

**American Council of Teachers of Russian  
Board of Directors Meeting  
February 2, 2018  
1:00 – 3:30 pm  
Grand Hyatt, Renwick Room  
Washington, DC**

**AGENDA**

1. Approval of minutes (April 29, 2017, Washington, ACTR Board of Directors) – Tom Garza

Minutes accepted. Natasha moved, Bob seconded.

Betsy will check into a shared Google drive for the notes, as some members expressed difficulties getting into the ACTR website.

2. Introduction of Loren Cramer, new ACTR President. Dan Davidson provided biographical background on Loren Cramer. Half British, Loren grew up in various parts of the world. His father is a distinguished linguist and author of an etymological dictionary of Hungarian. Loren's languages are Mandarin and French. He was a Senate staffer and later served as Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Labor, and Human Rights under Secretary Colin Powell. After his term at State he headed the International Republican Institute, which is a sister organization of AC in democracy development around the world, including in Central Asia. He has a great deal of experience as CEO and is very well connected in Washington. Loren joined AC on 5 July after a search at nearly 300 applications. There was a very thorough search process, in which Dan was consulted, although he was not part of the search committee.

Board members introduce themselves to Loren.

Loren introduces himself: studied Chinese in college, spent a summer studying in Taiwan. Loren was at the Brent Scowcroft Institute and at the Asia Institute. He worked for Secretary of State James Baker under President George H.W. Bush. His father was a defense attaché who learned Russian in college and learned Bulgarian and Hungarian afterwards. His sister studied Russian; both he and his sister attended Reed College, where his sister studied Russian. He decided to study Chinese.

The heart and the soul of AC is Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union. Loren is looking to add other regions to AC's portfolio: we need to do more in Africa and Latin America. Dan built up AC's presence in Asia and the Middle East. We will keep our heart and soul in Russia. Our relationship with Russia has suffered, with fault on both sides. But since the fall of the wall, there has not been the study of Russia to the extent that there should have been. You never know which region of the world will be important. Part of what we are doing at American Councils is taking what is strategically important and getting to know them and having them get to know us. Loren has been around long enough to see the sine wave of US-Russian relations go up and down. He would like AC to be in a position to maintain the threads while the fabric of US-Russian relations has been ripped. He wants to preserve those threads now, so that we can knit the fabric back together once relations get better again. All that we are doing: the scholarships, the awards, are all part of that. He wants to assure us that ACTR will continue to

have a close relationship with AC and we will see how much we can do together to keep that fabric together.

In terms of language study, area studies, the situation is going to be okay. After the 2018 elections important people in Congress will be leaving, and we don't know who will replace them. Your work at home in your districts to advocate for what we do is tremendously important; you would be surprised how important. Having real data about the impact our programs have has an effect. Lindsey Graham is the most important person for foreign aid in the Senate and is up for reelection in 2020. It will get tougher for the next couple of years, but it will get better.

New travel advisory. His impression is that the placement of UK in Category 2 and Russia in Category 3 started somewhere in the State Department and never rose to a higher level to be stopped. There are not enough people at the top to vet ideas like this. He expects a reexamination and would be very surprised if this categorization lasted.

Dan: This issue is the subject of debate in the State Department now. AC has requested a statement from the State Department that the situation in Russia has in fact not changed from 2007 to 2018, so that AC can circulate that notice. Dan is asking us to forward any information about decisions we see at our home institutions to hold off on travel because of the placement of Russia into Category 3, because there are some in the State Department that don't feel this is important. Concrete examples are very helpful.

Loren doesn't think they will change the category, but he is optimistic that they will issue a clarification. Nothing in Russia has changed. The more information the Board can give Dan, the more AC can go to the State Department with the request for the clarification.

Question: Are there major changes or projects planned? AC is in excellent shape. There is not a management issue that he has not dealt with before, so he has the luxury of thinking about programs in Africa. He is really looking forward to working with us and looks forward to the future that we have.

