



# ESF (Esperantic Studies Foundation) Annual Report for 2016

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The year 2016 has been a particularly busy and successful year for the Esperantic Studies Foundation. This year, our North American Esperanto Institute (NASK) was extremely well attended; we were significant contributors of scholarships to the Adam Mickiewicz University graduate program in Esperanto and Interlinguistics (Poznan); and we continued to support Edukado.net, the leading international website for Esperanto teachers. We have supported conferences in the United States, Italy, and Slovakia, and we have provided financing for an internship at the New York office of the Universal Esperanto Association. New York was also the site of an ESF-supported symposium on language and development aimed at raising the awareness of the United Nations about the importance of language equality for human development and human rights. Our research program has helped support new research tools, such as publication of the first comprehensive history of Esperanto literature, and a sociological study of the Universal Esperanto Association.

Our twin goals are to support research on Esperanto and language issues generally, and also to provide Esperanto-related education programs. We work through a ten-member board and an advisory committee of some thirty experts in language policy, language planning, and related fields. We choose our research topics carefully, supporting recognized scholars engaged in significant work; and our education programs are among the best and most up-to-date anywhere in the world. No other organization in or close to the Esperanto movement has a stronger program of support for first-rate research and the provision of important services to speakers of Esperanto, and we also work in the fields of language policy and language planning generally. We are helped by the strength of our board. One of our newer members, Esther Schor, of Princeton University, is the author of *Bridge of Words: Esperanto and the Dream of a Universal Language* (2016), which has received a great deal of positive press in recent months; Mark Fettes, another member, is president of the Universal Esperanto Association; I myself have co-edited a special issue of the journal INDECS this year, on *The Phenomenon of Esperanto*; another, Derek Roff, works closely with CALICO, the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium, where ESF sponsors a high-visibility annual award.

As the year 2017 begins, we're looking at some pretty significant changes in the world and also in the Esperanto movement. The Foundation is working hard to understand these changes and to maximize opportunities to advance not only Esperanto but concern for languages and language diversity in the world. While traditional Esperanto organizations work to maintain their positions, the Esperanto-speaking community as a whole is expanding rapidly and ESF is playing a vital role in that expansion. Keeping the momentum going means moving fast and decisively. Some years ago, the Foundation was there to assist in launching Lernu.net, a program that had over 230,000 registered members at the end of 2016. With the website completely redesigned this year, we are closely following social media as the numbers of speakers and users of Esperanto multiply on Facebook and elsewhere, and through Duolingo. While once upon a time users of Esperanto had to sign up with a traditional Esperanto organization to get access to the Esperanto community, today they can bypass these organizations and become active users of Esperanto immediately. At ESF we are working to assess the impact of these newcomers to Esperanto and to engage them as actively as possible in the practical use of the language.

Thanks to the strong support that we receive from the Esperanto-speaking community and beyond, we are able to respond. As our budget grows and our reach expands, it is vital that we build further support. We hope that we will continue to receive support from the Esperanto community and beyond.



Lastly, with deepest regret, we note the passing of Paul Gubbins and Detlev Blanke. Paul Gubbins was a beloved professor in ESF's North American Summer Courses, author of the screenplay for *Pasporto al la Tuta Mondo*, the Esperanto television course for which ESF provided partial support, and a well-known figure in the Esperanto movement, particularly as editor of the journal *Monato*. Detlev Blanke, one of the most renowned contemporary scholars in the field of interlinguistics, a long-time ESF partner, a board member of the ESF-supported Centre for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems (CRD) and editor of the Centre's bulletin *Informilo por Interlingvistoj*. We will miss Paul and Detlev dearly...

Humphrey Tonkin

President

## PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

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

In July 2016, the team of lernu.net was happy to announce the full relaunch of the site. The new lernu.net has an interesting new Esperanto course with hundreds of exercises, illustrations and a large searchable library. The site has been fully modernized and is compatible with new browsers and web technologies which didn't exist when the previous version of the site was launched.

The new site's full 26-lesson course is based on a story by the renowned author Anna Löwenstein, with exercises by educator Birke Dockhorn. The course contains abundant exercises, illustrations and sounds, and it follows the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The new course also includes a detailed Esperanto grammar and a revamped forum system, dictionaries and translation function. The team continues to add new materials and functions to the new site.

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

Edukado.net celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2016. During these years it has continued to grow, introducing more and more online and offline services and activities to help Esperanto teachers, as well as the growing number of Esperanto learners using the website. At the end of 2016, Edukado.net had 4138 members from 128 countries. On average, a new person joined the community every day.

