

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We welcome your interest in The English-Speaking Union (ESU)! The English-Speaking Union of the United States, founded in 1920, is a non-profit, non-political educational organization committed to its mission of “promoting scholarship and the advancement of knowledge through the effective use of English in an expanding global community.” The ESU realizes this mission by responding to the needs of local communities across the country and around the world through a variety of national and international educational initiatives.

The ESU operates through a network of 74 Branches across the U.S. and shares a mission with over 50 ESUs around the world. Members provide financial and volunteer support to sustain the ESU's educational programs, as well as engage in a variety of projects particular to their own communities, including seminars, lectures, and other social events. Members benefit greatly from the personal relationships and international exposure gained from ESU activities.

The Indianapolis Branch of the ESU was founded in 1949 and has been a part of the city's educational and cultural landscape for over half a century. The Branch's founding president, Charles J. Lynn (1949-1957), provided vision and leadership for the ESU to take its place in this community. Mr. Lynn, a vice president of Eli Lilly & Company, was a significant presence in the city's business and philanthropic communities. The Branch has enjoyed strong and steady support from its board of directors and seven presidents over the course of its history in Indianapolis. There are sixteen members of the board of directors with standing committees for Scholarship, Shakespeare Initiatives, Programs, ESU Book Club, Membership, Page Scholar, Hospitality, Books as Envoys, Development & Investment, Technology, and Public Relations & Publications.

The first of the Branch's educational programs began in 1951 with the sponsorship of a British student at Indiana University Bloomington. This scholarship program is Indiana University's oldest international exchange, recently celebrating its golden anniversary. The School of Music at IU has been a strong attraction for the program, but students from the United Kingdom have studied widely across the university.

The Branch participates in the national ESU's British Universities Summer School (BUSS) program. We send a secondary school teacher from Indiana to a British university for a course of study each summer. Presently, teachers may study at the University of Oxford, University of Edinburgh, and the Globe Centre outside London. Established in 1976, the Branch will extend this scholarship to its thirty-second high school teacher in the summer of 2007.

The national ESU launched its National Shakespeare Competition in 1983 in which almost 150,000 secondary school students have participated. Branches hold their local competitions and the winners compete in New York to be the national winner. First-place winners receive a summer course of study about Shakespeare in England. The Indianapolis Branch has participated in the Shakespeare Competition since 1988 and now also offers annual Shakespeare workshops for both students and teachers.

The Walter Hines Page scholarships, named after our ambassador to Britain during World War I, are sponsored by the national ESU and promote the exchange of ideas by bringing British educators and administrators for short-term visits to schools in the U.S. They come to study developments in their specialized fields. A complementary program of Southern Hemisphere Page Scholar exchanges was launched in 1998, allowing teachers from the U.S. and countries below the equator to visit schools while they are still in session.

Along with the British Universities Summer School program, the Shakespeare Competition, and the Page Scholars program, the Books-Across-the-Sea program is the fourth, and final, national educational initiative in which the Indianapolis Branch participates. This program represents various educational projects having to do with the written word, effectively dramatizing the role of books as interpreters of culture. The Ambassador Book Awards are presented annually to those authors whose works best represent American life in the areas of fiction, biography, poetry, and American Studies. The Branch sponsors an ESU Book Club where members read and discuss these books each year. Also, through the Books as Envoys program, these works are sent as “literary ambassadors” of American culture to ESUs around the world for distribution to local libraries and schools. The Indianapolis Branch is partnered with the Bavarian Branch in Munich for the Books as Envoys program and hopes to further develop this partnership.

In addition to these educational programs, the Branch membership meets approximately once a month from September through June. One of the goals of the ESU is to foster fellowship amongst its members, both within Branches and among the Branches across the country and around the world. These meetings usually include a speaker and a meal but sometimes the purpose is simply social. Annual meetings include the Scholarship Program at which our recipient of the BUSS scholarship speaks about the experience of the previous summer; the local Shakespeare Competition; the Evelyn Wrench (founder of the ESU of the U.S.) speaker, a person brought over from the United Kingdom to tour our region of the country; the Wine & Wassail holiday reception in December; and the Garden Party/Celebration of the Queen’s Birthday/Business Meeting in early June.

We invite you to join our educational mission and to become a member of the Indianapolis Branch of the ESU. Please visit the membership section of this Web site for further information. Thank you for your interest in The English-Speaking Union.

Sincerely,

Dr. James P. Fadely
President