

**ACTR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA**  
**American Council of Teachers of Russian**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Washington, D.C. – April 9, 2016**

**Present:** Tom Garza (president), Nataliya Ushakova (vice president), Karen Evans-Romaine (secretary), Cynthia Ruder (treasurer), Betsy Sandstrom (past president), Dan Davidson, Nina Bond, Bob Channon, Evgeny Dengub, Irina Dubinina, Ruth Edelman, Paavo Husen, Peter Merrill, Lee Roby, Jane Shuffelton, Alla Smyslova, Mara Sukholutsкая, Jim Sweigert, Mark Trotter, Michele Whaley

**Absent:** Tony Brown, Elena Farkas, Diane Nemeč-Ignashev, Irwin Weil; Richard Brecht (as representative of the American Councils Board of Trustees), Bill Rivers (stepping down as editor of *Russian Language Journal*), John Schillinger (as representative of the Committee on College and Pre-College Russian)

**1. Approval of Minutes (9:00)**

January 8, 2016

ACTR Board of Directors Meeting (AATSEEL, Austin, Texas)

Jane moved, Cindy seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

**2. Announcements (9:10)**

Tom Garza

The Board expressed sympathy at the recent death of Dan Davidson's father.

Karen conveyed to the Board John Schillinger's request for information to supplement the Committee on College and Pre-College Russian website:

<http://www1.american.edu/research/CCPCR/cendir.htm>

The Board discussed increases in enrollments at Harvard, Georgetown, George Washington U, and the University of Chicago. Suggestion to contact those four institutions to find out how they are increasing their enrollments.

Pre-college programs were not invited to participate in enrollment survey for the past two years. Karen: Please have John send a query for that information.

Karen volunteered to convey information to John about assessment, if people prefer to send that information to Karen. She also volunteered to forward to pre-college members of the Board any Seelangs announcements from John Schillinger on submitting enrollment data to him.

Suggestion: There should be an ongoing line in the newsletter soliciting information on enrollments from pre-college programs and a link on the ACTR website to John's enrollment data.

### **3. Report on ACTR Academic Programs and Conferences (9:15)**

Dan Davidson

This is an interim report; American Councils usually provides a summary at the end of the year, which includes a comparison of programs by languages.

Dan was at a study abroad forum in Atlanta. A lot of campuses see this as the principle internationalization strategy, to have faculty take students overseas for a couple of weeks. AC's position is that if this is well done, it can be a good strategy to encourage people to study abroad again. University of Connecticut, Notre Dame, Arizona State University in Tirana, and Lehigh University joined American Councils in organizing such programs. The support of faculty and deans allows these short-term programs to succeed.

For example: Notre Dame: two weeks in St. Petersburg and Moscow, lectures in English on cultural and historical topics, excursions, meetings with students

AC gave a total of \$100,000 in private scholarships and tuition waivers this past year to students taking part in summer, semester, and AY RLASP programs, over and above federal money from Fulbright Hayes and other federally funded sources. AC can award scholarships from the Brecht Fund, as well as from other AC funds. AC is hoping once again to be able to award Title VIII funding for graduate students, researchers, and faculty for combined language training and research overseas.

NSLI-Y: This summer (2016) there will be 102 NSLI-Y summer scholarships to Russian-speaking cities: Moscow, Kirov, Chisinau, Narva, and Daugavpils (UW-Madison subcontractor). In addition, there will be 14 academic-year scholarships to Moldova for those able to spend an academic year, which is very often a gap year.

NSLI-Y applications: 1025 applicants for Chinese; 770 for Korean (summer, 217 academic year; 987 total), 550 for Arabic, 501 for Russian (97 for academic year). Most of those applying in Korean are heritage speakers.

Federal funding is meant to be focused on students from underrepresented populations. We can potentially open to non-scholarship students as well through AC. We should think about ways in which we can complement NSLI-Y with faculty-led or other organized initiatives.

Challenges with NSLI-Y raised by the Board:

- Decline of interest in Russian applications because of the low acceptance rate.
- Difficult to convince the parents of students from underrepresented populations to let them study abroad for an extended period.
- Dan: High demand for support services for NSLI-Y participants: not only support with cultural adjustment, but with mental health issues. The greatest challenges for NSLI-Y students are in the Middle East.

CLS: 50 positions in Russia this summer, fully funded at \$10,000 apiece. Half will be at CORA in Vladimir. (Never once did anyone speak a word of English during the first semester of study

there!) The other 25 will be in Nizhny Novgorod. There were 420 applications for those 50 positions. We got 70 applications for the Azerbaijani program in Baku.

Flagship applications were down this year. This is a normal cycle: 25 this past year in Almaty at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and our projections show that that will rebound in the year after this.

Dan: We have seen coverage in the *Wall Street Journal* and other sources about the shortage of Russian and Eurasian area studies specialists because of cuts in positions made 20 years ago. Yet the money to fill this gap is still slow in coming. Title VI funding is unlikely to rise again, and we're receiving Title VIII funding because AC is making a strong case for it.

Mark: Funding for Title VI appears to be stable.

Dan: We're about 40% under where we were in Title VI, at \$70 million. Fulbright has not done as well, but there was a huge letter-writing campaign to the Capitol to put Fulbright-Hayes back to flat funding, which is still 40% below what it was in 2010, not allowing for inflation.

Mara: On 18 April 2016 there will be a symposium at Oklahoma State University with Louisiana State and a university from Illinois dedicated to involving Native American students in study abroad. Among the attendees will be businesses who are prepared to fund all participants 100% from Native American tribes.

