

Terralingua Annual Report, 1996-1997.

This is the first Annual Report of the activities of Terralingua. It covers our initial year from the date of incorporation (August 1996), although it necessarily also makes reference to previous activities dating back to 1995. The next report will be issued in January 1999, and will cover the 17-month period of August 1997 to December 1998. After that, the Report will appear annually each September.

President's Message.

It has been just a year since Terralingua officially came into existence as a non-profit organization devoted to supporting the world's linguistic diversity and to exploring the links between linguistic and biological diversity. We come to you to report on our journey so far, and to chart with you our direction for the future.

In the following pages, our Secretary-Treasurer Dave Harmon gives us the specifics of the year's activities. Here, as Terralingua's Inaugural President, I would like to offer a few comments and put things in perspective. As measured against the threats faced by the world's linguistic, cultural, and biological diversity, and against the urgent needs experienced by indigenous and minority peoples and all concerned others in the struggle to preserve this diversity, there is little doubt that our accomplishments may well appear rather modest. Through our newsletter and Internet Web site, as well as through participation in conferences, workshops, and symposia, we may have had some success in raising awareness of biocultural diversity issues among scholars, activists, and the general public — which is most certainly part of our educational and informational mission, as laid down in our statement of purpose. Through our writings (which we are and will be making available to interested parties on our Web site and otherwise upon request), we may be contributing to the elaboration of some of the theoretical and methodological bases for the integrated study and understanding of the complex interrelationships between the various aspects of the diversity of life on earth — another key

aspect of our mission. However, no less central to our mission is our desire also to be involved in action: direct action on the ground in support of indigenous and minority peoples' efforts in defense of their linguistic and cultural heritage, their ancestral lands, and their traditional knowledge and wisdom. At this level, we must recognize that we have hardly begun to fulfill our mission.

Yet, this is by no means due to a lack of good will. Inevitably, a great deal of our energies this year had to be devoted to legally and physically setting ourselves up as an organization — energies that, furthermore, we mustered working as 100% volunteers on top of the respective activities from which we draw our sustenance, in the spare time we do not have. Everything we have done has been the fruit of this volunteer labor, financially aided exclusively by the membership fees we received throughout the year — for which we are, as always, most grateful. Further down on these pages you will find the Treasurer's report. As you will see, we could have hardly been more parsimonious! And much of what little we did spend on program activities actually went into making sure we reached those among our members and sympathizers who do not make use of electronic mail — our current medium of choice due to the minimal size of our budget (but more on outreach later).

This structuring process will be complete once we will have carried out our first elections for the Terralingua Board of Directors (coming up, as you will recall, in the last quarter of this year) and set up our Advisory Board (a group of highly experienced individuals who will act as consultants according to need). In both cases, we are trying to ensure geographic and ethnic diversity and the appropriate mix of expertise. Once we have these structures up and running, we will be able to concentrate our energies on formulating action plans and seeking funding for their implementation.

As you will remember from earlier Terralingua communications, we have already started on an initial project: gathering information on language maintenance and revitalization organizations and activities around the world, to be made available on our Web site as well as in non-electronic form. We have already received a considerable amount of responses to our query, which we are putting into a database, organized by continent. The first set of data will be included in the next update of our site. True to the Terralingua perspective, we are especially interested in hearing about efforts that link the preservation of linguistic diversity and that of biodiversity in indigenous and minority communities around the world. We urge our members and sympathizers to keep

this information coming and to pass our request on to others who may in turn have relevant information. Expansion and upgrading of this database will also benefit from the funding we hope to obtain. However, in this as in all other cases, nothing will benefit us more than the commitment of Terralingua's supporters to working with us toward our goals!

Beyond this, our efforts will be devoted to reaching out to indigenous and minority communities around the world, as well as spreading our perspective among the general public. Two crucial issues will have to be addressed in this connection, both having to do with the medium of our communications: one is that of the language(s) of these communications, the other is that of the channel(s) through which our communications will occur. As you know, we have already been making efforts to go beyond the exclusive use of English, which would be most ironic given our mission. Based solely on volunteerism, we have obtained translations of our statement of purpose in several different languages — a mere drop in the ocean, admittedly, but it is a start. We are most grateful to those who have contributed these translations, and renew our invitation to you all to send in more of them. We will strive to expand this translation effort to as many major Terralingua documents as possible. Again, funding will aid this enterprise, but short of a budget worthy of the United Nations, our best hopes rest in the continued help of our supporters. What we really need is a network of activists around the world who will act as "switchboards," so to speak, converting communications from one language to another. This, of course, should work both ways, so that we may not only reach others who do not speak English, but also those others may reach us with their information.