### 3. Announcements – Tom Garza

- a. Two members of our Board are receiving national awards at the AATSEEL conference: Michele Whaley, whom Tom nominated, received the national award for secondary school teacher of the year. Long overdue, and we're happy that she can receive that award. Teacher of the year, post-secondary, is Mara Sukholutskaya. In addition, Bill Comer, Lynne DeBenedette, and Alla Smyslova will receive the textbook award for *Mezhdunarodnyye yazyki*.
- b. President's Reception this evening at 7 pm.
- c. CARTA Annual Meeting – Mara. CARTA is turning 20 years old. It has always been Mara's dream and others' that we could take CARTA to the country of the language of study. The Board voted and approved a trip to Russia: CARTA will be going to Russia in May, hosted by the Pushkin Institute, which has been very supportive. It would be wonderful if the ACTR Board were represented at the conference. She has contacted her Republican Congressman in Oklahoma to have John Huntsman speak at the CARTA conference in Moscow. There will be roundtables, there is an invitation from Maria Evtushenko to visit Peredelkino. They will have

tea at the house and visit Evtushenko's grave; he is an honorary member of CARTA. CARTA has an invitation from Zlatoust to come to Petersburg. Dates: May 29 – 31 for conference and 2-3 more days for cultural activities, including visits to literary estates, like Polenovo and Yasnaya Polyana.

4. Report on programs and new initiatives – Dan Davidson. American Councils has focused its attentions recently on the new State Department classification of Russia. If you are aware of any decision on a campus or school district that is based on this new categorization, State Department is eager to receive this information, so that they can understand the damage that would be done. We are literally today in the midst of that conversation.

In reviewing the incident reports from Fall 2014 through Fall 2017, AC has had on average about 400-450 people in Russia for varying periods, and there has not been a single incident of harassment in that period. That is consistent with what has been reported broadly about Russia.

Dan reported on the most recent “Open Doors” study abroad data showing fairly dramatically a decline in study by US students for credit-bearing work to Russia. The decline began is evident in 2013-14 when numbers fell to 1527. Post-Crimea in 2014-15 to about 1100. The movement of Russians coming to the US is also down to approximately 4100. The Russian numbers include current students who are holders of Russian passports enrolled in a higher ed institution in the US.

NSLI-Y: 64 in Russia, 59 outside of Russia (Estonia, Latvia, Moldova)

AY NSLI-Y (coming back at ILR 2-level proficiency) have not been in Russia since 2014. They have been in Moldova, but the micro-environment in Moldova turns out to be very productive. CLS in Vladimir and Nizhny Novgorod: 50. Estimate for next year is the same. Thanks to the US Congress, we got a nearly 10% increase in NSLI-Y, even after the president had asked the program to close. Congress understands the value of these programs, and there was not a single person in Congress, particularly in the appropriations side, who doesn't know the program. CLS has a slight increase.

RLASP: 100 at Moscow International and Herzen in Petersburg, 50 more at RLASP in Kazakhstan, where we send those who cannot use their funding (Flagship, Boren) in Russia. Our choices are made based on careful measurement of the quality and quantity of authentic language content students get in study abroad, the extent to which they are dealing with institutions nearly identical with Russian institutions in the ways they work. Other AC or AC-managed programs:

1. OPIT: internship-based program with language scaffolding has just received new private foundation support. It piloted last year with a small number of participants; this year it is growing. The program provides well-supported internship programs in Russia and has been endorsed by the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia: a well-supervised and meaningful internship position with substantial language development support.
2. Partners Program with UT and Notre Dame, in which AC is essentially an overseas management partner for university programs.
3. Flagship continues to perform well and will mark its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018-19.
4. Researchers. There were 14 AC-supported researchers in Russia this year. Those researchers were supported by the Title VIII program doing research and field work, with university

placement at a Russian university which helps make the necessary connections to help enable research. We believe strongly in supported research opportunities.

Dan announced the launch of an entirely new program for research support through American Councils thanks to a grant from The Carnegie Corporation. The program provides for research placements in Russia from 2-9 months in the social sciences. Support levels are based on academic rank and duration of stay. The grants do not replace home salary, but may be combined with a sabbatical leave for research or collaborative project work in Russia.

Dan expressed some reservations about sending those studying Russian to the European Union in light of current “de-Russification” policies taking shape in the Baltic states, for example, but Kazakhstan and Moldova are proving to be good sites as reflected in test scores.

Overall, the area among AC exchanges showing the greatest growth involves shorter-term programs. Semester programs are holding steady, but AY programs have fewer enrollees.

The American Academy report calls on universities to rethink the policy of integrating overseas study in a way that won’t work against foreign language learning and sufficient time abroad.

Reminder that in May 2019 is the 14<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Russianists, MAPRIAL, will take place in Astana, corresponding with the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Flagship. Question: will support for some Board members to go be available? In late summer 2018 they will want to know who is in the delegation. Board members went to Granada last time. They challenged us to create online materials, and Jane, Natasha, and Betsy would like to present the materials we created.

