

**ACTR Membership Meeting**  
**January 9, 2016**  
**AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center**  
**University of Texas**  
**Austin, Texas**

The meeting started at 5:15.

**1. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the January 10, 2015 Membership Meeting were approved unanimously.

**2. Announcements:** ACTR Board of Directors President Betsy Sandstrom reminded those present that there are several working committees on the ACTR Board of Directors, and the Board welcomes new committee members. Committee members need not be Board members.

**3. Treasurer's Report:** Tom Garza reported for Treasurer Cynthia Ruder. A full report will be in the upcoming ACTR Letter and on the ACTR website. The fiscal year 2014-2015 finished with a \$2626 deficit due to diminished membership and subscriptions to the *Russian Language Journal*. Several suggestions in a separate report will offer ideas to raise membership and cut costs for the ACTR Board. Overall, the budget is in good shape.

**4. Membership Report:** Irina Dubinina reported for Membership Secretary Bonny Einstein. There are 360 active members: 90 life, 170 regular members, 69 associate full professors, 20 retired members, 4 student members, with 5 new members in the last 30 days. An update will clarify why the number of life members has dropped so precipitously. It may be that the transfer to the new data system or the request for a \$250 "supplement" for life members affected the numbers.

Sandstrom commented that the Board is working to increase the dues structure.

**5. American Councils for International Education Board of Trustees:** Irwin Weil could not be here. Sandstrom, also a member of the Board of Trustees, reported that ACTR's recent audit was very clean. American Councils (AC) is concentrating on a new strategic plan and has been involved in helping ACTR celebrate its 40th anniversary.

**6. Report on ACTR Programs:** American Councils CEO Dan Davidson divided his report into three parts. First, the situation in Russia is unchanged. There have been no disruptions of any kind affecting AC students and scholars. The number of those studying in Russia is down slightly because students are going to Kazakhstan and Moldova, for instance, instead of going to Russia. The number of scholars, students and teachers in Russian-speaking countries was 354 in 2015. Most received partial or full support through AC, including 50 CLS students, 65 NSLI-Y students, and another group of NSLI students who spent the academic year in Moldova. The summer Flagship Program went to Kazakhstan, and a total of 28 others received travel grants. A group of ACTR Board members received travel support to attend the MAPRIAL Conference in Granada. The conference gave Board members a sense of solidarity with other Russian teachers from around the world.

President Obama signed off on the Title VIII Fellowship in December 2015. That fund was set for \$3,000,000. AC and ACTR are the major administrators of that fund, which is purely for scholarships and supports RLASP and other programs.

The Summer Language Teachers program received high reviews from the 12 teachers attending.

ACTR's 40th anniversary year saw the number of private donors to AC double, from about 600 to 1200. Many alumni are now able to donate to AC scholarship funds that AC puts to use immediately. Some donations are for specific cohorts, specific geographical areas, or for specific groups of students who are less commonly represented in language studies.

Ben Rifkin spoke as a father of an AC program participant. His daughter had phenomenal language growth during her first semester in Russia. She reported that she loved all her teachers, appreciated her family, and has had great support from the directors. Even over winter break, she has been in contact with her teachers and her peer tutor. Rifkin thanked the Board and especially Margaret Stephenson for all she does to make the program successful.

## 10. ACTR Publications

**Russian Language Journal:** Editor William Rivers explained that Volume 65 of *RLJ* was delayed due to a lack of solid submissions. There is about a 25% acceptance rate, with a double-blind peer review. There will be five or six book reviews in the upcoming edition. Editors work intensively with the authors to ensure that the quality of *RLJ* is at the highest level. Important changes in the last year include that *RLJ* is now indexed in the Journal Storage Project (JSTOR). AC staff boxed and sent the entire publication since 1947 for page-by-page copying, meaning that every page will be accessible to the 4,000 libraries that subscribe to the Humanities Catalogue in JSTOR. Seventy years' worth of scholarship will now be available. JSTOR will provide a potentially significant revenue stream. Now *RLJ* is also indexed in the MLA bibliography. Finally, *RLJ* is also on Google Scholar, a result of intensive work on the part of AC's IT staff, as each journal had earlier been uploaded as a complete PDF.

Rivers announced that he will be seeking a replacement for the editor position.

