

**AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF RUSSIAN
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
January 10, 2015
5:15 PM – 7:00 PM
Renaissance Harbourside Hotel
Vancouver, British Columbia**

Tom Garza, presiding as ACTR Vice President, called the meeting to order at 5:15.

1. **Approval of Minutes** of Jan 11, 2014 Membership Meeting (Chicago) - approved, no changes.

2. **Announcements – Tom Garza**

- Olga Kagan earned the NDFL award at the Modern Language Association.
- Ben Rifkin has accepted a new position as Provost at Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY.

3. **Treasurer's Report** – Cynthia Ruder

Robert Channon reported for **Cynthia Ruder**.

- The fiscal year is from July 1 to June 30. The present report ends 30 June 2014.
- Revenue support: \$30,292; in the previous year it was \$25,096.
- Expenses: \$25,658.
- Net surplus of revenue over expenses: \$4,634.
- Previous year: deficit slightly over \$11,000, because of higher expenses for travel.

4. **Membership Secretary's Report** – Bonnie Einstein

Robert Channon reported for **Bonnie Einstein** on 2014. [calendar year]

- New membership applications: 43.
- Renewals: 157
- Life members: 123.
- Total active members: 323. Only twelve are student members.

Previous calculations of membership presented active members for the year in the last week of December. Now that the Board meets in early January, new membership numbers appear low. Members' renewal dues have yet to come in.

ACTR members should continue to recommend that graduate students join ACTR and benefit from the lower dues rate. Tom Garza mentioned that the University of Texas Slavic Department has been paying for one year's membership for every entering graduate student. The investment has paid off, increasing student interest in the profession.

5. **American Councils Board of Trustees Report** – Richard Brecht

Richard Brecht reminded the membership that the AC Board of Trustees is fiscally responsible for overseeing ACTR's activities and those of other organizations with an annual fall audit.

The Board of Trustees has completed five years of strategic planning goals and is starting the next session of strategic planning. Looking ahead is particularly important in these challenging times.

The Board of Trustees has invited two distinguished former ambassadors to return to the Board of Trustees: John Ordway and Richard Morningstar. Morningstar is knowledgeable about petroleum, and Ordway is fluent in Russian.

Tom Garza thanked Brecht for advocating membership invitations that improve the Board's gender and ethnic diversity.

6. **JNCL-NCLIS** – William Rivers

William Rivers explained that JNCL-NCLIS is the lobbyist organization that represents 100 organizations and institutions in Washington, DC, to influence local policy decisions. ACTR is a founding member of JNCL-NCLIS. Over the last year, Rivers visited over 70 congressional offices and the White House, the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, and members of the intelligence community, leading to some successes in a challenging fiscal environment. Thanks to an active effort carefully coordinated with AC and ASEEES, Title VIII, the research and studies program for Eurasia, was brought back. Title VIII had been cancelled in 2013. Dan Davidson is continuing to work diligently on the process. Title VI was level-funded; a \$10 million increase did not come through. Title VI was cut by 48% two years ago, resulting in the elimination of programs and halving budgets in language centers.

Rivers expects incremental increases in years to come, but noted it will be important to demonstrate consideration of 21st-century challenges such as water shortages and other global issues. Language groups should alert Rivers about projects so he can better help. Most of the previous cuts to DLI were returned, with an impact on research. NSEP, including Flagship and StarTalk, can expect level funding. Administrative cuts should be absorbed, but the number of exchanges should remain steady. Most important this year was a letter written in collaboration with American Councils, JNCL-NCLIS, AAAS and the British Academy of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The letter stressed the cognitive advantages of language study and the impact of language on security, economic growth and social justice. The group is in the process of establishing a Commission of some 20 AAAS fellows and some others. AAAS, founded in 1781, is the oldest honorary academic society in the US. One result of the Federal Advisory Information Act is there will not be another Perkins Commission, because clearance would take too long. The AAAS Fellows Commission will act in its place, delivering a report to Congress in about 18 months with some answers to questions and recommendations to states, business communities, and the nation. This is the first broad-based, congressionally-directed commission since 1979.

7. **Russian Language Journal** – William Rivers

William Rivers reported that Volume 64 of the *Russian Language Journal* is in circulation, including a special section on Humanities Plus, the result of the first-ever conference of RGGU, AC, and Brigham

Young University. Four solicited articles are included in this issue as well as seven reviews, including one by John Bailin. Michael Gorham is charged with the reviews. Of 22 commissions, four were considered out of scope, and four published, leading to a 17% acceptance rate. This is a double-blind peer review, with reviewers not listed because of the small circle of reviewers.