The main news of 2016 was the introduction of the program *Ekparolu!* (<http://edukado.net/ekparolu>). This program aims at pairing beginners ("nephews and nieces") with experienced Esperantists ("uncles and aunts") that meet on Skype to practice the language. In 2016 tests, rules, training materials were created and dozens of "uncles and aunts" were trained. In the experimental phase, 150 sessions were held. The program, conceived by the editor of Edukado.net, Katalin Kovats, was launched at the end of the year and it expects in its first year, 2017, that some 200 "uncles and aunts" will be helping some 300-400 "nephews and nieces" by enabling as many as 600-800 sessions. This system will not only help the new learners to start using the language orally, but also create personal links between the participants and will guide the new learners into the Esperanto movement.

As a part of her regular tasks, the editor continued to work on tasks started earlier, facilitated the successful educational game RSKO, organized Common European Framework of Reference for Languages sessions, actively participated in various training activities (e.g., in Poznan, as a part of the Interlinguistic Studies program, and in France, preparing students for extracurricular, yet official, school program activities in Esperanto) and led Esperanto courses during the World Esperanto Congress. Thanks to Edukado.net, an Esperanto version of the children's app *Leer kinderen talen* (Teach Languages to Children) was developed.

The Foundation Edukado.net continues to enjoy support from its members. In 2016 it received 11,234 euros that came from 48 people through 102 donations. ESF, too, continues to support the editor with a regular honorarium. Her work was not only acknowledged financially, but also was officially recognized by the German city Aalen when the mayor handed her the special Esperanto Culture Award, in the presence of Esperantists from Germany and all over the world.

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

For the third time in its history, the North American Esperanto Institute, the Foundation's flagship educational activity in North America, took place in Raleigh, NC, at William Peace University. The NASK participants were also able to take part in the U.S. Esperanto Congress in Miami the following weekend. This year was the second time NASK joined forces with KTF: Esperanto Performing Arts and Film Festival (Kino-Teatro-Festo), and under the double name "NASK/KTF", it brought together 52 students from 20 different states in the U.S., plus participants from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Cuba and Brazil. For an additional symbolic fee, the NASK participants were also able to enjoy the program of the Festival. This gave an additional opportunity to experience Esperanto in a non-classroom setting. Several students participated in creation of a radio drama that was also filmed and will be made public in the future.

The instructor team consisted of Bertil Wennergren, Germany, teaching at the advanced level, Tim Morley from Great Britain at the intermediary level, Lee Miller from the U.S. at the post-basic level. Hoss Firooznia was the faithful editor of the daily magazine *NASKa Fasko*.

William Peace University remains one of the favorite annual sites for NASK. With the help of Chuck Mays, ESF now has a three-year contract, which means that NASK will continue there in the near future.

## Interlinguistics Certificate Program

In 2016, a record number of 17 students studied in the Interlinguistics Certificate Program at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland -- the best-known and most successful graduate program for the study of Esperanto and interlinguistics. The students this year came from Poland, Brazil, Spain, Sweden, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Russia, Croatia and Belgium.

This large number of participants from around the world was made possible by ESF through its regular support as well as the additional scholarship support provided as part of the AMU Poznanon program, launched in 2014 and aimed at collecting an additional US\$5000 in funds by matching the contributions of donors.

Thanks to the larger number of participants, in 2016 four specialization programs were made available: on Esperanto literature, Esperanto linguistics, International and Intercultural communication and Esperanto teaching. Thanks to this last specialization, a teacher training program was organized, bringing together 18 people from 12 countries, three of whom were Interlinguistics Certificate students, to perfect their Esperanto teaching skills. The program was led by Katalin Kováts, with support and contributions from Zsófia Kóródy, Ilona Koutny and Ulrich Lins.

## Esperanto "Access to Language Education" Award

In 2004, ESF began sponsoring an annual award for an outstanding language-learning website, open to any and all languages. Criteria include 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 2016, as in most previous years, the award was presented in person by Board member Derek Roff. The 2016 recipient was Mezhdu nami: An Interactive Introduction to Russian ([visit the website](#))

## Interlinguistics Support Fund

The Interlinguistics Support Fund provides small grants to scholars for publications, conferences, and similar activities, and is administered on behalf of the foundation by the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems. A small committee makes recommendations on awards under the program.

