

## Open Architecture Curriculum and Transformative Language Learning Revisited

### Part 2. Toward a Constrained Definition of OACD

By Andrew R. Corin

#### Origins and Emergence of OACD

While the practices on which OACD is based have developed over many years, drawing them together under a single conceptual roof to leverage their potential is a newer development. The term itself, in relation to L2 learning, was introduced at DLIFLC in 2015 as part of a push to enable more Basic Course students to achieve ILR 2+ (Advanced High) or higher. In this context, "OACD" represented a cover term for an approach that eschewed textbooks but encompassed a broader range of program design desiderata. These included immersive (target-language-only) instructional environment, reliance on authentic materials, diagnostic learner-centered instruction with assessment maximally integrated into learning activities, content-scenario - and project-based learning, engaging higher order thinking and critical reflection, etc. The purpose was not to achieve flexibility for its own sake, but rather to enable the maximally adaptive integration of a broad range of program characteristics generally believed to promote efficient L2 learning.

Why did the absence of a textbook come to be identified as the central concept within this approach? In simple terms, this reflected the view that when a fixed textbook is eliminated from the equation, a program is compelled to adopt "compensatory" strategies, such as those indicated above, which more than fill the supposed void while maximizing flexibility. The result is a more learner- and mission-responsive solution that enables optimized learning outcomes. The question naturally arises as to the cost of this shift in terms of resource expenditure (including professional development). In the DLIFLC context of that time we considered the payback well worth the cost—in spades.

OACD achieved signal success in turning around DLIFLC's intermediate and advanced courses between 2006-2015, with outcomes at ILR 3+ and 4 becoming common, though not yet regular, and enabling unanticipated outcomes in a variety of non-resident programs as well, including those for personnel who are not language specialists. During this period a number of parameters of effective OACD application, especially (but not solely) at ILR Levels 1+ – 4 (Intermediate High – Distinguished), came to be refined. In 2015 a push to expand OACD into DLIFLC Basic Course programs began, stimulating inquiry into OACD's potential at the earliest stages of learning.

This course of development was pushed forward by

constantly mounting pressure from DLIFLC's broader institutional and real-world context to achieve or enable learning outcomes at ILR 3 and higher, including directive impulses from other actors within the Defense Language Program of which DLIFLC is a critical component. This pressure arose from growing awareness of both the real-world significance of ILR 3-4 (Superior-Distinguished) L2 proficiency and the potential for learners to attain these levels. Analogous pressures have also been felt by non-government K-12 and higher educational programs (Corin, 2020b).

OACD builds on a lengthy history of practice which is by no means limited to DLIFLC. Essentially what is now referred to as OACD was once termed "modular" curricular design. Stryker and Leaver (1997) presented a number of content-based examples, some yielding remarkable outcomes. Some of this author's own experiments in Russian and Serbian-Croatian from the late 1980s through late 1990s also employed OACD. The same is no doubt true for many instructors at numerous institutions. DLIFLC's specific circumstances, however, provided both a compelling impetus for the emergence and crystallization of OACD and a context in which it could be developed and tested at scale. Nevertheless, looking forward, it is in the broader higher educational and K-12 contexts that instructors and small teams will likely have the greatest flexibility to innovate, develop and deploy an essentially infinite variety of approaches to exploit OACD's potential.

#### Definition and Principles of OACD

Drawing on experience to date in the practical application of OACD, published literature, conference presentations, and various professional/program development activities (the latter largely at DLIFLC), we can define OACD as follows:

*OACD is a flexible, textbook-free framework that allows for: (1) interchangeable unadapted authentic texts, tasks, and other activities, often organized into modules; (2) continual and systemic tailoring to individual learner/cohort needs; and (3) ongoing learner involvement with selection and delivery of meaningful content.*

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The governing noun phrase (“a *flexible, textbook-free framework*”) describes the most salient features of OACD. However, flexibility provides just superficial benefits, except to the extent that it is harnessed to promote an array of beneficial strategies and techniques. We are therefore concerned not merely with the narrow definition of OACD as a textbook-free approach to curricular design, but rather with OACD’s primary principles of operation. As intimated above, the definition of OACD *entails* several principles of effective implementation, while simultaneously serving as an *enabler* for a variety of practices that implement other broadly acknowledged principles of efficient L2 learning. A brief survey of some of these entailments and “enablements” can help us get a handle on just what effective OACD looks like in practice.