Dan: Also on 18 April AC is co-sponsoring a conference at Almaty hosted by the Slavic and Turkic Language Department at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, with participation of our colleagues from SPGU. The focus will be on the interaction of intercultural development and language proficiency. The two go independently at the lower or intermediate levels of speaking, but at advanced levels, you have to have cultural knowledge to make higher gains and vice versa. There is a new and very powerful argument for studying languages at a higher level. See the article on this in the forthcoming Language Flagship volume, co-edited by Karen and Dianna Murphy at UW-Madison.

#### **4. Report from the American Councils Board of Trustees (9:25)**

Dan Davidson reporting for Dick Brecht. (In the future, either Dan or Tom will report for Dick Brecht.)

The Board of Trustees was at American Councils for the day on 4 March. The board meets in the morning in committees: audit and finance, fundraising taskforce, etc. We looked at investment policies, which are relevant for ACTR because of the Walker and Pushkin Institute funds which are part of the new investment model. We had the best report back from Northern Trust in Chicago, a highly respected Chicago-based fund. The market has recovered slightly. The fundraising task force is examining the impact of our 40<sup>th</sup>-anniversary fundraising effort. (Thanks to all of you who supported it!) We managed to double our fundraising base, which wasn't big to start with. There are 1500-1600 people making mostly small contributions, with a few larger donors. A series of events each year brings in low six-figure sums. To make that happen AC has to maintain a fundraising department that costs approximately the same amount

of money to support. So the board asked, “Are we doing this right?” The board looked at similar organizations (IIE, AFIS, etc.). Some do raise money, some don’t. Our Board of Trustees is trying to provide professional, businesslike advice on what we should be doing to make fundraising more systematic and more effective. They are exploring a major donor model, letting down on the annual fund campaign in favor of outreach to major donors; that is what they are planning for the next phase, while not abandoning our current strategy. This will be important for the future unless we want to be forever dependent on federal funding; we are 85% federally funded.

Congratulations to Cindy Ruder on the ACTR budget. Someone on the AC Board of Trustees asked how ACTR works financially. Is this something that Councils is underwriting totally? John Henderson responded that ACTR very much stands on its own; it is a strong partnership and the oldest partner, the parent organization of AC.

Board of Trustees committee on growth, which is examining the overall model of American Councils over the next 10 years, looking at key areas where we hope growth will occur. Dan reported to the Board of Trustees on the prototype AP Russian exam, endorsed by the College Board under the rubric of the National Exam on World Languages, including 10 LCTLs. This is now on their website. The rollout is purposefully slow, to give AC a chance to move from linear to adaptive tests, so that we can offer our tests in a 50-minute class period rather than 90 minutes. We’re piloting the adaptive test in Korean, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, and heritage Chinese. The College Board has announced it.

Discussion:

- The term “prototype AP” is important both for school district/county funding for the exam and for the weighted course now being offered as a prototype. If schools lose that AP funding, it could hurt upper-level enrollments. The National French and National Spanish Exams are contests, not supported as AP exams.
- At the university level, it’s the word “prototype” that causes problems.

Dan: That is one of the reasons for the slow rollout, in order to convince the College Board to say more than “endorsed.” They likely are concerned about using AP, because they are not the owners of the exam. No one will take away the word “prototype” until we have finished conversations with the College Board.

## **5. Treasurer’s Report (9:35)**

Cynthia Ruder

Budget reports from 2015 and comparisons of March 2015 and March 2016 have been provided. The investment firm has been able to earn \$1000 for the Pushkin Fund. With the prior investment we had lost a little money.

We will miss Mulugeta Tamire, who has accepted a position at another institution and will be leaving AC at the end of next week. Mulugeta has done an outstanding job, answering patiently and with good humor questions as varied as contest payments, PayPal and renegotiating PayPal rates, reporting practices, etc. His responsibilities will be distributed among other people in the

finance division. Fortunately, we'll still be able to work with Selome Mengistu, who is well-versed in what we do and what kinds of transactions we have.

So far we have made a dent in our travel expenditures, which is one of the areas we were trying to reduce. We won't know for sure until 30 June.

Many thanks to Evgeny, who has been fabulous in setting up Wild Apricot, which has been a very wise investment. We got to the point that we didn't have enough database space with our current Wild Apricot account, so we have upgraded to 2000-person capacity. That is a wise expenditure and has streamlined what we can do in membership.

Request to the ACTR President to write a letter to ask our life members to up their contribution. That alone could bring in a few thousand dollars. We were talking about \$250 at our last board meeting last April. Evgeny and Cindy have talked about installment payments for life memberships. That gives people more options to invest in our organization.

We need to publish updated membership rates.

Two big reasons to give out Pushkin Scholarship Fund scholarships:

1. People gave donations for that very purpose.
2. It's great PR for us, which should generate more scholarships.

Cindy suggests that for 2016-17 we award one scholarship to a pre-college student and one to a college student, \$1000 each. We also need to determine guidelines for awarding scholarships. The scholarships must be awarded to participants in an AC program. We could check with the outbound people in AC, look at the applications of the neediest people, and issue scholarships by reducing the cost of the program for that student, not sending a check to the student.

Tom: Motion, recommended by our current treasurer, that we use a portion of the Pushkin Scholarship Fund at the amount of \$1000 each for one secondary and one undergraduate student for the 2016-17 year. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion about how to determine financial need for these scholarships:

- We could ask, as Slava has done in the past, that the teacher comment on the student's financial need.
- Teachers could find out who is receiving free or reduced-price lunch as an indicator of financial need.