**11. JNCL-NCLIS:** William Rivers serves as the Executive Director of two non-profit organizations. He is "America's Language Lobbyist" as he serves on the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies. These positions allow Rivers to register as a lobbyist. This is the first year in seven or eight that has been a positive one for language organizations. The recent budget allocated \$60 billion of new discretionary funding to the Federal budget, and \$20 billion more will follow. Title VIII will therefore see double funding this year. Rivers will work with others to ensure that the funding reaches programs. Title VI was saved from a 48% cut. Rivers is working with the Coalition for International Education and with Dupont Circle associations to change a negative perception of Title VI.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was funded without foreign language assistance. Now the Department is instead giving funding in block grants directly to the states through the new ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act). However, in Title IV and Title IX, foreign language is included specifically in a stronger way than it was in NCLB. (Rivers commented that "world language" was not accepted as wording.) Grants include funding for heritage language populations, enhancing core curriculum, and to connect foreign languages with STEM, for example. Rivers is working to make sure that when the grant competitions are published this spring, there will be specific language about including foreign languages. If the state applications don't include foreign languages, they won't be able to get funding.

AC programs are well regarded and supported, so they will be at least level funded or slightly increased. JNCL's organization reports a year in the black for the second year in a row, with a manageable deficit. Membership has increased from 91 to 114, and JNCL is seen as a critical, trusted source for information on "global talent." Two major surveys researched and reported on what the business sector needs. JNCL is involved in discussions that help make the case for foreign language study.

Last year, Congress requested a Commission on Foreign Languages to make strategic recommendations about language study. The American Academy was established in July 2015, including both Dan Davidson and ACTFL President Marty Abbott. Other members are drawn from all walks of life. The group is a distinguished and savvy one, including Retired Lieutenant General and Ambassador Carl Eichenberry, Judge Diane Wood, Paul LeClerc, and others. More members of the business community will join the group. A Commission requires an act of Congress, and this is the first national Commission since 1979. The Mellon Foundation will fund one year to study and one year to share recommendations. JNCL is pleased that Davidson is a member of the Academy Commission.

## **12. Reports on Contest and Awards**

**a. The ACTR Olympiada of Spoken Russian:** Evgeny Dengub reported for Co-Chair Mark Trotter. There was a slight decrease in students: 1095, with the highest numbers of participating students in Alaska and Virginia. The number of schools decreased to 57 schools. All states are using the new version of the Olympiada materials for level 1. The Revision Committee – Lee Roby, Shosh Westen, Betsy Sandstrom and Natasha Ushakova – is currently working on level 2 material revision. Top finalists receive a letter from Dan Davidson and a copy of Geneva Gerhart's *Russian's World, Life and Language*. Heritage finalists receive a copy of Gerhart's *Russian Culture in Context*. Both books are provided by Slavica and funded by SLAVA.

**b. ACTR National Russian Essay Contest:** Co-chair Evgeny Dengub reported on the 2015 NREC, which received 1,407 essays. Those essays were being read at the time of the meeting. The topic was "My Ideal Day." Davidson asked whether there is an overlap in participation in the Essay Contest and the Olympiada, as well as with Scholar Laureate and other programs. Shuffelton reminded the group that the Olympiada requires more work on the part of the teacher to organize travel outside the school.

One member suggested that ACTR connect schools with colleges and universities that offer Russian so that students are aware of continuing programs. Some universities host the Olympiada and offer tours to students. Lee Roby suggested that universities should update their census information with objectives of their Russian programs. Davidson commented that the Academy Commission has been asked to do a census of all languages at all levels, with a directory of programs, leading to articulation between high school and college programs. Some states have clear information, but others do not have state-wide language coordinators. Students need to know where colleges will accept the Prototype AP ® Russian Exam.

Davidson said that the College Board is about to release an endorsement of the Prototype AP ® Russian Exam. ACTR offers the Prototype AP ® Russian Exam in ten less-commonly taught heritage languages. It will still take several years to get the information out to secondary institutions. Rifkin commented that it would be useful to have a letter to give ACTR high school teachers with a list of colleges that will accept the Prototype AP ® Russian Exam.

Sandstrom mentioned that while summer Startalk program students return to schools where Russian is not taught, savvy students find ways to continue their study. Some apply for NSLI-Y, then go online to BYU courses, for instance, showing their persistence in learning the language. It would be useful to support these individual scholars. Sandstrom taught groups on Saturdays for free for two years. Now they are Skyping with high school Russian students.

**c. ACTR National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest:** Chair Tony Brown was pleased to report that the NPSREC added participants this year: 1087 total up from 1004 in 2014, from 68 institutions. Topic: an Interesting Day in my Life. A comparison of participating institutions shows that there were a number of gains as a result of reaching out to smaller institutions who may have felt that they were not able to participate on the same level. Regular mail was very expensive and slow, so now PDF forms will go to a Google Docs folder, and then be shared with the Moscow office. Institutions will also pay online. The hope for 2017 is that instructors will register students online. In 2016, Nina Bond will take over as the NPSREC chair.