On the entailments side, eliminating textbooks, which enable syllabi based on grammar and/or other elements of linear scope and sequence (functions, notions, vocabulary, etc.), necessitates a shift to some other organizational principle. Typically this is a modular theme-based syllabus, which may be content-based, project-based, or scenario-based. In current practice, this theme-based syllabus is usually accompanied by a textbook at levels through ILR 1 (ACTFL Intermediate Mid).

The shift away from linear scope and sequence toward theme-based syllabi also necessitates reconsideration of our fundamental approach to staging learners’ increasing levels and repertoires of performance capabilities. If learners are not being gradually introduced, in some defined sequence, to grammatical, lexical/phrasal and paralinguistic (pragmatic, stylistic, discourse, sociocultural) material, then how *does* one arrange for their repertoires of L2 linguistic and sociocultural competencies to advance, and ensure that this occurs? The answer is twofold.

On the one hand, there will be a greater tendency for both linguistic and paralinguistic material to be introduced and reinforced spontaneously, arising out of the development of thematic units, including needs that arise during learning-related tasks. Since units are based on an ever-changing repertoire of authentic materials and task specifics, the actual inventory of linguistic and paralinguistic material encountered and manipulated will differ somewhat during each iteration. Changing external circumstances, student choices and the unpredictable dynamics of learning tasks all play a role.

On the other hand, abandonment of linear scope and sequence also thrusts us inevitably toward an entirely different principle of scaffolding learners’ ability to carry out tasks at particular levels. Within a theme-based syllabus—especially if it is scenario- or project-based, in which learners address real or simulated needs—it makes no sense to speak of a gradation from first module to last in the level of learning tasks, focusing initially on word-level tasks and working up gradually toward tasks requiring support for opinion, hypothesizing, and higher levels of abstraction characteristic of ILR 3-4 (ACTFL Superior-Distinguished). Occasion for tasks at any or all of these levels may, in principle, arise in the course of any module at any stage of the course. This means that instead of gradually increasing task level throughout a course (which, of course, never occurs in a pure form in any course), learners build their performance from simple to complex tasks over and over, as many times as possible, over the course of numerous modules, yielding a dynamic that I refer to as vertical spiraling (Corin 2020a; 2020b; also Corin 1994, 1997 using different terminology).

The shift from linear scope and sequence (an enabler for discrete point or, more generally, achievement testing) toward theme-based syllabi further necessitates a shift toward performance-based proficiency-oriented formative assessments integrated into the learning process. This frees learners from test preparation as an activity distinct from learning, simultaneously freeing instructors to be more creative in course/lesson preparation. Admittedly, in some programs summative assessments may be woven into administrative structures in ways that make them difficult to eliminate. Also, students with certain learning styles prefer to have an admixture of quiz-like summative assessments as one check on their progress.

Moving beyond its entailments, many of OACD’s other benefits lie in principles of efficient learning for which it can be a major enabler. Chief among these are OACD’s effects on enabling continual and systematic tailoring to learner needs. This is achieved in part by empowering instructors to change themes, texts, and activities

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## ACTR President's Corner



## Слово президента

## Дорогие друзья и коллеги!

We are getting close to the middle of this incredibly challenging school year. Our classrooms have become «remote», «blended», and «in-person». Did I miss any name?

Our classrooms changed, but our goals stay the same: teach, learn, and create a positive attitude in our students towards any challenges.

American Council of Teachers of Russian is your organization and does everything to help and support you to meet any professional challenges during this “new normal” time.

You can access ACTR's revision of *Standards for Learning Russian K-16*, now available in electronic form at: <https://www.actfl.org/resources/world-readiness-standards-learning-languages>

ACTR is the first language association to complete the task of updating the standards. The revision adds materials for post-secondary learning and presents new sets of performance indicators linked to proficiency levels, as well as new learning scenarios.