Betsy proposed having ACTR support a teacher-led spring or summer program that would go through American Councils but at student expense. This would provide an opportunity for deserving students not eligible for or accepted to NSLI-Y to travel. There would be an application.

Webinars: We need to make sure the webinars don't get posted to YouTube. That defeats the purpose of people registering and paying for the webinars. Those who register for webinars often become members. In March we earned about \$600, in part because of the webinar, but also

because of membership fees during contest season. Evgeny: We generated \$350 from two webinars.

Should we raise contest fees in order to generate revenue?

Discussion:

- We might lose participants, in part because some schools cannot cover the cost.
- Mark: The vast majority are paid for by school districts or teachers.
- Mark calculated 3 years ago that \$6 should be more than enough to cover the cost.
- Tom: 10,000 participants in the Spanish version of the Olympiada, all paid for by local Mexican restaurant chains, who have advertisements on the front and back of the Olympiada program. We need to seek out similar benefactors.

To what extent are the fees not covering Olympiada expenses?

Cindy: In the past, that has been difficult to tell, because the Olympiada category in the budget covered all contests, including the essay contest. Mulugeta set up the budget so that in the future each contest will have its own line item, so that in the future we can examine costs and income separately for the Olympiada and the essay contest. Last year I started asking all contest organizers to submit a budget, so we should be able to track costs in the future. (Mark: With the Olympiada you might have to track expenses across 3-4 years, since enrollments vary.)

Betsy: The ACTR Scholar Laureate has no income but has expenses.

Cindy: The Post-Secondary Scholar Laureate spends very little money. What we have in the budget has been adequate to cover PSSSL expenses.

The main categories in which we run in the red are travel and not anticipating costs for things like postage, or not getting enough people to participate in contests that have fallen through. But in the aggregate we're in relatively good shape.

## 6. Membership Secretary Report (9:50)

Irina Dubinina

Membership update:

Total members	<b>482</b>
Active	<b>368</b>
New members since last board meeting at ATSEEL (Jan 10, 2016)	72
Life members	111 7 e-mail contact attempts failed
Level 1: Assistant Professors, Lecturers, K-12 Teachers, & Independent Scholars	Active 174 (Total 241)
Level 2: Associate/ Full Professors & Non-Academics	Active 56 (Total 91)

Level 3: Retired persons	Active 22 (Total 22)
Level 4: Student (with or without RLJ subscription)	Active 26 (Total 38)
Lapsed members or Renewal overdue	<b>129</b> lapsed 91 active 23 pending renewal 15  <i>Need to have clear policies</i>
Donations by members	10 (4 by the same person to different funds)

We removed duplications from the old system, and we have archived those who have not responded to numerous attempts to contact them.

Ways to pay for membership:

- Online (using PayPal system and credit card)
- By mail/e-mail: check or credit card information on form

Evgeny: We would have to go to a different system if we don't use PayPal and the automatic renewal system. If you don't want to have automatic renewal, you have to submit a form to Irina with a check or credit card info. In order to cancel automatic renewal, members can go into their account profile and cancel automatic renewal.

We hope to move to a different system, which will simplify the payment process: an app that allows us to process payments on our own instead of sending payments that come to Irina to American Councils.

Irina and Evgeny asked if members want to receive a paper copy of the newsletter and RLJ. Here are the responses:

- 67 would like to receive newsletter by e-mail only (18%)
- 70 would like to receive newsletter by both mail and e-mail
- 55 would NOT like to receive RLJ (14%) and 196 would

We should take this into account when mailing these publications.

Peter: Motion on lapsed membership policy: Membership would be discontinued 6 months after the membership renewal deadline of 1 January.

Discussion:

- ASEES: You receive a notice in late November. If you don't renew it by the end of January, you receive another notice. The third notice ends their membership.

- If our dues are due January 1, termination would be July 1. Since contests take place in March, the 6-month grace period would include the contest season.
- RLJ normally comes out in spring and fall (October/November).
- As soon as a motion is passed, Evgeny can set up an auto-reminder.
- 10-15% of members prefer to mail the forms.
- There are a lot of people who would like membership renewal entirely online but without automatically renewal.

Motion: Peter proposed, Jane seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## **7. Membership Dues (10:00)**

Bob Channon

Bob proposed an alternate dues structure, in which membership fees are lower than what was proposed at the ACTR Board meeting at ACTFL in San Antonio in 2015.

Discussion:

The largest expense is travel, and the largest expense within that is the hotel. We have already addressed that significantly by agreeing to have Board members pair up and share hotel rooms for the April meeting.

It was never expected that ACTR membership fees would cover this meeting.

American Councils subsidy of the ACTR Board meeting: Dan will try to find a way to continue the AC subsidy of the ACTR Board meeting in Washington, but it is complicated because auditing standards over the last decade have gotten much stricter. There is no question that the ACTR board historically and now is a source of authority for AC generally, at least in the field of Russian and certainly in teaching. The difficulty is how to monetize the value of this board and charge it against specific grants, given that federal agencies cannot appoint advisory boards. Where ACTR can charge an activity of this board to AC, we will, but AC cannot provide a blanket statement. Another consideration is the position of Russian within AC, which has decreased, although it is still significant, with AC currently offering 14 programs in Russia.