**13. RGGU and the American Studies Center:** Tony Brown reported that on May 12-13, 2015, the Alexey Zverev International biennial conference on American Studies took place on the campus of Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow. Organizers included Russian State University for the Humanities (Institute for History and Philology, American Studies Program at RSUH, Department for International Relations and Regional Studies of the Institute of History and Archives, Russian- American Academic Studies Center), Fulbright Program in Russia, and the University of Central Florida (College of Arts and Humanities). The conference coincided with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary marking the end of the US Civil War.

US delegates were: Jennifer Bown (Brigham Young University), Lauren Brown (Marymount Manhattan College), Tony Brown (Brigham Young University), Roy Scranton (Princeton University), Irwin Weil (Northwestern University). American Councils for International Education provided travel grants to each member of the US delegation.

Future topics have not yet been set.

**14. ACTFL Assembly of Delegates:** ACTR's ACTFL Assembly Representative Jane Shuffelton reported on the meeting that she and Betsy Sandstrom attended. The delegates worked this year on a document on core practices that came out of the Summer Leadership Initiative for Language Learning. They also discussed how various language organizations worked and how to support teachers, especially concerning the issue of non-native teachers working with heritage learners.

Shuffelton moved to explaining work on the *World Readiness Standards for Language Learning*. The Collaborative Board owns the Standards, while ACTFL publishes them. Shuffelton explained that in late 2015, some ACTR Board members had found some errors that ACTFL then corrected in its recent publication. Purchasing the new *World Language Standards* includes the right to download the language-specific standards as they are updated. The revision process is complicated because as expectations shift, the group must continue to revise. The Russian Learning Scenarios are the first to have been reviewed and accepted. Two of the five goal areas have also been finished and are out for review. The third area, Connections, is also almost finished. Shuffelton says that the group has made deep revisions, and now includes post-secondary examples in the sample progress indicators, in the scenarios; so all sections will include all levels, from pre-elementary through post-secondary. This work

should be very useful for articulation. Shuffelton thanked those in the room who have contributed. Diane Nemec Ignatiev reviewed the scenarios, Lee Roby, Shannon Johnson, and Ben Rifkin all contributed learning scenarios. President Sandstrom thanked Jane Shuffelton, Peter Merrill and Tom Garza for their work on the Standards.

**15. 2015 Nominations Committee:** Evgeny Dengub reported for the committee, which also includes Karen Evans-Romaine and Lee Roby. All Board members up for reelection agreed to stay on. These were Betsy Sandstrom, Michele Whaley, Tom Garza, Richard Brecht, Tony Brown, Ruth Edelman, Peter Merrill, Diane Nemec-Ignashev, Mara Sukholutskaya, and Jim Sweigert. Tom Garza agreed to serve as President, should he be elected. Natasha Ushakova has accepted a nomination for Vice President. There were no other nominations. Dengub's motion to accept the slate of for reelection was seconded and the vote to renew Board members passed unanimously. A second motion to elect Garza and Ushakova passed unanimously. Members congratulated Garza and Ushakova on their new positions.

**16. ACTR Service Award Committee Report:** Jane Shuffelton read the citation honoring Cynthia Ruder. Ruder has been a strong champion of ACTR, consistently supporting and encouraging her colleagues to join the organization. Her activities on the Board and in the teaching world have been numerous. Ruder took on the position of Treasurer of ACTR at a time when managing the budget became a suddenly more complicated task. The complete citation will appear in the *ACTR Letter*, and the ACTR Board will present Ruder with the award when next the Board meets. Members applauded Cynthia Ruder for her dedication to the field.

**Old Business:** President Sandstrom brought members' attention to the new ACTR website, where members can find information about ACTR programs and renew their membership. She thanked Dengub for his creation of the new site and establishment of a Facebook page for ACTR.

**New Business:** Jane Shuffelton offered thanks to Betsy Sandstrom for her four years of service as president and commented in awe for everything she does and the professionalism she brings to her service. Shuffelton reminded the members of the Moscow Language Teacher Award and the Pushkin Medal that Sandstrom received at the MAPRIAL Conference to hearty applause.

Sandstrom announced that the Board voted to accept SLAVA as an affiliate member of ACTR.

Shuffelton announced that Michele Whaley will represent Russian teachers as the PNCFL Teacher of the Year at the 2016 ACTFL Conference in Boston.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42.