I would like to congratulate Jane Shuffelton, who served as Chair of the task force, with co-authors Tom Garza and Peter Merrill.

Last summer ACTR brought together pre-college and college educators to discuss issues we are all confronting in the Russian language teaching field due to the COVID 19 crisis. During five meetings in June and July we held **ACTR National Conversations on Teaching of Russian**, where we discussed: changes to pedagogy, co-curricular activities, professional development, American Council of International Education opportunities for study abroad, and the Flagship Program. This issue of the newsletter begins a series of articles focusing on the critical question of inclusivity in our field. This topic was one of the key points of another one of the National Conversations in the summer. You can find recordings of the conversations at [www.actr.org](http://www.actr.org)

In the 2019-2020 academic year more than three thousand college and pre-college students participated in ACTR contests and programs. All programs and contests will remain active in this academic year. All information will be posted on the ACTR website.

ACTR is running regular **Teachers Lounges** with the goal to support colleagues across all levels of instruction. ACTR Lounges provide space for idea sharing, networking, discussing com-

mon challenges and finding solutions.

Pre-college and college teachers meet every Friday from 5 pm to 6 pm via Zoom.

ACTR will continue organizing webinars on topics of interest to our members. As a reminder, all webinars are free to active members. Please register for any webinar you are interested in. If you are unable to attend, you will receive a recording of the webinar. Current members can also access recordings of all previous webinars upon request.

If you would like to suggest a topic or a presenter for the ACTR webinars or Teachers Lounges, please e-mail

Evgeny Dengub at [edengub@gmail.com](mailto:edengub@gmail.com)

Irina Dubinina at [idubinin@brandeis.edu](mailto:idubinin@brandeis.edu)

John Rook at [RookJ@glastonburyus.org](mailto:RookJ@glastonburyus.org)

The Board of Directors met on September 26, 2020 instead of the usual time in April, due to the pandemic. The directors received reports on the activities of contest chairs, membership, the Pushkin fund, etc. The ACTR Board of Directors Nomination Committee is currently accepting nominations. If you would like to nominate colleagues or yourself, please contact Lee Roby at [eroby@friendsbalt.org](mailto:eroby@friendsbalt.org)

Nominees must be ACTR members in active status.

ACTR is growing, having welcomed 80 new members in the past academic year. We are committed to supporting all teachers of Russian, including teachers at community-based schools and private instructors, as well as graduate students. To make membership more accessible, the Board decided to change the term of your membership from calendar year to a rolling basis. Current members with an automatic annual renewal date of January 1 will not be affected. New and lapsed members who wish to join ACTR/renew their membership can do it at their earliest convenience. Their membership will run for 365 days from the day it is activated/renewed. Please log in to renew your profile at <https://www.actr.org/your-actr-accountrenew-membership.html> today.

**Участвуйте в наших встречах по пятницам!**

Пишите нам!

Расскажите о программах и занятиях в ваших университетах, колледжах и школах.

~*Nataliya Ushakova*

*President*

*American Council of teachers of Russian*

*Russian Teacher*

*Staten Island Technical High School*

[nushakova@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:nushakova@schools.nyc.gov)

*Front Page Dialogue, continued from p. 2.* according to program, learner, or cohort needs, including through negotiation of content. It also removes limitations on their ability to individualize activities and learning plans.

Beyond this, OACD promotes a learning environment maximally grounded in the World Readiness Standards (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2019) in multiple respects. Chief among these may be its orientation toward content scenario -, and project-based instruction, with the incorporation of collaborative learning such as group presentations and projects based on learner research. This in turn promotes the development and use of critical reflection and higher-order thinking skills, deliberate, continual use of the target language, including unadapted authentic materials, from Day 1. Exclusive reliance on unadapted authentic texts, in turn, inevitably promotes the integration of formal, colloquial and non-standard language. These same factors, in turn, make it easier to incorporate a wide variety of listening and reading genres across the full spectrum of social media platforms and beyond, thus also encouraging a focus on stylistics, including register and discourse analysis.

