

JANUARY 4, 2013 ACTR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES

**American Council of Teachers of Russian Board of Directors Meeting
Boston, Massachusetts, January 4, 2013
Chatham Board Room, Hyatt Regency Boston**

Directors present: Richard Brecht, Tony Brown, Robert Channon, Dan Davidson, Ruth Edelman, Karen Evans-Romaine, Elena Farkas, Tom Garza, Michael Gorham, Masha Lekic, Diane Nemec-Ignashev, Peter Merrill, Ben Rifkin, William Rivers, Cynthia Ruder, Betsy Sandstrom, Jane Shuffelton, Alla Smyslova, Nataliya Ushakova and Irwin Weil. Also present: Bonny Einstein, Membership Secretary, Bozena Szulc, Co-Chair of the NREC and Michele Whaley, Board Secretary.

President Betsy Sandstrom welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 4:10. Minutes of the May 5, 2012 Board of Directors Meeting were approved with one amendment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Betsy Sandstrom welcomed Bozena Szulc, present for her first meeting as Co-Chair of the National Russian Essay Contest.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Betsy Sandstrom distributed Treasurer George Morris' report in his absence, explaining that he was sad he couldn't be present. As of December 31, 2012, income from credit cards was \$5865 and from checks \$20,482.63. Expenses totaled \$17,718.66. The checking account balance was \$35,275.15. The Pushkin Endowment fund, now transferred to American Councils management, holds \$38,583.06, and the Claire Walker Olympiada Fund stands at \$5097.50. ACTR finances are in transition while accounts move to American Councils.

Sandstrom announced that this was Morris' final report and that Cynthia Ruder has accepted the position of Treasurer. The Board applauded Ruder's appointment.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Membership Secretary Bonny Einstein shared that there are 299 active members, of whom 122 are life members. There were 47 new memberships in 2012, with 130 renewing members, a consistent record over the last few years. Einstein is planning a postcard mailing to remind and alert members to ACTR programs and possibly to attract new members to membership.

REPORT ON ACTR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Executive Director Dan Davidson's annual report on ACTR programs and the activities of American Councils will be printed in the *ACTR Letter* in full. Davidson commented on the positive and negative effects on AC/ACTR of Russian-American relations in 2012. There were 937 Russian scholars, teachers, and professional students who came to the US under AC/ACTR auspices, accounting for a larger share of the total academic exchanges activity from Russia than in recent years.

Davidson reported that ACTR placed and supported a total of 434 students and graduate students in Russia over the past year. This includes AC- funded 69 graduate students in Russia, who spent from two months to a year there. NSLI-Y and some direct exchanges sent 104 high school students to Russia. There was no Olympiada in 2012, and no high school teachers in 2012 on the SLT, but a new cycle of US Department of Education did come through in September 2012, which will permit resumption of this valuable program in the summer of 2013. ACTR funded six senior researchers and 239 outbound undergraduate students. The CLS program accounted for 79 of those, with the balance supported by the ACTR/RLASP semester and academic-year programs. In addition, AC offered a total of 16 travel grants to scholars and advanced graduate students in support of their research or conference presentations in Russia. Finally, the Russian Overseas Flagship Program placed twenty students for the 2012-13 year in St. Petersburg. Flagship is the only US program requires 2-level proficiency for admissions and trains to Level 3 and above.

Hope for a less turbulent relationship was somewhat dampened this past year when a planned trip by President Obama to Russia was put on hold. Unfortunately, negative trends can be self-feeding. Davidson reminded Board members that one of the historic strengths of ACTR has been its ability to keep scholarly and academic dialogue between Americans and their Russian counterparts, even when the political climate is bad. In that connection, Dan informed the Board of a forthcoming US-Russian Symposium on Russian, which will take place at the time of the next ACTR spring board meeting: April 26-27, 2013. The Russian Delegation, to be headed by L. A. Verbitskaja, President of St. Petersburg State University, will also take part in the 2013 Olympiada and Language Festival. The ACTR Conference and Festival, threads of which will include culture, language norms, and the challenges of heritage learners will take place on April 26, closely coordinated with the 2013 Northern Virginia Olympiada.

Russian Flagship Program

Director Masha Lekic reported that the Flagship Program has twenty students who include sixteen from domestic Flagship Programs and four at large. This is the second year of a dedicated heritage program, and the first year of using textbooks specifically written for the program. When students took the TORFL in December, ten earned a level 3 in all five subtests, and eight more missed passing just by only one of 5 sub-tests.