Cost continues to be an issue. AC staff received boxes of the *Russian Language Journal* and packaged them. The printing company is now shipping the journals book rate: \$8,500, so total cost to produce the journal is about \$14,000. The only costs covered are the editorial assistant, printing and shipping. About half of the \$14,000 is defrayed by institutional subscriptions, so each volume costs around \$23. It is available online to all ACTR members through the ACTR website. A year after publication it is available more broadly.

The *Russian Language Journal* is indexed and under negotiations to be included in JSTOR. Scholar citations are finally appearing from *RLJ* articles. The ACTR Board congratulates Rivers for the *Journal's* reaching the gold standard for publications. Rivers commented that he took over the *Journal* in very good shape with an excellent editorial board.

8. Report on ACTR programs—Dan Davidson

Dan Davidson reported on an eventful year for US-Russia relations. Professional networks and personal networks trump political networks for American Councils and ACTR. As troublesome as the relationship between the two governments has been, worsening over the last year, it has been heartening to see how colleagues in Russia (university, government, foundation, and association-based) continue to work with AC and ACTR as they always have. In April 2014, Davidson represented AC at a well-attended, major international conference at MGIMO on the subject of the global university, trends in higher education, and the role of Russian universities in the globalization of higher education. Davidson gave a plenary lecture at the opening session, as if nothing had changed in relations.

The many AC offices across Russia were required to shut down on 7 April after registration changes, with about one month to adapt. NGOs in St Petersburg, Vladivostok, Novosibirsk, and Moscow were also shut down. A commercial office in Moscow performs academic testing (TOEFL, GRE, MCAT, etc.). The office was registered separately as a commercial entity, which was not affected by the closure rule. American Councils spent six months trying to bring the non-profit registration back into line. It was submitted on 25 December, and will be effective if and when it is registered. Of greater importance is that the for-profit office, which has assumed responsibilities of the non-profit, was just reaccredited through December 2017. AC's presence in Russia is legal, but the smaller office has to carry a larger load.

Impact on programs: RLASP programs have not been affected at all. They remain the same in Moscow, Petersburg, and Vladimir, and no changes are contemplated. Some of the resident directors say that a person who didn't watch the Russian media wouldn't notice any changes.

The CLS program will remain in operation. Next year 50 participants are to be fully funded by the State Department, with no plan to move them outside Russia. In summer 2014, one group in Ufa moved to Tbilisi because of greater difficulty for outlying republics to gain permission to host programs. Kaliningrad, Tuva, Ufa, and others are having difficulty getting permission.

The International Olympiada operated well this year after some initial stumbles.

The travel grants program this past year supported an increasing number of scholars: 20 scholars, 41 grad students, and 8 outbound professionals. The tightening of visa regulations has made it essential that scholars be appropriately careful. It is no longer feasible to get a tourist visa to conduct research; a visa must precisely reflect the purpose of the visit.

Multiple entry visas are still being issued and honored, but it is helpful to check that the issuer is still in good standing.

MAPRIAL is preparing for its 2015 International Congress in the third week in September, hosted by the University of Granada in Spain, a strong center of Russian studies. The Congress should be stimulating, given the politics of international Russian studies.

Eureka, the entrepreneurship and technology transfer program is working well. Educational testing and opportunity grants are working well.

NSLI-Y Kazan moved to Moldova in May, returned to Moldova in the fall, and will be in Narva in the spring semester.

Similarly, the Boren program and Flagship are no longer in Russia. The Flagship Program was moved from St. Petersburg State University to Almaty at the last minute, under the guidance of Dr. Lekic and Dr. Sulemeina. That shift has taken place in an effective way for the students concerned. Mid-year testing results are exactly where AC expects them to be.

Part of counter-sanctions has been a disappointing decision to cancel FLEX in Russia. The Future Leaders Program, child of Bill Bradley, is in its 23rd year. Last year, there were 15,900 applications from across Russia for 300 positions that AC filled. Those students are in the US now, but the Russian government announced in October that AC had to stop recruitment for next year and that Russia would be leaving the FLEX program. That is not a popular decision among Russian students, parents, or teachers. A petition, legal efforts and appeals are in process, but for now FLEX will stop with the return of this year's students. The quota for applicants from Russia was transferred to Ukraine. Other programs may substitute for FLEX in the meantime.

Total numbers:

- 401 undergraduates, graduate students, language teachers, researchers, Olympiada participants in Russia.
- 1024 Russians came to the US on AC programs.