Life membership: Typically life membership is about 20 years' worth of dues, but there should be an installment method of paying them. There are some organizations that discount the life memberships based on how many years of full dues you have been paying. The Linguistics Society of America has a policy that if you pay dues for 40 years, after that you automatically become a life member and don't have to pay dues. For some organizations, for every 10 years you have paid dues they can discount life membership by 25%.

Motion to put forth the following as a new dues structure.

Assistant Professor: \$60  
 Associate Professor: \$75  
 Full Professor: \$90

Lecturer, Instructor, Pre-College, Retired, Independent Scholar: \$50  
Student/Adjunct: \$20  
Non-Academic: \$90  
Life: \$1500  
Life Membership Supplement (requested of current Life Members): \$250  
Joint Membership: \$50 on top of the higher membership category in a household  
Sustaining Membership: \$100 in addition to regular membership fee

Continued discussion:

- Some prefer a single dues structure.
- Suggestion that we cannot raise fees without increasing services. On the other hand, we have already begun to increase services.
- This proposal would override the decision made at the April 2015 Board meeting.
- Institutional membership still needs to be defined.
  - We still have an institutional membership on the books; we should remind ourselves of what that currently entails. Whatever is on the books for affiliate or institutional members will remain in force until this board changes that.
  - Questions still to be defined: Some institutions can pay institutional membership, for example Title VI institutions, but we need to clarify what institutional membership would entail (An institutional RLJ subscription? Contest fees for contest participants? Relationship between institutional membership and the individual membership fees of those working at member institutions?)
- Proposal to put off discussion of institutional membership to a future meeting, because of questions about its parameters still to be clarified.

Peter seconded new fee structure.

Motion passed with 18 yes votes, one nay, one abstention.

New dues structure effective immediately.

## **8. Communication with Members, Membership Development and Fundraising (1:00)**

Irina Dubinina and Evgeny Dengub

See attached document, “Items for ACTR Board Meeting”

Proposal from Evgeny and Irina:

Evgeny and Irina have become a de facto membership committee, whose work includes not only membership information, but communication and information about professional development opportunities for members, such as webinars. It is therefore too much work for two people. Irina and Evgeny suggest creating a committee or working group dealing with membership, communication, and development issues. For example, webinars: People are asking for certificates of attendance. Do we give certificates only to those who were in the webinar online

space, or also to those who view the webinar later? We also need help with social media networking. We need one more person, and we could have this membership committee.

Communication with members (see handout): Evgeny: We could and should do a better job of communicating what is happening in our field, to solicit and report on information about our activities: presidential address in an email also soliciting donations, welcoming new members and send them a letter on paper, thanking the people who became life members, and so forth.

Benefits of membership: we need to think about what we can do for individual members. Right now they get RLJ, the newsletter, and the right to register students for various contests. We as an organization have a lot of intellectual resources we can share with our members. We want to make this more visible to our members. Can we negotiate a discount to *Russian Life*? Discounts on registration for AATSEEL and ACTFL annual meetings?

Discussion:

- We could become a sponsoring member of the ACTFL conference, for which we would have to guarantee a certain number of attendees, and that number is fairly high. We pay ACTFL a certain sum, which gives us two places at the delegate assembly. If we wanted to send a third rep, then we would have to pay.
- The discount to *Russian Life* should be easy to negotiate. (Drawback: High schools would not allow it, because of the vodka ads.)
- We should contact colleagues who are not current ACTR members. We should suggest to those colleagues with graduate programs that they encourage their graduate students to join.
- If we had webinars specifically geared toward graduate students, introducing them to the profession, this would benefit them directly.
- We should begin by surveying members. What does ACTR mean to you?
- We should establish official channels for soliciting people's opinions, except for the membership meeting, which so few people attend.
- Betsy volunteers to work on items 6, 7, and 8 from Evgeny and Irina's memo: organizing a national promotional activity like the Do Deutsch campaign, developing a line of products (pens, mugs, bookmarks, etc.), and drawing up a proposal for an internship at American Councils. Develop the promotional items by competition from community schools, elementary schools. Then we would have a committee to select images at different levels and then create the materials. You can produce these materials online at a reasonable rate.
- Nina suggests sending out an email and a paper solicitation to our members soliciting donations and explaining what ACTR does and can do. Nina volunteers to work on that.
- Send a survey to Seelangs to non-members of ACTR finding out what we could do.
- ACTR listserv. Anyone could become a member of the ACTR listserv to provide information to members/listserv subscribers. A listserv is a useful way to solicit information on teaching-related questions.
- Facebook might be more useful for younger members of our profession.
- Webinar on careers.

- Profile people who studied Russian and went on to careers outside academia using Russian. I know someone in the Department of Commerce.
- Volunteers to join the membership and communications committee: Evgeny, Irina, Michele, Nina, and Bob
- Can American Councils provide us with an intern on logistics?
- Can Russkii mir help us?
- Dan: Responses to these two questions.
  - Who would supervise the intern? We would have to work out the mechanism for oversight. Irina: Irina: I could do so from a distance. This person should have website skills.
  - Russkii mir: That's a different source. ACTR is a natural client for this foundation, but that would require a project proposal and a proper submission. Right now there is a \$50,000 cap on what they are willing to fund and currently a moratorium on Fond Russkii mir activities because of the budget situation in Russia. We hope that situation will improve in the future.
- The "Study Russian" campaign would be a perfect match once Russkii mir is in a position to entertain proposals.
- This could be an avenue to inspire institutional memberships. We could promote a year of Russian language. Is your university Russian and East European Studies center interested in sponsoring this? Interest that center in activities as well.
- Donation campaign for a specific purpose. We are raising money to grow our professional development program.
- American Academy report in the fall on why language study is so important. Then ACTFL campaign. That's where we could join forces with the academy and ACTFL.