In the year 2016, the CED-Fund made four grants:

- to Maritza Gutierrez (Cuba) for participation in the International Congress on Discursive Territories in Latin America: Interculturality, Communication and Identity (Quito, September) with a paper on identity in an intercultural context (September),
- to Davide Astori (Italy) for participation in the International Conference on Linguistic Rights (Teramo, Italy, December) with a paper on the use of English as a conference language (“Parlare Inglese a un Congresso: ma quanto mi costa?”)
- to the Italian Esperanto Federation for publication of the papers of a symposium on Esperanto and minority languages organized as part of the Italian Esperanto Congress (Frascati, August)
- to the Slovakian Esperanto Federation for purchase of the Esperanto library of Christian Darbellay.

A grant made in 2015 came to fruition with the publication of the festschrift *Lingua, politica, cultura: Serta gratulatoria in honorem Renato Corsetti* (ed. Federico Gobbo; New York: Mondial, 2016).

With the sudden and deeply regrettable passing of Dr. Detlev Blanke, who helped establish the CED Fund some ten years ago and remained its administrator and chair at the time of his death, the operations of the fund were dealt a severe blow. ESF’s president Humphrey Tonkin stepped in temporarily to chair the Fund’s selection committee, which now consists of Jesper Jacobsen (France), Velimir Piskorec (Croatia), and Angela Tellier (UK).

## Research Grants

While no new research grants were awarded in 2016 under this program, the Foundation continues to support research and research-related activities through CED and its own programs, as detailed in other parts of this report.

## Conferences and events

**Symposium on Language and Equality.** The Study Group on Language at the United Nations, in cooperation with the Centre for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems and the University of Hartford, with funding from the Esperantic Studies Foundation and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL, Washington DC), organized yet another successful symposium in New York, at the UN Church Center (777 United Nations Plaza) on April 21-22, 2016. The topic of the symposium was Language and the Sustainable Development Goals. The keynote address was given by Suzanne Romaine. Well-known for her work on historical linguistics and sociolinguistics, from 1984 to 2014 Suzanne Romaine was Merton Professor of English Language at the University of Oxford. Featured speakers included Michael Ten-Pow (Senior Advisor on Multilingualism, DGACM, United Nations), Carolyn Benson (Teachers College, Columbia University), Lisa McEntee-Atalianis (University of London), Kurt Müller (National Defense University), Timothy Reagan (University of Maine), Rosemary Salomone (St. John’s University), Humphrey Tonkin (University of Hartford), and Sarah Moore, Molly Fee, Terrence Wiley &

Beatriz Arias (Center for Applied Linguistics). A report on the symposium is available for download at [www.languageandtheun.org](http://www.languageandtheun.org).

**Tivadar Soros Lecture Series.** December 16, 2016 saw the debut of a public lecture series to commemorate Tivadar Soros, Esperanto speaker, whose memoir *Masquerade*, written in Esperanto, recorded his successful efforts to keep his family alive and intact in Hungary during the Nazis' round-up and murder of thousands of Jews. Esther Schor (Princeton University), author of *Bridge of Words: Esperanto and the Dream of a Universal Language* (Metropolitan Books, 2016), was the first speaker in this series which was made possible by a grant provided by the Soros family to the Esperantic Studies Foundation and is sponsored by the Linguistics Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The lecture series will feature six events and will continue through Fall 2017.

### **Newsletter Information for Interlinguists**

On August 20th, 2016, Detlev Blanke, founder, long term president and, later, honorary president, of Gesellschaft für Interlinguistik (Society for Interlinguistics; GIL), as well as the editor of the newsletter *Information for Interlinguists* (IPI), passed away. He edited the 98th issue of IPI, and the editing of the 99th issue was taken over by a team consisting of Sabine Fiedler, Cyril Brosch and Humphrey Tonkin. This issue pays tribute to the long and fruitful career of Dr. Blanke who will be dearly missed by the ESF team. In 2017 a 100th issue of IPI with the indexes will be published. The IPI collection from 2010 to the present is available on ESF's website (section "Publication", in Esperanto). ESF is now exploring ways of continuing the newsletter and possibly adding an English-language version.



## OPERATIONS

### Administration

#### Executive Director

In 2016 Joel Amis completed his sixth full year as ESF's part-time Executive Director, working an average of 80 hours/month. He worked closely with ESF's Operations Committee, which met twice a month by phone. 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.