Heritage learners start their internships in the fall, while the rest start in the spring. Homestays have gone well. Most students got A's in their content courses, doing presentations of ten to fifteen minutes in Russian at the close. The situation at Petersburg University is somewhat challenging with an outflux of 100 faculty members under a new budgetary plan, but does not seem to have affected the students. Selection of new faculty for the Flagship Program will begin soon.

REPORT FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCILS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Richard Brecht, Chairman of the American Councils Board of Trustees, reported that the Board is composed of twenty-three nationally and internationally distinguished representatives from academia, government, business and law who are responsible for ACTR's fiscal state. The Board of Trustees accepted the Audit Committee's latest report. It confirmed that the annual audit was again without findings and maintained the organization's low-risk status. The Board of Trustees is proud of ACTR's great management and the fact that it is achieving its goal of ethnic and gender diversification in new members. Income again significantly exceeded outlays over the past year. Changes in financial arrangements mean that ACTR's finances are being rolled into American Councils finances.

REPORT ON PUBLICATIONS

Editor Masha Letic reported sending out Volume 62 of *Russian Language Journal*, now in its eighth year under ACTR; it is an expanded version with outside funding that looks at a retrospective review of the Flagship experience. Every writer is a Russian or American Flagship teacher. The volume celebrates the tenth anniversary of the Flagship Program. RLJ continues its reputation as being a selective, high-quality bilingual journal, with a double-blind review system and submissions coming internationally.

The grant for Volume 62 will help turn *RLJ* over to a new editor. Letic is stepping down. Richard Brecht commended Letic for bringing *RLJ* from an "almost moribund state" to being a successful academic journal.

Davidson brought forth a proposal for a future discussion to address production and mailing costs to sustain *RLJ*. Only one person, outside the AC/ACTR offices, receives any payment. All other staff and writing is voluntary. If 600 copies are produced, each one requires \$22. ACTR membership dues are only \$30/35 per year, which cannot sustain the production costs. Life members do not currently pay anything for *RLJ*. Members can gain access on line to the current volume, and after a time delay, anyone can read past volumes. It might be possible to charge a fee for downloading particular articles. Davidson asked members to consider models of sustainability and to share ideas with a committee that will ready them for a discussion in April. The discussion included ideas about how an electronic version would increase the citation index, ways to separate dues so that there is additional payment for *RLJ*, whether electronic versions would increase

circulation, and how to set up changing the membership dues structure and subscriptions for *RLJ* at the same time. Alla Smyslova, Dan Davidson, Michael Gorham, Elena Farkas and Bonny Einstein agreed to work together to gather ideas and create a proposal for the April meeting.

Sandstrom nominated Bill Rivers to become the new editor of *RLJ*. Dick Brecht seconded, and the Board unanimously approved his nomination. Discussion that followed concluded that Assistant Editor Michael Gorham and Rivers should confer on a third partner to join them on the editorial staff.

REPORT FROM RGGU AND THE AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER

Director Irwin Weil announced the May 13-14, 2013 RGGU Conference, "Urbanism as a Dimension of American Civilization." Tony Brown discussed the stimulating nature of annual conference proceedings, noting that it is the first time the conference has advertised on SEELANGS. AC/ACTR will provide six travel grants, and both Weil and Brown are seeking additional support for the US travel delegation. Time is of essence for planning visas and housing. This conference offers both Russians and Americans to see their countries as others see them, examining stereotypes that often date back to the Cold War. RGGU is trying to help redefine America in Russia, and it is also worth looking at renewing American views of Russia and Russian culture. Several comments underscored the importance of the conference in these political times.

REPORT FROM JNCL-NCLIS

Bill Rivers, Executive Director of the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies, explained that these two non-profits have 72 members of associations of teachers, researchers, scholars and practitioners, representing more than 300,000 language professionals in the United States. Its two-fold mission is first to raise the awareness of language as a profession in the US, and secondly to lobby the Executive and Legislative Branches to achieve policy aims. ACTR has been a member since 1981; Dan Davidson is a former president and current delegate to the Delegate Assembly and board member of the organization.

Rivers discussed the current situation in Washington, saying that he believed that ACTR and Startalk should not see too much damage, no matter what happens with the "fiscal cliff." Bad news included the fact that FLAP grants were deleted for 2012, with the idea of helping institutions get block grants from state agencies. Other bad news: a Title 6 budget is now 45% of what it was three years ago, for instance. Good news includes that JNCL-NCLIS is working with supporters in Congress to establish an informal study group from both parties to develop more champions for language study. There is a growing desire to assure "global competence," but the Department of Education is not putting language instruction as a priority.

Languagepolicy.org is the new JNCL-NCLIS website. Facebook, Twitter, and Linked-in all have connections to the website, alerting members to action items, success stories at the local level, and upcoming events. JNCL-NCLIS has been working with ACTFL to

create tools for successful advocacy.