### Is OACD Feasible?

Two questions remain as to whether OACD, so defined and elaborated, is actually feasible. First, is it feasible generally and on a sustainable basis? Second, is it feasible, in the sense of being generally and sustainably beneficial, in its application with Novice and Intermediate (through ILR 1) learners?

Concerning the broader question, I have occasionally heard OACD characterized as desirable on general grounds, yet too labor intensive for instructors or course developers to sustain on a long-term basis. Corin (2020b) argues that in reality—indeed by design—the opposite is true. To summarize the argument, it is rather the need for sequencing of specific material and articulation between successive units inherent in traditional linear scope and sequence that artificially creates a labor-intensive aspect to achieving flexibility of course design and implementation. Once one jettisons linear scope and sequence and embraces theme-based syllabi and vertical spiraling as a strategy for proficiency growth, this need for sequencing and articulation evaporates. This does not mean that all aspects of sequencing necessarily go away. As illustrated by Dababneh (2018), themes that are inherently less cognitively challenging will still be best addressed prior to those that are more challenging. The requirement of comprehensible input (i+1) for learning, moreover, does not disappear. What does go away, however, is the need for a course developer to program a single specific i+1 sequence in advance for all learners, an archetypically teacher-centric approach. To the extent that instructors and course developers can relinquish the role of master puppeteer and dance step choreographer, they become freer to develop and thrive in the role of facilitator or mentor of learning.

### OACD at Early Stages of Learning

The relevance of OACD for learning at the lowest levels of proficiency, in terms of feasibility and potential, requires a more articulated response than I can provide here. Briefly, though, multiple approaches have been articulated to date. Campbell (2020) acknowledges generally that at low levels of proficiency OACD is typically applied with the accompaniment of

a textbook. Krasner (2020) described the use of gradual release of responsibility as one approach to gradually “weaning” students off textbooks. Weygandt, Bondarenko, & Kogan (2020) applied a sophisticated content-based OACD approach with second-week novices alongside more marginal use of a textbook. Corin (1994, 1997) described a target-language-only OACD approach with novice conversion (Czech à Serbian-Croatian) students from Day 1, and mused about forms of pre-training to prepare true novices to perform in a manner analogous to conversion students. A number of such pre-training materials have been discussed and developed, and some tested, but generally this is still an area for future growth.

### Supplementary Resources

As a final note, while OACD eschews the use of textbooks, it is not necessarily a resource-free panacea. The effectiveness of OACD can typically be enhanced by a variety of accompanying resources. Dictionaries and style/phraseology guides come immediately to mind. Reference grammars adapted to the needs of learners can play a crucial role, especially in enabling higher-level proficiency (bearing in mind that different types of learners will benefit from differing types of supporting resources). A variety of pre-training and possibly other support materials may also prove useful.

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### **American Studies Center Conference**

In April of 2021 we are hoping to have a normal Conference at our American Studies Center in Moscow at the **Russian State Humanities University**,

which was established as a non-Soviet type institution in the late 1990's.

This year's Conference deals with the writing of Tobias Wolff, whose fiction and memoirs have won a number of prizes over the years. He is currently a retired Professor at Stanford University.

There will be many different approaches to his writing. After reading his autobiography I found very interesting in comparison with Gorky's best work, his try-partite account of the early years of his fascinating life. Both Wolff and Gorky grew up in households where the familial circumstances made life hard for the boy and the adolescent, but a wellspring of ideas and feelings useful for a writer. The Peshkov (Gorky's real name) family, with all its dysfunction, and color, was in many ways parallel to the broken family which nurtured, and in many ways hurt, the man who became a well known poet and writer. There are many other ways in which the two had parallel experiences of growth which was partly painful, and partly colorful in a way not entirely separated from poetry.

It is of course impossible to predict with certainty what the health situation will be in next April. I am only hoping we will be able to take part in a living conference. If anyone wants to investigate, or take part, I would be happy to hear.