## **9. Website and Webinars (1:30)**

Evgeny Dengub

ACTR.org is up and running. Please visit it, make sure you are comfortable with it, make sure you like all the categories. Evgeny will be happy to make changes or edits or give you permission to make edits.

Facebook group is also running. Thanks to Michele for help with this. Please continue to like it, to share posts. 80 people liked it. We're trying to advertise our contest and events through it.

Every time you comment on the ACTR page, it brings it back to the forefront on Facebook.

1000 plus people are talking about it.

If the institutional memberships included the right to show the webinars, that would be an additional reason to subscribe for an institutional membership.

Password that everyone used to log in. We're turning it into personal passwords. This will be the archive and the place to go for us to access the minutes, documents. It's not available yet. I hope to have this by the end of the month. Look out for the email that invites you to join that website.

There are actually two websites, one managed by Wild Apricot, which is our membership management system. Evgeny would be happy to teach you how to do what you need to. You can send emails through the Wild Apricot site. Evgeny is still trying to figure out how to make the transition between the two seamless.

Webinars. Two have taken place, one with Ben Rifkin, one with Elena Shmeleva. Ben's had 90 people registered, Elena's 114. Free for ACTR members, and we charged non-members \$15. We raised \$350 for the two webinars. It seems that more people joined in order not to pay the \$15. Let's make this a regular practice. Some organizations do a webinar a month.

Thanks to Irina for technical support. Brandeis provides the webinar interface.

Suggestions for webinars:

Dan could do a webinar on study abroad.

Suggestion for webinar on available AC overseas programs for instructors, levels of instructions. End of September would be good. Graham Hettlinger at AC could do that.

Dan could conductor a different webinar on the state of study abroad.

How about having Dan do the larger talk at the end of the academic year, and Graham did the September webinar on programs?

Are we willing to say that if the instructor is a member it's okay to show the webinar to that instructor's students?

Some webinars must be free for all. They are promotional, promoting our programs. And there are educational ones, for professional development, that should be fee-based.

We posted the videos on YouTube as a closed link, so you cannot search for it. You can only have a direct link. Some people's bandwidth is so slow that the ACTR site would not work. We could open the archive to every member of ACTR, so that all webinars could be available to them.

Should we put off discussion of showing webinars to students until we discuss institutional membership?

Tom Garza could do a general online meeting, great for people who cannot make it to AATSEEL, who cannot make a face to face meeting.

Could we transition to virtual attendance to annual meetings?

Problem: voting. Voting can be done by group chat.

Suggestion to convey ACTR news and updates for the membership in the AC bulletin sent out to study abroad alumni as a way to generate membership.

Ben Rifkin suggested we form a webinar committee which would invite speakers, make it a more official body, so that people could put that they were selected. This committee would decide on the schedule, invite speakers, topics to be covered, promotion. Ben would volunteer to be on that committee. Evgeny can chair it. Karen volunteered to serve on it, as did Michele.

Webinars bring us international members. There is a teacher of Russian in Japan who became a member because he wanted to listen to the webinar. A woman from England has inquired whether she can become a member, and we told her yes.

### **10. ACTR Newsletter (2:00)**

Natalia Ushakova

As the chair of the Russian Laureate Award committee, Natasha emphasizes how important the newsletter is. Teachers send the newsletter to school principals, and so paper newsletters are vital as a document that teachers, principals, and students can read and share it. The problem is delays: this year's newsletter fall issue came out in February. It's crucial for contest winners and award recipients to know from the first semester that they received this prestigious award before they apply to college. In addition, the results of last year's contest never appeared in the newsletter.

At the ACTR Board meeting at AATSEEL there was discussion of an editorial review board. Could we post summaries of some RLJ articles in the newsletter? It would be great to have summaries of some of those articles in the newsletter. High school teachers do not have time to read the journal itself.

Following up, at our AATSEEL meeting we talked about having Jane oversee the newsletter editorial review board. This is too huge a job for one person. It should be two people, one from high school and one from university, to put materials together. Collecting materials, editing, selecting, formatting, etc.

Mark: Indiana could probably get a student hourly to do this. Perhaps centers could rotate.

Evgeny: As an alternative, we could consider reformatting the newsletter. We have a functional, operating website which could take some of the functions. We could have the newsletter come out less often, with links, more on the website, which is cheaper and more manageable. It's hard to convince members to sign up when there is no newsletter and no RLJ.

We voted in January 2016 to reduce newsletter issues from 4 to 3 times. Perhaps twice would be better.

Compromise: an electronic newsletter that comes out 3-4 times a year, but send out a paper newsletter issue at the end of the year. Contest and award winners can be announced on the website, so that that information gets out more quickly.

The newsletter has lost its gravitas. There used to be front page matters on teaching. It's important to have front matter vetted. It has also been problematic to solicit authors for newsletter pieces.

Five members of the ad hoc newsletter committee: Elena, Jane, Michele, Mark, Natasha. Jane will be convener of the committee. Karen and Tom volunteered to be among the newsletter contributors.

Newsletter review board: Jane, Lee, Paavo.