#### Development Officer

*Esperantic.org.* The ESF website was completely redesigned and relaunched in August 2016. The new ESF website is done in WordPress and has a responsive design which can adapt to the size of any screen (desktop, tablet, cell phone). It is easy to maintain and to add new content. Most of the redesign work was done by Yevgeniya Amis, the Development Director, with some help from a WordPress professional developer. Asya Pereltsvaig, the Academic Coordinator, is responsible for maintaining the sections on Esperanto in the Media and the section on Publications – the most dynamic sections, with new content generated on an ongoing basis.

*Facebook.* ESF continues to be active on Facebook, with approximately 70 posts published in 2016 and approximately 500 people who 'liked' ESF (the ESF Facebook page was launched in late 2015).

*Advertising.* The November issue of the journal *Esperanto* carried a letter by Humphrey Tonkin inviting Esperanto speakers to donate to ESF, and during the World Esperanto Congress in Nitra, Slovakia, each participant received a "from Congress to Congress" calendar.

*Fundraising.* Regular communication with national Esperanto associations and donors (both active and inactive) continued. In 2016, ESF raised approximately \$27,600, much of it in small donations – a record. This included, however, \$12,500 from the Soros grant for the purpose of the Soros Lectures (see above). Without this grant annual fundraising would have stood at approximately \$14,000, roughly comparable with previous years. In 2016, AMU Poznanon entered its third year. Funds collected were lower than in years one and two.

#### Academic Coordinator

In 2016, Asya Pereltsvaig, the Academic Coordinator, continued to network with scholars and students interested in different aspects of Esperantic Studies. She completed a "state-of-the-art" overview of the field which will be published in the journal *Language Problems and Language Planning* and is available at [www.esperantic.org](http://www.esperantic.org). She also worked on compiling a handbook on Esperantic studies, and set up and maintained an Academia.edu page for ESF. In addition, she regularly updated ESF's Facebook page and website.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Humphrey Tonkin (USA) completed his first year as ESF president and Derek Roff (USA) continued as Secretary. Anna Bennett (USA) continued as Treasurer through September 2016 and was succeeded by Ben Speakmon. We welcome Ben to the Board, and we thank Anna for her hard work and years of service, and for continuing with ESF as a regular member of the board.



We were also pleased to announce the addition of a new member to the ESF Board: Esther Schor. The other board members were Wallace Du Temple (Canada), Mark Fettes (Canada), Grant Goodall (USA), Geoffrey Greatrex (Canada), Charles Mays (USA). Erin Piatetski attended board meetings in her capacity as CEO of ESF's web projects subsidiary ESF-enrete, and Joel Amis in his capacity as Executive Director.

In addition to monthly teleconferences, the Board met in Vancouver, Canada, for its annual Board Retreat in September. The day-to-day management of ESF was delegated by the Board to its Operations Committee, consisting of Tonkin, Bennett, Speakmon and Roff, plus Joel Amis ex officio.

## ADVISORY BOARD

In 2016, we were pleased to add two new members to the ESF Advisory Board: Jed Meltzer and Gary Grady. Jed Meltzer is a Neurorehabilitation Scientist working for Baycrest Hospital, University of Toronto, and Gary Grady is co-founder of a consulting firm helping develop and market software to analyze risk in the stock market. In 2016 the ESF Advisory Board consisted of:

- Ulrich Becker (publisher, Mondial, New York, USA)
- David Gaines (composer, USA)
- Duncan Charters (Principia College, USA)
- Probal Dasgupta (Indian Statistical Institute, India)
- John Edwards (St. Francis Xavier University, Canada)
- Alvino Fantini (School for International Training, USA)
- Normand Fleury (arboriculturist, Canada)
- Bonnie Fonseca-Greber (University of Louisville, USA)
- François Grin (University of Geneva, Switzerland)
- Gary Grady (financial specialist, USA)
- David K. Jordan (University of California San Diego, USA)
- Sho Konishi (Oxford University, UK)
- Katalin Kovats (edukado.net, Netherlands)
- Jed Meltzer (Neurorehabilitation Scientist, Canada)
- Lee Miller (ASL interpreter, USA)
- Arika Okrent (author, USA)
- Jonathan Pool (Utilika Foundation, USA)
- Timothy Reagan (University of Maine, USA)
- Ian Richmond (Université Sainte-Anne, Canada)
- Martin Schäffer (Mondo Foundation, Germany and Mexico)
- Klaus Schubert (Universität Hildesheim, Germany)
- Nancy Schweda-Nicholson (University of Delaware, USA)
- Alan Simon (computer specialist, Canada)
- Sebastian Tonkin (software specialist, USA)