As for communication channels, again our choice of the Internet (e-mail and Web site) has been due to our current budget limitations: the electronic medium is available to us virtually free, while paper and regular mail, alas, are not. So far, we have made minimal use the latter — although, as mentioned above, we have tried to make sure we would reach our members and sympathizers who are not on the Internet. However, we are keenly aware of the need to improve on this state of affairs. Perhaps the majority of the people to whom we most wish to be of service do not have access to the Internet. Funding should allow us to expand our use of the printed medium for our communications. Yet, in this case as well, nothing will be more effective than your collaboration — those of you who are Internet-connected passing information on to those who are not, and vice versa. On both of these communication issues, we therefore warmly solicit your help; we also urge you to

send us your comments and suggestions. Adequate solutions to these issues are vital to the achievement of our goals.

This message has been full of appeals, but I cannot conclude without launching another one. Above all, we need your help to define and foster our mission. We came to you with a vision, a perspective; your enthusiatic response has indicated to us that the time was ripe for it, and that there was a niche to be filled. Now we need our collective strength to move forward. We need to continue to elaborate the theoretical and methodological bases on which our enterprise rests, those of the links between linguistic and biological diversity. And these bases must be the foundations of the applied work we will carry out. Help us by sending us ideas, comments and suggestions on the theoretical and methodological aspects, including in the form of publishable pieces for our newsletter. And help us by sending us ideas, comments and suggestions on specific projects in which we might engage, applying our perspective in support of linguistic and biological diversity on earth. By doing so, you will contribute to formulating and confronting one of the key issues of our times.

Many thanks again for your continued support.

Cordially,

Luisa Maffi Inaugural President, Terralingua.

Organizational Review.

Background.

Terralingua originated in discussions that took place at the Symposium on Language Loss held at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.S.A., in June-July 1995. At that meeting, a small group of volunteers formed an Ad Hoc Organizing Committee. The Committee then spent the next several months drafting a Call for Interest and Statement of Purpose, which were sent to a number of e-mail lists in December 1995. In April 1996, respondents to the Call for Interest received a Prospectus which outlined a proposed structure and activities for Terralingua. People were invited to join under a trial membership structure. Based on the response to this, Terralingua began accepting memberships, and in May 1996 established a bank account and obtained a U.S. federal tax identification number. In

July 1996 the Interim Board of Directors (which had evolved, with the consent of the membership, from the Ad Hoc Organizing Committee) approved a set of By-Laws.

Incorporation and 501(c)(3) status.

In August 1996, Terralingua was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state of Michigan, U.S.A. The incorporators were David Harmon, Martha Macri, and Luisa Maffi. In December 1996, Terralingua applied to the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.) for the U.S.A. federal recognition of tax-exempt, nonprofit status (known as "501(c)(3) status"; see below). In February 1997, the I.R.S. granted this status.

Board of Directors.

As noted above, the original Ad Hoc Organizing Committee has become an Interim Board of Directors, which will serve through December 1997. In June 1996, preparations were begun for Terralingua's first Board elections, which will take place in the last quarter of 1996.

Advisory Board.

The By-Laws allow for the formation of an Advisory Board to which the Board of Directors can have recourse for consultations as needed. In July 1997, preparations were begun to issue invitations to several persons to serve on the Advisory Board.

Membership.

Terralingua has three categories of membership:

REGULAR, which requires a monetary contribution (in any amount) or a commitment to volunteer time on behalf of the organization;

DONOR, which requires a contribution of US\$100 or more; and

ORGANIZATIONAL, which requires a contribution of US\$35.

In addition, Regular and Donor members who joined before June

30, 1997, are designated as "Founding Members."

As of 31 July 1997, Terralingua had 93 Regular Members, 7 Donor Members, and no Organizational Members. Ninety-seven of these were Founding Members. In addition, there were 229 other individuals and organizations on our mailing list.