Charge of the newsletter committee: to review the shape, content, and structure of the newsletter; to gather items and remind people to submit them They will bring a report to the ACTR board February meeting at AATSEEL.

To produce a newsletter, one person has to be responsible. When you get a whole committee, no one feels responsible. We should assign sections to people. Jane could be the final editor, not the person doing solicitations.

Could we consider investing in a professional designer who could produce a template that we could use?

Suggestion: Twice a year, 8 pages per issue.

It's evident that one of the most important things, if not the most important, is recognition of those high school students. We could first try to quantify what should go into an issue of a newsletter, how much content, how much essayistic prose, book review, news, and then maybe try to adhere.

We want to make sure the charge of this review committee is to go into action now, quite apart from giving a report at the end of the calendar year, so that intervening issues of this newsletter will look different. It may not be the final format, but it will make a difference in sooner issues.

The changes we are able to introduce may be rather modest. We might not have the time or personnel to make great changes.

## **11. REPORTS ON CONTESTS AND AWARDS**

### **a. Olympiada of Spoken Russian/OLYMPIADA International Olympiada**

Mark Trotter/Natalia Ushakova

Announcements. We are in the middle of Olympiada season. We expect there to be 15 competitions, including a region not previously represented, Tennessee. Last year we also added a competition in NC, and they will have a competition again this year. So we seem to be expanding the number of regions. There was a slight decline in participant numbers in 2015 relative to 2014.

Shosh Weston at the University of Washington is retiring at the end of April. She replaced Halina Danchenko as co-chair. Ruth Edelman has very kindly agreed to accept Mark's invitation as national co-chair of the Olympiada.

Two issues to resolve today.

Mark: Motion: to call what has previously been called the Top Finalist award the ACTR/Slava Olympiada Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Study of Russian, and for short, the ACTR/Olympiada Award.

Discussion: The title of Top Finalist prize has caused confusion, particularly in the years when an international Olympiada, with very stringent criteria (for example, regarding age, citizenship, and non-heritage speaker status) takes place in Moscow. This award would be entirely separate from nomination to compete in Moscow. Those students who got previously got the Regional Finalist award would now get this award, which would be awarded only once to each recipient; it's a completely separate process from the selection process to compete in Moscow.

Bob seconds the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Second issue: Suggestion that when a suitable candidate can be found, we try to get a non-teacher, or a teacher who is not fielding Olympiada contestants, to chair regional Olympiadas.

Discussion: That would minimize risk of friction between teachers. This may not always be feasible because of the small numbers of teachers involved, but it would be ideal. In addition, we should emphasize that this is the ACTR Olympiada.

Tom: Hearing no objections, the ACTR Board endorses this policy.

## **a2. Olympiada of Spoken Russian materials revision**

Ruth Edelman

The committee is continuing to work on it. It's an ongoing process. It's moving along. We're working on level 2 and will pilot level two.

Betsy: We have a committee member who will pilot heritage materials. We will start the pilot in the DC area. They will come from the entire DC metro area to participate in the Virginia Olympiada. We have closer to 30 participants which increases membership in ACTR. Whether they are enrolled in ACTR as a parent, a tutor, or a teacher, they become a member of ACTR. Of the new members from March, at least 6-10 from the DC heritage community participating. Next year it will not be a competition, but participation in a pilot. Mark has kindly agreed to distribute certificates, and Betsy can help as necessary.

Can we consider rotating the chairmanship? Mara, would you be willing to step in as chair?

| Mara agrees, Ruth agrees. The committee will be chaired by Mara, with Ruth, Betsy, [Lee](#), and Natasha participating.

## **b. National Russian Essay Contest (NREC)**

Paavo Husen

Co-chairs Evgeny, John Rook and Paavo have just about finished their work for 2016. First-round results, medals, and certificates have been sent. Second-round results have been sent, and second-round medals will be sent soon. Participation numbers have remained stable, with some schools gained, some lost. The most unusual request was the Russian Embassy school. Paavo passed out two pieces to appear in the ACTR *Letter*. We received them at last year's meeting; they never appeared in the ACTR *Letter*.

Paavo proposes a fee increase for next year from \$4 to \$5, and the co-chairs support it.

Discussion from earlier at today's Board meeting:

National Russian Essay Contests would like to propose an increase from \$4 to \$5. The \$4 fee was set in 2001. Our contests used to provide more income for ACTR. We are paying judges more and will continue to do so. We have cut costs. The German National Exam is \$6. They grade the exam electronically, and results are immediately available, so they are producing quite a bit of income. The French exam is \$6 or \$6.50. We're looking to the future, and at the moment we're the best deal for any contest in the nation: the only proficiency-oriented contest, and the only one that is judged by people, not electronically.

This is not a great deal of money. It is equivalent to the cost of two song downloads. Even a course workbook download costs more. Students want to add these contests to their resumes and for college admissions.

We also have to be careful to compensate our judges fairly. Judges receive \$175 for 120 essays. Total cost was \$1920. That does not include Moscow judge, who is paid from a source outside the ACTR budget.

Perhaps Title VI centers could pitch in on these expenses. Indiana, Ohio State, and Harvard use Title VI money for this purpose. It's not a lot of money for 15 centers, and high school outreach is important for these centers, which are funded by the Department of Education. It's an approved expense. ACTR could still collect the fee, but Title VI centers could help subsidize.

Fee increases could be problematic for some schools. An increase from \$4 to \$5 could cause undue hardships for some participating students or schools.