Q&A:

Can we as an organization participate by issuing an open letter with regard to the State Department recategorization? Can our profession respond in this form? Dan doesn’t see a downside to that, and it could be signed by everyone in ACTR Board (or more broadly in ACTR). It would be impressive to see Board names and institutions.

Jane: Motion to prepare such a letter that Board members could sign. Irina: second.

Tom will prepare the letter, with Karen’s help. Karen will distribute it for electronic signatures.

All in favor, no opposed, no abstentions.

U Texas Austin just approved a Fulbright Hays program in Irkutsk.

5. NEWL Assessments (Dan + two handouts): Dan reported to the Board on a number of endorsements of the NEWL by Arabic, Korean and Portuguese educational groups, as well as an enhanced new endorsement of AC’s NEWL portfolio by the College Board. While ACTR initially called for and supported the Prototype AP Russian Examination, the model of all the NEWL tests, and its members the largest clients of the tests, ACTR has never actually expressed a public endorsement of the examination. (A text of the endorsement letter was circulated in

advance of the meeting for Board member review.) The College Board has asked AC to consolidate the naming of the test: it will be called NEWL-Russian, but will also continue to be known as the AP Prototype Russian, given its ten-year operation under that name. Administrators at schools know what an AP is; they don't know what a NEWL is. We therefore face the challenge of schools understanding that change. But the support of an ACTR endorsement letter is very strong. At the higher ed level, Board members were urged to support the use of the Russian test for admissions, advanced placement and credit by examination purposes, where appropriate. The AP has value for admissions offices as a credential that can demonstrate a student's proficiency. The NEWL brings an AP score and four proficiency subscores on the ACTFL scale. There is no disadvantage to higher ed faculty to accept this test, but it is an enormous help to secondary teachers and to students to be recognized in this way by having NEWL results acknowledged. At Bryn Mawr the NEWL is recognized for direct placement. An IH/IH/IM places a student into third year; an IL places a student into second year. NSLI-Y grads have NEWL scores. When there are problems recognizing the NEWL, AC is asking students to tell AC where they are applying, so that AC can be in touch directly with campuses. For entering first-year students, the issue of recognition of previous work in Russian for credit is also an important issue. Current, students of the commonly taught languages may use AP score reports for this purpose; NEWL can be recognized to serve the same purpose for Arabic, Korean, Portuguese and Russian. As of 2017, the release of the Russian test score aligns with the release of all other AP scores. Dan reported that an informal survey conducted by AC of recent AP Russian and NEWL students, showed that approximately one third of the test takers ultimately did not go on with their study of the language. (For example, not all chose to study at a university where Russian or other NEWL language was offered.) Another third of the students did not report one way or another about their college placement, while a third made use of the score for advance placement or credit by examination purposes. Recently, for example, Bob Channon was able to get the NEWL recognized at Purdue. In Maryland, in Bethesda and Rockville, parents of heritage students want their kids to take the exam, and now AC is getting calls from Baltimore with similar requests. Same in Virginia. In Montgomery County two high schools are considering starting Russian: Wootton and one other. In Prince George's County Russian is offered more frequently. There were 475 students taking the NEWL this past year, in May 2017. At Brandeis you need to demonstrate Intermediate-level proficiency in a language, and so those who take the NEWLs at Brandeis usually place out of the language requirement, which means we lose them in our classes. We should also use the Olympiadas to advertise the exam; a good flyer would help.

Motion to of endorsement of the NEWL.

Karen moves.

Jim seconds.

Passed unanimously.

6. ACTR Newsletter Update – Jane Shuffelton. Newsletter is going well. Elena is working on the Winter issue this weekend. Plea to let Jane know when something interesting is going on: Olympiada in Moscow, interesting things going on in classrooms, someone who could write an article. Volunteer yourself or nominate someone. This front-page dialogue is on teaching heritage learners from Marina Polinsky and Olesya Kisseleva.

7. ACTFL Assembly of Delegates – Jane Shuffelton. Committee of the Standards Collaborative has approved the Standards with minimal suggestions for changes. Not clear when it will appear on line. If you purchased the volume of World-Readiness Standards, it came with the right to download. Jane and Jeanette Owen attended the ACTFL Assembly of Delegates. They focused on teacher recruitment. It would be good to learn more about how people across the country get certified to teach Russian.