[l-weil@northwestern.edu](mailto:l-weil@northwestern.edu)

### **From the ACTR Board Nominations Committee**

The Nominations Committee serves to fill vacancies on the Board as new positions become available; new members are sought from the membership at large. The Committee welcomes nominations (including self-nominations) from instructors of Russian of all levels and from a variety of teaching environments, including elementary schools, dual-immersion schools, online schools, and community schools. Please submit nominations at any point before January 1, 2021 to Lee Roby ([eroby@friendsbalt.org](mailto:eroby@friendsbalt.org)). For a self-nomination, submit a statement describing your past involvement in ACTR programs and your interest in serving on the ACTR Board of Directors. Please indicate specific ways that you could envision serving the Board. In nominating others, please submit a statement describing the nominee's contributions to the field and/or record of professional service and what you believe the nominee would bring to the ACTR Board.

*Lee Roby*

*Chair, Nominations Committee*

# Русский язык в вопросах и ответах

This column is Hosted by Alina Israeli, American University

This question and Professor's Israeli's answer is the third of a planned series to be published in the newsletter. Please direct your own questions to her at: [aisrael@american.edu](mailto:aisrael@american.edu). Future issues of the newsletter will continue this feature.

**Q. Is there a list of nouns with the diminutive suffixes that no longer are considered diminutive in Contemporary Standard Russian? Can we consider suffix -K- as diminutive or are there two suffixes, a diminutive and a word-forming one?**

**A.** The short answer to the first question is “no.” Let us approach the suffix from the point of view of the nouns and the purpose it serves in various types of nouns. The suffix -K- is typically used in feminine nouns. But, of course, it can be used with masculine nouns designating people in the II (-a) declension. This means that -K- can be used in all male diminutives (a diminutive of a diminutive): Саша – Сашка, Вася – Васька, Юра – Юрка, Коля – Колька, and so on and also дядя – дядька, just as it is used in feminine names and terms of relationships: Наташа – Наташка, Аня – Анька, тётя – тётка. The meaning of the suffix -K- is peculiar because it can mean one of two almost opposite things: on the one hand it can create an endearing term, although not as endearing as with suffixes -ОЧК-, -УШК- or -ЕНЫК, as in тётка мужа, and on the other hand it can be pejorative or condescending (пренебрежительно), as in Подходит одна тётка и говорит... Also, Russian language allows speakers to pile up suffixes, for example бабуля is a diminutive from бабушка which is very endearing, but бабулька has a tinge of pejorative or condescending attitude.

Most commonly, as I said, the suffix -K- is used with feminine nouns. The nouns range from those that do not attach this suffix at all to those with an obligatory suffix.

For high style nouns the use of the suffix -K- is impossible: страна, воля, свобода, родина, правда, истина. So, for example, материя has both an abstract meaning of ‘matter’ in a philosophical sense and a concrete meaning of ‘cloth.’ In the first meaning it cannot attach the suffix -K-, while in the second one it can: материйка.

For a large group of nouns, the use of suffix -K- signifies either a term of endearment or smaller size or importance of the item: книга – книжка, собака – собачка, бумага – бумажка, дыра – дырка, трава – травка. The names for both sexes also belong here: Лена – Ленка, Ваня – Ванька. Same names, usually with the suffix -K- in reference to an animal, also belong here if they are part of the standard language use: Миша – Мишка (медведь), Петя – Петька (петух), but they would belong to #4 if they are individual nicknames.

For some nouns the use of the suffix -K- is two-fold: it can be used as in number 2 or it can create a different meaning altogether: рука – ручка (pen, knob, handle), нога – ножка (leg of table or chair), машина – машинка (small mechanical device, for example машинка для стрижки волос). One can usually see the metaphoric or metonymic connection with the base word.