9. Reports on Contests and Awards

a. Olympiada of Spoken Russian

Robert Channon delivered **Mark Trotter's** report.

- A limited number of middle schools offer Russian and participate in Olympiada.
- Alaska has two Olympiadas; Juneau cannot always travel to Anchorage because of weather conditions. A heritage-focused school in Maryland also has its own Olympiada.
- In 2014, over 46 schools and 1111 students participated in Olympiada. Of those 847 received traditional Olympiada awards, medals, or certificates.
- A group of students attended the International Olympiada in Moscow in 2014. The domestic version is held annually; the international version once in four years.

New England sat out last year, but returned this year with two participating schools.

b. National Russian Essay Contest – Paavo Husen

Jane Shuffelton reported for **Paavo Husen**.

- NREC 2013: 41 schools, 47 teachers, 1065 participants. “What’s important to me.”
- NREC 2014: 40 schools, 48 teachers, 1362 participants. “How young people live in America.”
- Six schools were new to the contest, but five programs dropped out.

Judging results should be available by 15 February. Shuffelton commended the excellent work by contest chairs Evgeny Dengub and John Rook. Please submit topics for next year’s contest to the contest administrators.

c. National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest

Tony Brown reported, thanking those whose students participated. 1004 students submitted essays this past year from 58 institutions, up from over 980 in 2013. The topic: “An Important Decision in My Life.” Brown will send out a SEELANGS announcement and an announcement to participants.

10. ACTFL and the ACTFL Assembly of Delegates – Jane Shuffelton

Jane Shuffelton reported that the main topic of the Assembly was advocacy. The group heard from William Rivers, and the National Standards Collaborative Board met as well. The Delegates discussed amendments based on concerns from some organizations to the new version of the generic World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. The Standards belong to the collaborative board, but ACTFL will publish the volume.

Once the volume becomes available, members will be able to order it in print or in an e-book version. It will be possible to order either individual language standards or all (sixteen) language standards. Those will be available only in e-format, and as languages update their standards, there will be no charge to download the new versions. A big change is that this volume includes proficiency levels. The committees are adding sample progress indicators and learning scenarios for post-secondary to the Standards. They are listed by proficiency range: Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced, and eventually the Superior level as

well. The Russian group is ahead of other languages. One goal area, Culture, is finished for Russian, and stands as a model for other languages. Jane Shuffelton, Peter Merrill, and Tom Garza form the Russian team.

11. **RGGU and the American Studies Center** – Tony Brown

Tony Brown asked Board members to consider participating in the Biennial Conference on American Studies, May 12-13, at RGGU. This will be the tenth anniversary of the American Studies Center and the 40th anniversary of American Councils. The deadline is 10 March for papers. The topic is War in American Culture, Texts and Contexts.

12. **2014 Nominations Committee Report** – Tony Brown and Karen Evans-Romaine

Tony Brown and **Karen Evans-Romaine** presented two candidates to the Board for consideration: Evgeny Dengub and Irina Dubinina. Dengub has been a lecturer at Amherst College, Mount Holyoke, and UM Amherst since 2010. Dubinina is an assistant professor at Brandeis University, and was a judge in last year's National (secondary) Russian Essay Contest.

The Board voted unanimously to accept both nominations with no objections, no abstentions. The slate for re-nomination was also approved unanimously: Robert Channon, Jane Shuffelton, Alla Smyslova, Natalia Ushakova and Irwin Weill.

13. **Old Business**

In November, the ACTR Board voted to approve a new membership dues schedule. Concerns since that time have led to a decision to reconsider the new dues structure. Robert Channon proposed an alternative schedule that the Board will review at the April Board meeting.

14. **New Business**

The new dues structure is already in print. The online version will revert to the old dues structure, but Board members should help spread the news that the old dues structure remains in place.

15. **ACTR Service Award** – Jane Shuffelton

The ACTR Board of Directors awarded the ACTR Lifetime Service Award to Dan Davidson at ACTFL in San Antonio. Shuffelton said that Dan Davidson and ACTR Service are synonymous. Davidson remarked that he was joining honorable company.

See the Anniversary Edition of the *ACTR Letter* for details.

16. **Announcement:** the US State Department offers a new grant between the US and Russia: *US-Russia Peer to Peer Dialogue Program*. The 2015 round of competition will offer up to \$100,000 for “unique projects centered on Russian-American, peer-to-peer collaboration, including an exchange of best practices on a topic of mutual interest.”

17. **Adjournment**

Garza adjourned the meeting at 6:28 pm.