A current project involves this July's Folklife Festival on the Mall in Washington. One-third of the event will be curated by Swarthmore Slavic Linguist David Harrison. Two million people attend the event, and they will see exhibits focusing on languages and cultures.

A final element for JNCL-NCLIS is one of gathering half a million language industry professionals, who are deeply concerned about the erosion of education support for the study of world languages at national and local levels. Powerful voices are rising for language support.

ACTFL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

ACTFL Delegate Jane Shuffelton reported on the ACTFL Delegate Assembly, which she and Betsy Sandstrom attended in Philadelphia. Discussion focused on ACTFL's initiative to coordinate and align the National Standards with Core Curriculum standards. The Core Curriculum does not include World Language study. The generic and language-specific standards are being revised, giving us a chance to add post-secondary learning scenarios and sample progress indicators to the Russian language standards.

REPORT ON THE REVISION OF RUSSIAN SPECIFIC STANDARDS

Peter Merrill, Tom Garza and Shuffelton worked for several days in Washington this summer to revise the Russian Standards. Merrill rewrote the Introduction, and Garza rewrote the Sample Progress Indicators by proficiency levels rather than by grade level. This is an ongoing process and there is much to be done, but the deadline is now extended to the next ACTFL Conference. Some of the work to come includes adding learning scenarios for novice, intermediate, and advanced at every program level. Shuffelton will actively be recruiting writers and will send a template to anyone who is willing to help write learning scenarios for this project.

REPORTS ON CONTEST AND AWARDS

Olympiada of Spoken Russian

Ruth Edelman distributed a handout from Co-Chair Mark Trotter. Fifteen competitions allowed 984 students to participate in high school, middle school, elementary level, and an exclusively heritage speaker competition. The states and regions with the highest number of participants were Maryland (208), New Jersey (188), and Virginia (175). The number of participants overall continues to decline, this year by more than 100 from the 2011 level of 1136. No competitions took place in the following states and regions: Mountain States, New England, Oklahoma, Southeastern Alaska, and Tennessee/Missouri.

The rule of requiring more than one school for participation in an Olympiada continued to be relaxed. This year, the International Olympiada in Moscow was closed to contestants outside the CIS states. A consolation prize is being arranged for finalists who were preparing for an October International Olympiada.

A committee consisting of Lee Roby, Betsy Sandstrom, Nataliya Ushakova and Edelman is working to revise the existing materials. This year some competitions will pilot the new Russian 1 materials. Regional chair people have already received those by email and can make the decision to start using them this year if they wish. Feedback will inform future revision efforts.

Discussion about reasons for the decline ensued. In some cases, ACTR has lost regional chairs and is working to replace them.

Traditional Olympiada medals/certificates were awarded as follows: Gold (39%), Silver (30%), Bronze (15%), Honorable Mention (17%).

Halina Danchenko is stepping down as Co-Chair. Suzannah Westen of University of Washington is the new Co-Chair.

National Russian Essay Contest (NREC)

Co-chair Bozena Szulc reported on the 31st NREC, reminding the Board of the rules of the contests, especially regarding heritage speakers and ranking. There was little change from 2011, with 1207 students participating in 2012 on the topic "Our School." There were 269 advanced students, 48 advanced heritage students, 338 intermediate, 53 intermediate heritage, 448 beginners, 23 beginning heritage students and 28 native speakers. The level distribution was also almost equal. A total of 41 schools including 44 teachers in 17 states participated: Alaska, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington and Virginia. The only bad news is that no new schools joined in the competition this year. Eight judges agreed to score essays and will report back in mid-January. Sculz thanked Elena Farkas and Mara Sukholutskaya as Board-member judges, and gave special thanks to Jane Shuffelton for her advisory position to the Committee Chairs.

Irwin Weil added that Mariana Katayeva in Moscow had been most complimentary about the level of essays that reach her desk from the gold medalist advanced, heritage and native speaker groups.

National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest (NPSRC)

Chairperson Tony Brown thanked those who encouraged students to participate. There were 1040 submissions from 48 institutions in 2012, with all level categories represented. Brown hopes to see the number grow. This year's application deadline is January 31.

Last year's topic was "What is a friend?" Brown encouraged members to send him questions about the contest and suggestions for future topics. Board members commented on the value of contest recognition for both students and institutions as continued support for Russian programs.