Schools seek out funding from local universities and local businesses, for example to cover meals during the day. In addition, schools are paying transportation costs to the event. Schools pay a \$50 participation fee, sometimes covered by the teacher. Some schools provide stipends for NREC, but can't do this for Olympiadas. These are additional costs even on top of the \$10 or \$15 fee for the Olympiada. NREC has a greater participation level because it's easier to execute; there is a lower participation rate in the Olympiada because of the logistics. Lee supports raising the fee for NREC and to leaving the Olympiada fee where it is.

Should each teacher be a member of ACTR in order for that teacher's students to participate in the essay contest?

We can discuss this if necessary. That is a problematic requirement for those institutions where graduate students are the teachers of participants. Perhaps if one teacher is a member in such an institutional collective, that can be considered sufficient.

After hearing from two colleagues whose students constitute 20% of the participants that such a fee increase would be problematic, Paavo will solicit input next year about a possible dues increase for the National Russian Essay Contest.

### **c. National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest (NPSRC) (2:00)**

Alla Smyslova

Tony Brown is the chair of this committee. This year we had 300 more participants from 11 new programs. The topic was "the incident that changed my life." We expect to get the results soon. There are several important changes that were introduced to the essay contest procedure. First of all, with thanks to Evgeny Dengub for excellent work on this, we successfully piloted an online payment system for several participating institutions. We discussed switching to typed versions of essays. This year two schools volunteered to type. It worked well, so we may try to move further in this direction. There was no mailing of hard copies. Everything was done through Google doc folders. Instructors scanned the essays and uploaded them to folders. It eliminated all postage costs. Changes for 2017: online registration for all participants, continuing to pilot the typed version and formalizing criteria for that, and fine-tuning the descriptions for heritage language learners.

Given the large increase in participation, we might consider raising the fee.

Essays are still graded in Russia, by 3 readers, who download the scans. They are getting a stipend for reviewing the essays. We might need to consider an increase in the number of readers in Russia, because of the increase in the number of participants.

One problem: late notification for those universities whose academic year ends early (for example, in early May).

Last year was a glitch in the schedule.

### **d. Russian Scholar Laureate Award (RSLA)**

Natalia Ushakova

This year we had 28 students who received awards, an increase. The previous year it was 26 students, and this year it was 28 from 22 high schools. Natasha is trying to get information about other schools who could be participating by contacting those teachers who posted on Seelangs. Natasha will post on information on the website and will send a personal email to every teacher

who has participated. Natasha is seeking permission to bring on a co-chair, who works at her school.

June 30 is always the deadline. With or without the newsletter, we need to announce those awards in September-October. That affects the people who participate exchanges and apply for NSLI-Y. The award is also encouraging for juniors.

Natasha will send information to students and principals in the fall, with the hope that the newsletter will come out on time.

#### **e. Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Laureate Award (PSRSLA)**

Alla Smyslova

There were no procedural changes this year. This year 68 institutions submitted nominations. Last year it was 62. 10 programs participated for the first time. 9 programs that participated last year didn't respond. Even if the director of the program changes, the program participates.

We are trying to work on a low budget. The budget for this year involved only postage. Alla will have to buy more boxes of paper for certificates in the future, so there will be that expense again. Alla has not received any complaints about misprints.

Thanks to colleagues: to Elena Farkas for spreading the news in the newsletter. Thanks to John Schillinger. We should not yet dismiss the significance of paper. Thanks to Evgeny Dengub for having the nominations done through the website. It has made Alla's job significantly easier.

Thanks to Cindy and Jim for helping with the letter. Thanks to Evgeny for website nominations. Thanks from the Board to Alla for doing this; it is very important for our students and programs.

#### **f. ACTR Service Award**

Jane Shuffelton

Service award committee (Jane, Bill Rivers, Elena Farkas), and now Mark Trotter and Alla Smyslova.

If you have a nominee to suggest for the upcoming award, please suggest!

Citation for this year's service award: Cynthia Ruder is as strong a champion of ACTR as anyone in the field. She is consistent in her conviction that the organization provides outstanding programs and opportunities for instructors of Russian. She goes out of her way to encourage her colleagues, in fact anyone she meets, to join ACTR, persuaded as she is and as she will tell them, that EVERY teacher of Russian should be a member.

She has devoted much time and energy to the organization as a member of the Board of Directors since 2000. She took on the task of administering the Post-Secondary Scholar Laureate Award and ran the program from its beginning until she turned over that effort when she agreed to take on an even bigger responsibility, that of Treasurer. As such, she immediately faced a

scenario in which the entire financial management structure of ACTR was changing, with many operations moving to the Washington office of American Councils for International Education. She oversaw that process with diligent attention and care, so that ACTR's finances continue to be managed efficiently and carefully.

Cindy is involved in writing and editing testing items for the world language exams that American Councils for International Education administers for students of critical languages. She has written and edited a phenomenal number of items for the prototype AP Russian exam, the Russian Flagship exam, and the Russian Outbound program exams. Those exams are of major importance in assessing language proficiency and Cindy's work on them is invaluable.

She does have a life outside ACTR and American Councils as well. She is Associate Professor of Russian at the University of Kentucky, where she has taught since 1990. She received the Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Teaching in 2000.

Her list of conference presentations, articles, and reviews is extensive, another indication of her service to the profession. She has written and presented on various aspects of Russian history in the Stalin era, particularly on the building of canals and the use of penal labor. She was the only non-Russian to participate in a conference organized to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Moscow Canal.