Program Activities.

Terralingua's initial focus is on serving as an information source and support organization for our two main purposes: preserving linguistic diversity and researching the relationship between biological and cultural diversity. Given the financial limitations of an all-volunteer, start-up organization, we have primarily concentrated on publishing material in electronic format and on organizing and participating in conferences. Nonetheless, we recognize that electronic publishing and participating in conferences — especially when almost all the communications are in English — are completely inadequate means of reaching large segments of the world where linguistic diversity is at risk. By far the biggest challenge facing Terralingua is to find a way to help language activists organize and distribute information in the very languages that need to be consciously preserved. At a minimum this will require putting together a network of activist translators from around the world. The fact that this task is monumental does not mean that we should shrink from it. On the contrary, it is a measure of our success as an organization. By this standard, our achievements outlined below are modest indeed.

Newsletter.

Beginning in September 1996 we produced the first four issues of a quarterly newsletter, which is distributed primarily by e-mail, with supplemental hard-copy distribution to members who do not use electronic publishing. The newsletter has organizational updates, news items from kindred groups, brief reports and communications from members, and longer feature essays.

World-Wide Web Site.

In November 1996 we began publishing the Terralingua Web site, a multi-page information resource. The site is at cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/terralin/home.html. It is hosted by, and receives technical support from, the Department of Native American Studies, University of California at Davis, U.S.A. The

site features an introduction to Terralingua; our Statement of Purpose in 10 languages (with translations from English supplied by members); discussion papers contributed by members; a large (and frequently updated) list of Internet resources relating to linguistic, cultural, and biocultural diversity; and the complete text of the voluminous Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) bibliography on endangered languages. We plan to develop the Internet resource list into a full-scale database of organizations working on language endangerment, linguistic diversity, and allied areas.

Book on Human Value of Biodiversity.

In July 1997, Terralingua members Luisa Maffi and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (along with Jonah Andrianarivo) co-authored a chapter on "Linguistic Diversity" in the forthcoming book "Human Values of Biodiversity," edited by member Darrell Posey (along with Graham Dutfield) for the United Nations Environment Program.

Conferences.

In April 1996, member Dave Harmon was a keynote speaker, and member Luisa Maffi a discussant, at the colloquium "Losing Species, Languages, and Stories: Linking Cultural and Environmental Change in the Binational Southwest," organized by the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A., and nominally co-sponsored by Terralingua. In October 1996, Luisa Maffi organized a major conference, "Endangered Languages, Endangered Environments, Endangered Knowledge," at the University of California at Berkeley, U.S.A. Again, Terralingua was a nominal co-sponsor, and a number of Terralingua members made presentations or participated. Maffi is currently working on a proposal for an anthology of selected papers from the conference, and a video based on the presentations is being produced. The position paper and other materials from the conference are on the Terralingua Web site. Reports of the conference appeared in the newsletters of the American Anthropological Association, the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, and the Foundation for Endangered Languages; in the Bulletin of the Working Group on Traditional Resource Rights, the Journal of Ethnobiology, and the Bulletin of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists; and on the e-mail lists EndLang, LingAnth, IndKnow, and others. Other reports on, or materials from, the conference were published in News from Native California, Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor, and the People

and Plants Handbook.

Contacts with Other Groups.

Over the period covered by this Report, Terralingua established contact with numerous other sister organizations, including the Foundation for Endangered Languages; Endangered Languages Fund; Arbeitsgruppe Bedrohte Sprachen, United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (U.N.E.S.C.O.) Clearinghouse on Endangered Languages; Linguistic Society of America's Committee on Endangered Languages; Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas; Institute for the Preservation of the Original Languages of the Americas; European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages; Working Group on Traditional Resource Rights; the People and Plants Initiative of World Wildlife Fund; U.N.E.S.C.O., and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (London, U.K.); the International Forum on Globalization; and others.

Information on Terralingua was distributed at the Tucson and Berkeley conferences described above, the "Silent No More" workshop for native Californians and "Voices from the Commons" conference in Berkeley in June 1996, the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in San Francisco in November 1996, the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche in Rome in February 1997, and the International Forum on Globalization "teach-in" in Berkeley in April 1997.