Valerie Ekberg-Brown encouraged everyone to sign up for the Russian SIG in ACTFL. (Her very successful program in Alaska was closed.)

NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements: Some schools build curricula based on can-do statements. That is problematic. Tom got a grant from ACTFL to tie proficiency ratings with can-do statements to see if there is a correlation. They will do two rounds of testing. The first round did not show a very good match. The correlation is better at lower levels (Novice). As soon as you get to threshold Intermediate, the correlation is too vague. It's problematic for the STARTALK texts for learning too.

American Councils and ACTFL have signed a new agreement of cooperation regarding NEWL. ACTFL has been seen as being behind in terms of intercultural competency and intercultural difference, biculturalism. The book that won the MLA Book Prize this year is *Teaching Intercultural Learning*, an excellent book that draws attention to the problem that this is not being addressed. The Flagship Cultural Initiative is looking at areas in which students can or cannot cope culturally at the ILR 2/ACTFL Advanced (domestic) and ILR 3/ACTFL Superior (study abroad) levels. IDI scores from domestic Flagships show a mixed bag. US students are not terribly sophisticated in understanding cultural difference. They can be judgmental. There is work to be done, and it seems to be being ignored by the language teaching profession. The polarization also reflects the general political environment.

At American Councils students are provided with situations and asked to provide three explanations. The responses can reflect a lack of intercultural understanding.

Marty Abbott is intending to come to the ACTR Membership meeting tomorrow evening.

8. National Post-Secondary Essay Contest – Jennifer Bown. Competition going on right now. Alla and Nina Bond have joined in. As of yesterday 1124 registered from 58 institutions. Down a little from previous years. Last year: 63 institutions.

Please send announcements to ACTR members first before Seelangs. Our ACTR members must receive announcements of contests officially. Evgeny will be happy to send these announcements to members through our system: contest winners, upcoming contests, Olympiads, etc. We could also use Facebook for that.

Will the ACTR website also send out information about STARTALK competitions? Evgeny tried to compile information about all programs we know of. If Betsy can get the list from STARTALK, for students and for teachers, she will send it to Evgeny and he will send that to ACTR members.

9. Olympiada – Ruth Edelman. Thanks to Mark for the charts. Different regions had Olympiadas in 2017. There was a slight drop: of the active regions, 3 did not have Olympiadas. Some are very impressive in numbers of participants. We have a wide variety of Olympiadas around the country: Texas; Tennessee-Mississippi; Western Pennsylvania, being organized by Pittsburgh (4 schools). Award winners for Slava received book prizes; list printed on Olympiada handout. International Olympiada: 6 students went to Moscow, accompanied by Natasha Ushakova. Thanks to AC, MAPRIAL, Slava, and the Russian and East European Institute at Indiana University (with special thanks to Mark).

Ben Gaylord, American Councils, has administering the International Olympiada. He would like to plan, now that we have had two consecutive Olympiadas. Ben proposes that if there is a pattern will continue from the last two years, the Olympiada has been in Moscow in mid-November to mid-December. Ben can put together the pre-application for students in spring to make sure they are eligible. Let's try to elicit nominations in the spring, so that we can get together a group. With the appropriate caveats (in case something goes wrong), we would like to have information earlier, in the spring, so that we can make preparations. That way, when we get specifics in mid-summer, we have a list ready. Student participants also need to prepare, especially given the constant changes on the Russian side. In Russia the leadership feels reassured that Natasha is in the lead. The preparation process for candidates has become quite lengthy. Current year students still have to be in school through December 2018. It is not possible to pick the top winners from regional Olympiadas, because some of them are graduating or are not eligible for some other reason. Olympiadas are starting in late February and will continue into April.

Ben will send parameters to Ruth and Mark.

Slava was not financially set up to do this every single year; every 3-4 years worked well. So we'll be meeting during the conference about that and can offer a plan, to have a smaller amount each year or a larger amount with less frequency. Total cost is about \$1250 per person. This year we had \$500 from Slava per student and a little over \$600 being paid by student. The salary is donated. Mark Trotter is working on getting a small grant through Title VI to get funding to offset some of the chaperoning costs. We want to make sure to send the most deserving students, not just the ones who can afford it.

We have enough information that we could say that the typical cost is \$1000 to \$1500. Typically, we get \$500 or more in scholarships from various sources. Some students got scholarships from elsewhere, such as from school programs. You can decide if you want to have one Slava scholarship per year, or two.