We continue to benefit from her generous willingness to serve ACTR and are pleased to acknowledge her with the presentation of the ACTR Service Award.

## **12. REPORTS ON PUBLICATIONS**

*Russian Language Journal*

Karen Evans-Romaine for Bill Rivers

We will be publishing volume 65 this spring, a bit late, as Bill reported in Austin. We have four items in hand for volume 66. Bill had informed Betsy that he intends to resign and will reiterate that to Tom.

Discussion: Who will be the editor in chief of the RLJ?

Dan: This board has to decide how it would like to proceed. There is a potential candidate for replacement at BYU, Jennifer Bown. Should we keep this quiet for now and say that the board is in the final stages of deciding who should be the editor of the board? Would BYU be contributing to journal production costs?

We should be soliciting nominations. We should send those to Tom, and Tom could refer to the appropriate people. The editor in chief should participate in finding an associate editor.

Tom will send out a call to ACTR Members, with a deadline of 15 May. Karen volunteered to help Tom vet nominations.

Dan will work with Tom in writing up an announcement. Dan, Tom, and Karen can meet at the Language Flagship meeting in May to vet initial applications, then send out nominations with biographies to the board.

### **13. Report on the revision of Russian Specific Standards**

Jane Shuffelton, Tom Garza, Peter Merrill

We have reported the 5 goal areas and will send out scenarios to reviewers Karen, Diane, and Jonathan Ludwig for review. We Skype regularly, once a week. We are making thorough revisions. If you have purchased the new World Readiness Standards volume, you are still seeing the old version of the Russian-specific standards. Then you won't have to buy the World Standards volume again. The Board will be notified when the revised version of the Standards is ready. Cost: \$35. For that you get the right to download the language-specific Standards. Chinese and African languages are not doing as much revision. Jane will be happy to answer questions.

### **14. Zita Dabars' ACTR Archive**

Jane Shuffelton

Zita called Jane recently. She had brought this up earlier. She has an enormous collection of ACTR material: minutes, newsletters, other documents, two boxes that migrated from person to person. She needs to downsize and has asked if she could then send materials. People at American Councils will take on the task of digitizing. The materials will come to AC, where they will be sorted and gaps filled.

### **15. 2016 Nominations Committee**

Tom Garza

Evgeny Dengub has agreed to stay on this committee. Betsy Sandstrom has agreed to take on this committee as chair, and Peter Merrill as secondary.

### **16. Announcements**

Betsy: Travel opportunity

American Councils' Insiders Trip to Georgia. We have brought volunteer readers on trips to countries where we work. If you know of anyone from ACTR who would be interested in this venture, please pass it on! Betsy has this electronically, so that it can be posted on the website and Facebook. We have the flyer for the website. Elena is asking that we help spread the word. The trip was amazing!

If you are or can be in Washington for the silent auction, Betsy can gladly put in bids for you.

Alla: Vermont International Olympiada in Russian

One of the nominators for the Scholar Laureate award sent me information about this Olympiada. Their 5<sup>th</sup> will be in 2016. Three categories: декламация, сочинение, песни на

русском языке. From elementary to college students, with subgroups according to language proficiency. They have participants from all over the world. It is sponsored by the Институт русского языка, истории и культуры. Lyndon State College. Winners have been from US, Bulgaria, Spain, China, Serbia, Georgia, Uzbekistan. Things are sent to them by videorecording. It will take place in May. Alla suggested that they send information to the ACTR newsletter. Evgeny will forward the email to everyone.

Mark: The Russian and East European Institute at Indiana University will provide travel scholarships for in-service and pre-service teachers at any level, with a preference for pre-college teachers, to participate in the 4-day ACTFL OPI workshop for full certification. Travel scholarships will include airfare, lodging at IU and per diem. Please get in touch with Mark. The OPI workshop will take place July 5-8.

Evgeny: If anyone wants to send an announcement to the entire ACTR membership, please forward it to Evgeny, who can teach you. Until we develop a set of rules about who has access to the site, Evgeny will handle it in the meantime.

Betsy: STARTALK in Virginia in July, and in Middlebury in July. In Virginia we work with 25 students rising into grades 6-12 for 4 weeks, as well as a 2-week program for teacher professional development during the last 2 of those 4 weeks.

Natasha: Thanks to Alla Smyslova conducting professional development for our students at Staten Island Tech.

## **17. MEETING DATES FOR 2016-17**

**ACTFL** –November 18-20, 2016, Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, Boston, MA

**ASEEES (AAASS)** – November 17-20, 2016 Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC

**AATSEEL** – February 2-5, 2017, Parc 55, San Francisco, CA (note: no longer meets with MLA)

**ACTR Board of Directors** – Spring 2017, Washington, DC

Note that the dates for AATSEEL could change from year to year. This year they meet February 2-5. The Parc 55 is a nice hotel, and they got a very good rate for it.

Because AATSEEL is much later this year, the board of directors' meeting should perhaps also be later. When should we meet? April? May?

We have to avoid both Easters and Passover.

September is frantic for schools.

Decision to poll everyone about conference attendance and 2017 ACTR Board meeting date preferences.

## **18. NEW BUSINESS**

Tom: Let's talk about the constituency and term limits for the board of directors. How many people do we need on the board? Should we introduce term limits and rotate? Tom would like to put that out as new business for next time we convene.

Also on the agenda for next time: institutional membership.

Sincerest gratitude to Betsy for her terms as president and for making the transition run so smoothly.

Thanks to Michele for her outstanding service as secretary.

**Adjourn.**