to the internal strengthening of the organization. It is hoped that these changes will lead to the emergence of a stronger and more efficiently operating foundation in the future.

GOALS FOR 2009

The ESF board set six short-term strategic goals for the organization in September 2008. These goals can be summarized as follows:

1. Develop and implement a fundraising / development strategy.
2. Build on the Amsterdam conference to strengthen university-level collaboration on interlinguistics and Esperanto studies.
3. Work to advance global/interlinguistic perspectives in language policy (the Nitobe Process).
4. Develop strategic goals for collaboration on such projects as Lernu.net, Edukado.net, and Esperanto Aktuale.
5. Develop and strengthen the North American Summer Esperanto Courses.
6. Rationalize ESF's spending policy, financial reporting, and project management.

It is noteworthy that goals 1, 4 and 6 are all related, in one way or another, to the rationalization and streamlining of ESF's operations. Given the adverse financial environment with which the foundation is currently dealing, the fourth of the objectives mentioned at the opening of this report, "Improving and expanding the operational capacity of the foundation itself," which embraces these three goals, must be given priority in 2009. It is to be hoped that the Nitobe Process and its associated activities can be maintained, that work on NASK can continue and the numbers of participants can be increased, that the advancement of university studies in fields of interest to ESF can proceed, and that such major activities as Lernu, Edukado, Springboard and others can be continued, if only in a holding pattern.