Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Endangered Language Fund newsletter. This tri-annual publication will keep you up to date on the activities of the Fund and let you know what is going on in this world of endangered languages.

It is truly a world of endangered languages. Every inhabited continent is home to dozens of languages that will not survive the next generation unless we take some action now. Like the disappearance of biological species, the loss of a language represents a permanent and grave loss to our world. No matter how much we write or record of a language, once it ceases to be spoken, the best we can hope for is the revival of its echoes. Every language has a unique perspective on the world and makes a singular contribution to our heritage. While that uniqueness may not be any more apparent than that of an endangered species, speakers know that when they lose their language, they have lost something that was uniquely theirs.

This fund's goals are to help preserve and to record languages for the sake of linguistic diversity and of linguistic sciences. We believe that these goals are mutually supportive, since an understanding of languages helps greatly in devising means of preserving them. We must strive to keep endangered languages intact, and in those cases where this is not feasible, the cultural value of language recordings and transcriptions is enormous. Put simply, this is our last chance to obtain even that.

The rapid growth of international travel and communication has placed us in a position previously unknown, one in which at least half of the world's languages will disappear within our children's lifetimes. However, this age of technology also means that preserving an endangered language in some form is now possible. It is up to us to do what we can to preserve the languages whose speakers want them preserved, and record as much as possible of others. Even those who currently reject the utility of their language may come to regret not having preserved it. The availability of some glimpse of what was will then be invaluable.

The Endangered Language Fund helps these efforts by providing grants. Communities that speak an endangered language and linguists who work on endangered languages should respond to our Request for Proposals (see page 2) and request the support they need for their preservation efforts. The first request for proposals met with a good selection of proposals to evaluate, and in the years to come we hope to see an equally good selection of proposals from our applicants. All readers of this letter are encouraged to apply for a grant or to pass this information along to an interested party.

Finally, the size and number of grants we can give are directly related to the amount of money we raise. If you are able to support the Fund, we encourage you to do so. The levels of giving and benefits of membership are listed on our website:

http://spiri.ling.yale.edu/~elf/

The problem of language endangerment is severe, but every donation helps us to do what we can. We hope you will join us. -DHW
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Request for Proposals, Endangered Language Fund

The Endangered Language Fund provides grants for language maintenance and linguistic field work. The work most likely to be funded is that which immediately serves the native community and the field of linguistics. Work immediately applicable to one group and more distantly applicable to the other will also be considered. Publishing subventions are of low priority, although they will also be considered. The language involved must be in danger of disappearing within a generation or two. Endangerment is a continuum, and a given language's location on the continuum is one factor in our funding decisions.

Eligible expenses include travel, tapes, films, consultant fees, etc. Grants are normally for one year periods, although one may apply for supplements. We expect grants in this round to be for less than $2,000.

HOW TO APPLY

There is no form, but the following information should be printed (on one side only) and four copies sent to:
Endangered Language Fund, Inc.
Department of Linguistics
Yale University
New Haven, CT 06520

Applications must be mailed. No e-mail or fax applications will be accepted. If you have any questions, please write to the above address or send e-mail to:
elf@haskins.yale.edu

REQUIRED INFORMATION:

Please provide the following information for the primary researcher (and other researchers, if any): Name, address, telephone number(s), e-mail address (if any), Social Security Number (if U.S. citizen), place and date of birth, present position, education, and native language. State relevant previous experience and/or publications.

Beginning on a separate page, please provide a description of the project. This should normally take less than two pages, single spaced. Describe in detail the type of material that is to be collected and/or produced, and the value it will have to the native community (including relatives and descendants who do not speak the language) and to linguistic science. Give a brief description of the state of endangerment of the language in question.

On a separate page, prepare an itemized budget listing expected costs for the project. Estimates are acceptable, but they must be realistic. List other sources of support you are currently receiving or expect to receive and other applications related to the current one. Two letters of support are recommended, but not required.

DEADLINE

Applications must be received by April 20, 1998. Decisions will be delivered by the end of May, 1998.

IF A GRANT IS AWARDED

Before receiving any funds, university-based applicants must show that they have met with their university's human subjects committee requirements. Tribal- or other-based applicants must provide equivalent assurance that proper protocols are being used.

If a grant is made and accepted, the recipient is required to provide the Endangered Language Fund with a short formal report of the project and copies of any and all publications resulting from materials obtained with the assistance of the grant.