Russian Scholar Laureate Awards (RSLA and PSRSLA)

Neither of the Chairs for the Scholar Laureate Awards could be present. Sandstrom explained the two Scholar Laureate awards: one for secondary students and one for post-secondary students. Current Chair Cynthia Ruder sent word that a call for nominees for the Post-Secondary Award will be coming out January 15, with a March 1 deadline, and students will receive certificates by April 1. She urged institutions to be on the lookout for those announcements and to be ready to nominate students. Ruder will no longer be the Chair of the PSRSLA because of her new position as Treasurer of the Board. Sandstrom asked for volunteers to chair the PSRSLA.

Sandstrom shared Chairperson Nataliya Ushakova's report that there were 41 complete nominations for this year's ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award from 33 schools in fifteen states. Several schools nominated two students each, based upon a secondary school enrollment of more than 100 students in Russian classes. Ushakova will make some changes in requirements for photograph submission. Sandstrom asked members to encourage colleagues to nominate students for this award. Announcements will come out soon.

ACTR SERVICE AWARD

Chairperson Jane Shuffelton mentioned that Bill Rivers will remain a member of the committee with Elena Farkas and Shuffelton, despite leaving the Board. She encouraged everyone to be present at the membership meeting to enjoy seeing Peter Merrill receive the award. Delighted applause for Merrill met Shuffelton's invitation. Shuffelton said that the award has been long overdue.

2012 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

2011-2012 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT AND ELECTIONS

Bob Channon spoke for the Nomination Committee, which also includes Paavo Husen and Cynthia Ruder. Nine terms expire this year. George Morris is stepping down this year, having been a founding member for 35 years, and the most active member in many different areas. Bill Rivers stepped down when he became the Executive Director of JNCL-NCLIS. Zita Dabars' term did not expire, but she asked to retire, as did Ben Rifkin. All four departing members will be deeply missed.

Discussion followed about encouraging junior faculty and graduate students to join the Board in order to make the Board's work known to and accessible to the next generation, as well as encouraging new faces to join in on ACTR goals. At this time, many of the "younger" members of the board are already approaching retirement. Channon

suggested that Board makeup changes be added as an agenda item for the April Board Meeting.

The Board approved the slate of re-nominations, including Peter Merrill, Betsy Sandstrom, Tony Brown, Mara Sukholutskaya, Diane Nemec-Ignashev, Richard Brecht, Tom Garza, and Ruth Edelman. The Board also approved the nominations of Michele Whaley, ACTR Board Secretary, and Jim Sweigert, Editor of the *ACTR Letter*. Assuming that the membership accepts the Nominations Committee proposals, there will still be two positions open, which the Board proposes to fill at a later date.

SUMMER LANGUAGE TEACHER PROGRAM

Diane Nemec-Ignashev reported on her work with Karen Evans-Romaine and Tony Brown to evaluate the program. They met with the Dean of the Philological Faculty, Marina Leontievna Remneva, and Associate Dean for International Relations, Galina Evgenievna Kedrova. The committee is working with Nadra Garas at American Councils to formulate a survey of former participants and hopes to return to the board with its assessment and recommendations, potentially including these areas:

- demographics (23% high school teachers, 37% graduate students and 39% junior university faculty) and enhancing the program's appeal for teachers and senior faculty,
- organization of classes,
- free time,
- diversity and connectedness of the program,
- offerings for different groups,
- support for those new to Moscow,
- cultural offerings,
- living conditions,
- travel experience,
- pre-testing,
- rewriting the handbook,
- transparency of program goals.

Teachers have commented that the school calendar, ending in mid- to late-June, impedes the participation of K-12 participants. Dan Davidson thanked the committee for their work, commenting on the changes to a single summer program from separate programs for K-12 and university members. This is the only program without a homestay or pre/post testing (because of teacher sensitivity).

Nemec-Ignashev and Davidson agreed on a mid-March report deadline.

NEXT MEETING

The next ACTR Board meeting will be April 27, in conjunction with the International Conference. It will be slightly shorter because of the Conference.

FINAL NOTES

Jane Shuffelton reminded the Board that we are losing Board members who have been pillars of support for ACTR. The Board wishes to give immense thanks to Ben Rifkin and Bill Rivers for their work, appreciating the fact that they will continue to participate in important ACTR matters. Zita Dabars and George Morris are original founding members of ACTR. The ACTR Board understands and supports their retirement, but recognizes the huge loss to our membership. Board members met Shuffelton's remarks with hearty applause for our retiring members.

The meeting adjourned at 6:54.

MEETING DATES FOR SPRING 2013, NOVEMBER 2013, AND JANUARY 2014

ACTR 2013 – Washington, DC, April 27, 2013, American Councils

ACTFL – Orlando, FL, November 22-24, 2013, Convention Center

ASEEES (AAASS) – Boston, MA, November 21-24, 2013, Boston Marriott Copley Place

AATSEEL – Chicago, IL, January 9-12, 2014 Drake Hotel