If students know in advance, they won't put themselves into that track.

Perhaps other Title VI centers will also have funds they can provide.

Thanks expressed to Ben for organizing this program. The parents were very impressed.

10. 2017 Nominations Committee Report – Alla Smyslova. Three people: Alla, Nina Bond, and James Sweigert. We are very grateful to Jane and Bob for answering Alla's emails and phone calls. The document will be edited before being sent to Karen for submission with the minutes. This year the term that is expiring is 2015-2017. The term ends at the annual membership meeting tomorrow. Terms are listed in the newsletter.

There were inaccuracies. Information gathered by the members of the nomination committee was based on the newsletter, where there were inaccuracies. Terms are still listed the way we had listed them before. Seven Board members are sitting: Bob, Evgeny, Irina, Jane, Alla, Natalia Ushakova, and Irwin Weil.

Members are expected to attend two Board meetings, the April one in DC and the AATSEEL meeting. They are also encouraged to attend a meeting at either ACTFL or ASEEES. We looked at attendance records. On the grounds of all this information we recommend to renominate Board members for the new term: February 2018 – February 2021.

Betsy moves to approve the slate, Ruth seconds. Slate passed unanimously, no abstentions.

The committee decided not to nominate a new member to fill the 25<sup>th</sup> position left with Michele Whaley's stepping down. This can be discussed at the April meeting. Betsy noted that there are fewer and fewer pre-college teachers on the board. Perhaps we should expand the pool, piggybacking on those working on Olympiadas. We should expand the pool to poorly represented regions as well.

Terms of President and Vice Presidents are two years. They have both been nominated for a second term, 2018-2020.

Motion put forward. Karen seconded it. Unanimous, no oppositions, no abstentions.

Term of nomination committee is also expiring at tomorrow's meeting, and they would like to suggest new nomination committee members. They suggest that every chair of the nomination committee should submit the list of board members to the editor of the newsletter so that it is checked and rechecked each year to avoid inaccuracies in the future.

We also need to think about how we list terms to avoid mixed interpretations, to avoid inaccuracies in the future. This all happened because of the shift of the AATSEEL conference from December to January to February. Terms to be listed tomorrow will be 2018-2020, meaning to February 2021. Let's not change it in the bylaws, since it says from one annual meeting to the next, which is correct. Or there is another option, 2018-2021, with the understanding that the election takes place in February 2021.

The terms expiring tomorrow are listed as 2015-2017. When the meeting was in the end of December or the very beginning of January, that made sense. It is cumbersome to list February, because there is a date and a time as well. We all know that the term is from the membership meeting to the membership meeting. So new terms should be listed as 2018-21, meaning February 2018 to February 2021.



Other argument: February to February is clearer, so that members who are potential board members know. We ourselves don't know our terms.

We don't need to change anything in the bylaws. For our own clarity and the newsletter, we can change the date there. Now it's February to February. If it's in the newsletter, that will be clear.

Modification to Bob's proposal: in the Newsletter put a line saying that terms refer to the ACTR Membership meeting in the years listed.

For officers, list their terms as officers, and not their terms as Board members.

Motion: 2018-2021, noting ACTR Membership meeting to ACTR Membership meeting.

2018 – 2021, with an asterisk indicating that it is ACTR Annual Membership meeting to ACTR Membership Annual membership meeting.

Mara moved.

Natasha seconded.

Motion passed, no objections.

This will need to be included in the Spring issue of the next ACTR Letter.

11. ACTR Service Award Committee Report – Jane Shuffelton. Goes to Camelot Marshall. It would be good to expand the committee to a third person, from Jane and Elena. Betsy volunteers to join. Please do send nominations.

The Service Award does need to go to an ACTR member.

Are we allowed to nominate AC employees?

The distinction to be made is if they are going above and beyond outside their duties at AC. We gave one to Vitaly Kostomarov.

12. Other committee reports

Membership: 53 more members, but we also have 290 people whose dues are overdue. We send out a lot of reminders, but that includes people whose memberships are lapsed, who haven't been members for over a year. The webinars are definitely bringing in new members.

Next webinar: Betty Lou Leaver, 20 February

13. New Business

Two reminders: please stop by the AC booth and say hello. Beautiful exhibits. Please come to the Membership meeting and bring a friend.

Meeting adjourned 3:49 pm.