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The Endangered Languages Fund
Department of Linguistics
Yale University
New Haven, CT 06520

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Announcements:

Meeting:
The annual meeting of The Endangered Language Fund will be at noon on Friday, Jan 9th, 1998, at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York, coinciding with the annual meeting of the LSA.

Request for Proposals:
Information on applying for 1998 ELF grants is available from:

Endangered Language Fund, Inc.
Department of Linguistics
Yale University
New Haven, CT 06520
elf@haskins.yale.edu
http://sapiz.ling.yale.edu/~elf/proposals.html.

More information on the preservation of endangered languages can be obtained from the following organizations:

Terralingua
P.O. Box 122
Hancock, Michigan 49930-0122 USA
gws@mail.portup.com
http://cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/terralin/home.html

“Terralingua is an international, nonprofit organization concerned about the future of the world’s cultural and biological diversity. Within this broad focus we have two main aims: preserving the world’s linguistic diversity, and investigating connections between biological and cultural diversity.” (Taken from the Terralingua Web Page at: http://cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/terralin/home.html)

The Foundation for Endangered Languages
Latin@ Newsletter
17 Oakley Road, London N1 3LL, England
0171-704-1481
nostler@chibcha.demon.co.uk
http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Philosophy/CTL/L/EFL/

Latin@ is the newsletter of the Foundation for Endangered Languages. The aims of the Foundation are: to raise awareness of endangered languages, to support the use of endangered languages in all contexts, to monitor linguistic policies and practices, to seek to influence the appropriate authorities where necessary, and to support the documentation of endangered languages.

Submissions:

ELFN welcomes the submission of announcements regarding endangered languages. Please send submissions to:

Endangered Language Fund, Inc.
Department of Linguistics
Yale University
New Haven, CT 06520
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About our logo

-Dennis Holt

The ELF logo incorporates a type of iconographic motif that was used to represent speech in many Mesoamerican murals and bas-relief sculptures. Called "speech-scrolls" by Mesoamericanists, these spiral designs often appear in front of the mouths of important personages in pictorial depictions of historical and mythological themes.

Each speech-scroll typically consists of a partially "unrolled" spiral element, much like the main part of a question-mark laid on its side (though often with the curve continuing farther into itself), to which are usually added a few nodes (as on the ELF logo) or "tabs" (or, in some especially interesting cases, flower-motifs). These tabs are spaced rather evenly along the outer edge. In some speech-scrolls, a central line running throughout the entire length of the spiral seems to indicate that the spiral is intended to represent a tongue. (An intriguing aspect of speech-scrolls that may help to corroborate this hypothesis is their occasional use to represent flames in depictions of fire. This is consistent with the fact that in some Mesoamerican languages the word for 'flame' was -- and is -- literally 'fire-tongue,' as in Nahuatl til-tepelilli.) The tabs, in turn, may represent teeth, which they very much resemble. (In connection with these speech-scrolls that have flowers instead of nodes or tabs, it is interesting to note the traditional association of flowers and song -- in xochitl, in cuicatl -- as a characterization of poetry among the Aztec and other Mesoamerican groups.)

With only a few exceptions, the speech-scroll is separated from the mouth of the speaker by a narrow gap and in this way seems to be distinguished from the representations of actual physical tongues, which, in the case of snakes and other animals, typically emanate directly from the mouth.

In most known examples, the speech-scroll is oriented with the longest outer edge upward, so that the central element (or "tongue") curves downward as it enters the spiral properly. Thus, for the ELF logo it is appropriate to invert this normal, "healthy" speech-scroll, much as the United States flag can be flown upside down as a distress-signal. In such an orientation the speech-scroll resembles somewhat the lower-case letters 'e' and 'l.' With the addition of a line parallel to the long part of the central element, to represent the missing lower-case 'l,' the initials ELF are all represented.

The original image from which the ELF logo was derived is found on Stela 13 at the Late Classic Maya site at Seibal, Peten, Guatemala, a rubbing of which is in the Merle Greene Robertson Collection of the Latin American Library at Tulane University.
HULU
Dennis Holt
21-IV-77

When a Chibchan speaker came across a cedar
what he saw & said (if he said)
was canoe.
Like 'meat on the hoof',
canoes in their bark,
on their roots:

puru pes-pis-ya

& as his current canoe
went along dingling through the rapids & rocks
with the loudest knocks
thought back
to where he had seen that tree.