There are nouns where adding the suffix -K- creates a new word, although we can see the connection to the original word: вода –

водка, пена (foam) – пенка (film of cream of milk), вилы (pitchfork) – вилка (fork), родина (homeland) – родинка (birthmark), нажива (gain) – наживка (bait); animal nicknames that have counterpart non-K forms: корова Машка, корова Зорька, корова или коза Майка, свинья Борька (based on the diminutive of Борис – Боря, but also by association with the word «боров» – ‘hog’), кот Васька, кошка Мурка (onomatopoeic to the purring sound мур-мур, but also a possible diminutive from Мария – Мура), кошка Манька, собаки Белка и Стрелка; animal nicknames that do not have non-K forms: корова Бурёнка, собака Жучка, собака Каштанка, лошадь Сивка-Бурка.

There are nouns of various origins that do not exist without the suffix -K-:

- Borrowed words: тарелка (from German through Polish *talerz*), юбка (from old French, German, and Polish), булка (from French and Polish), рюмка (from German), будка (from German), пулька (card term, from French).
- Formations based on adjectives: белка (from белая), сивка (a horse, from сивый), антоновка (apple, from антоновские), малиновка (bird, from малиновый).
- Formation based on verbal roots: улыбаться – улыбка, варить – варка, парить – парка, пороть – порка, класть – кладка, стелить – стелька, синить – синька, мыть – мойка, стирать – стирка, ставить – ставка. This is a very large and productive group.
- Formation of feminine nouns of people and animals based on the masculine (although there are many other feminizing suffixes as well): кот – кошка, голубь – голубка, студент – студентка, моряк – морячка, немец – немка, торговец – торговка.
- Formation of nouns in -K- based on feminine nouns of the III declension (as a result the gender is the same but the declension changes): тетрадь – тетрадка, сельдь – селёдка, морковь – морковка, мышь – мышка, кровать – кроватка, дочь – дочка, вошь – вошка, бутылъ – бутылка.
- Occasionally the suffix -K- forms feminine nouns from masculine ones in cases other than people or animals: картофель – картошка, короб – корёбка.
- And then, there are nouns that are not related, but look like they are: стопá (foot) vs. стóпка (shot glass), норá (animal hole) vs. нóрка (mink).

**To summarize: For words in sections 2, 3, 5e, and 5f, -K- is a diminutive suffix; for the same words in 3, 4 and the rest of 5, it is a word-forming suffix. In 1, one has to be careful because the diminutive -K- can be condescending or even pejorative depending on the context (who is speaking to whom and about what or whom).**

## Standards for Learning Russian K-16

The newly revised e-publication of *Standards for Learning Russian K-16* is now available at the following site: <https://www.actfl.org/resources/world-readiness-standards-learning-languages>

ACTR is the first language association to complete the work of revising their language-specific Standards, under the auspices of the national Standards Collaborative. Jane Shuffelton (Chair), Tom Garza, and Peter Merrill formed the task force for the work of revising and rewriting ACTR's Standards. The revised Standards volume adheres to the format of the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, with the same goal areas and the same standards within each goal.

The task force realized early in the revision process that the Russian Standards would benefit from an extensive overhaul in many respects. Language in the introduction was outdated, the learning scenarios needed more elaboration, and sample progress indicators needed rewriting. Most important, the new version adds material specifically written for post-secondary learning. The original volume, *Standards for Learning Russian K-12*, did not address learning past high school level. Instructors will now find much new material at all levels, including a completely new set of learning scenarios. Those scenarios include one at Superior level. Examples in the SPLs and the learning scenarios integrate concepts from the NSSFL/ACTFL Can-Do Statements and the Project for Twenty-first Century Skills.

A major change in the new volume is the association of learning scenarios and sample progress indicators with ACTFL proficiency levels, from Novice to Advanced in most instances, and also by education levels: elementary, middle school, high school, post-secondary. SPLs are framed in terms of what learners can do in terms of a particular standard. The task force took into account the importance of age appropriate considerations in creating SPLs. For example, some movies and TV shows are more appropriate for learners in high school or post-secondary classes. Even some fairly simple Novice level tasks may vary at different education levels. College students may communicate with instructors and classmates using Cyrillic keyboarding skills, whereas elementary school learners are less likely to do so. College students at Novice level might ask a question about another student's major, not an appropriate inquiry at lower educational levels.

Learning scenarios show more detail in what learners are expected to do, and have an expanded teacher reflection piece, with language on how the activities in the scenarios relate to specific goal and standards areas. Each scenario is organized in segments: The Instructional Setting, Learn/Practice/Assess, and Reflection. Learn/Practice/Assess provides rather complete information on what goes on in the classroom and how learning is assessed for a particular lesson or an entire unit of study. The reflection piece often uses wording that ties the scenario to specific standards within a goal area. For

example, referring to work on transportation at Novice elementary level: "Learners use interpretive communication when they work with maps in Russian."

The Standards will be a valuable resource for those who are preparing learners to take the NEWL Russian exam through American Councils for International Education. Information about the NEWL exam can be found on the AC website, which explicitly states the exam is linked to the Standards and to ACTFL proficiency levels. The Standards volume will help post-secondary instructors understand the language learning background of students who come into their courses from high school programs that are grounded in the goals and standards put forth in the Standards.

NEWL exams, given in Arabic, Korean, Portuguese, and Russian, are recognized by the College Board as equivalent to Advanced Placement exams in other languages. The entire exam is administered online. The NEWL exams test proficiency in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Like AP exams, NEWL Russian consists of two sections of prompts in Russian with multiple choice questions in English, one section of interpretive listening and one of interpretive reading. The exam also includes a section of speaking prompts, to which test takers submit recorded responses. Finally, there is a section of prompts for writing. Both the speaking and writing sections may be considered examples of interpersonal communication. Unlike the other AP language courses, no set of broad topics governs preparation for the NEWL exams. Topics for prompts are chosen so that students with intermediate proficiency skills will be able to earn top ratings (5, following the AP rating scale of 1 through 5). The overall rating is also disaggregated to show numerical rating for each of the four skills being tested.

In the decades since the first edition was published ACTFL has also made substantial strides in helping teachers understand differences in the assessment of performance vs. proficiency. By attending to the more nuanced assessment that is possible with NEWL testing and understanding that *performance* measures a student's outcome regarding specific, learned topics, it is now much easier for teachers to make productive use of the content standards of this volume. While some learners and teachers may find it initially confusing to have two different scales for measuring performance and proficiency, by making it obvious that the locus of short-term assessment is performance, which is both practiced and domain-specific, ACTFL has given teachers a framework for language learning that aligns closely with what the science of learning tells us with regard to language learning. At the same time, by paying attention to the breadth of the content standards, teachers will be providing the kind of range of learning across multiple domains of performance measurement that is required to increase proficiency levels.

The task force thanks the following people who contributed to the revised Standards volume:

### CONSULTANT:

**Dan Davison, American Council of Teachers of Russian**

### REVIEWERS

**Ruth P. Edelman** Tenafly High School,  
Tenafly, New Jersey

**Karen Evans-Romaine** University of  
Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin

**Jonathan Z. Ludwig** Oklahoma State  
University, Stillwater, Oklahoma

**Diane Nemeč Ignashev** Carleton College,  
Northfield, Minnesota

### CONTRIBUTORS OF LEARNING

#### SCENARIOS:

**Mary Bordes** World Languages Magnet School,  
Brackenridge High School, San Antonio, Texas

**Bonny Einstein** North Colonie Central Schools,  
Latham, New York

**Thomas J. Garza** University of Texas at Austin,  
Austin, Texas

**Shannon Johnson** Friends School of Maryland,  
Middle School, Baltimore, Maryland

**Cynthia Martin** The University of Maryland, Col-  
lege Park, Maryland

**Paavo Husen** Illinois Mathematics and Science  
Academy, Aurora, Illinois

**Benjamin Rifkin\*** Hofstra University, Hempstead,  
New York

**Richard Robin** The George Washington Universi-  
ty, Washington, DC

**Elizabeth Lee Roby** Friends School of Maryland,  
Upper School, Baltimore, Maryland

**John Rook** Glastonbury Public Schools, Glaston-  
bury, Connecticut

**Antonina Sergieff** University of California, Los  
Angeles, Los Angeles, California

**Nataliya Ushakova** Staten Island Technical High  
School, Staten Island, New York

**Anna Walker** Turnagain Elementary School, An-  
chorage, Alaska

\* Scenario based on a class at the University of  
Wisconsin, Madison

## An Open Letter to ACTR Members and the Profession

On June 10, 2020, the Board of Directors of ACTR posted on its website a “Statement from ACTR on Racism and Equity” in response to the growing national conversation on endemic and institutional racism in the U.S. In its statement, ACTR expressed a commitment to address national inequities: “Through our meetings, professional development initiatives, and study abroad programs, we will create inclusive spaces for greater dialogue and conversations on race, ethnicity, cultures, and equity.” Similar statements were posted on websites of the MLA, ACTFL, AATSEEL, and ASEEEES. The ASEEEES statement is particularly impactful, as it appears in, in addition to English, ten languages of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including Russian.

As we all face a persistently uncertain situation in most of our cities and schools due to COVID-19 in terms of how we interact with our students and deliver our content, it is all too easy to forget the imperative and momentum of this past summer’s circumstances. In our common desire to return to ‘normal,’ we unintentionally revert to the *status quo* of inequity and bias that has marked all institutional strata of the US, including education. Each day that we meet our Russian classes – in person or virtually – we choose what and how material is presented to our students. At the same time that we model ways of engaging with the language and culture, we are also modeling how to converse with other human beings with respect and empathy. Ensuring that both the content of courses and the ways in which we interact with our students is inclusive and equitable is fair and humane. At the same time, it is pedagogically sound.

“Decolonizing the syllabus” is a not only a core goal for courses in literature and cultural studies; most of our language teaching materials would equally benefit from substantive diversification of content and presentation, including varying characters and identities, regional representation, and situations and settings of exercises. Critical examination of your current text materials might reveal Russian characters only from urban areas, with jobs requiring a higher education; they probably have a dacha and live in a nicely appointed apartment with a heteronormative family unit. Literary figures mentioned tend to be white and male, as do political, historical, and scientific figures. Even the characters who represent our learners tend to be portrayed in text materials as white and usually affluent. Introducing characters from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and means is a first step in the “decolonization” process and sets the stage for a more representative and inclusive course in which our students can begin to see themselves as engaged and equal participants. Including Pushkin only begins the conversation about racial diversity in Russia.

Russian grammar, like that of most Indo-European lan-

guages, is also heavily marked in gender terms, even in lexicon. But by promoting inclusion and diversity in the conversations we have in our classrooms we open up new lines of interpersonal and intercultural communication – one of the most important goals of our endeavors. Many of our students live in single-parent or blended families, but our materials rarely introduce lexicon for “step-parents,” “half-siblings,” much less “two moms” or “two dads.” Gen Z students, who are already more inclined to talk about their identities, may use «он», «она», or «они» to define themselves in ways that seemingly violate conventional grammatical norms; they may use constructions such as «Мой папа вышел замуж за мексиканца» or «Она собирается жениться на русской», which might upset grammatical conservatives, but which correctly expresses the reality and value of their lives. As the events of summer 2020 reminded us, we still have work to do and promoting equity and inclusion often requires having “difficult conversations.” Turning these conversations into teachable moments in our Russian classes is beneficial both in proficiency and personal terms.

Making our language and culture courses relevant and meaningful to a more inclusive and diverse audience that better represents our regional and national demographics is not a simplistic and reactive nod to “political correctness” or partisan politics; it is an essential component of the educational process, a process that requires fair and equal access and opportunity to succeed. It is also a crucial component of any strategic plan for the continued success and future growth of our programs. Russian programs that are inclusive and relevant to the broad spectrum of learners that comprise the 21<sup>st</sup> century US classroom will attract and retain more students, ensuring that Russian and other world languages retain their place in the curriculum.

To have the academic environments in our schools and universities reflect one standard on institutional diversity and equity, but then have a different standard reflected in our course content presents our students with a muddled, inconsistent message which disconnects the humanities from our core purpose of understanding and expressing what it means to be human. The materials and classroom practices in our courses and programs abroad must attend to *all* students equally in *all* respects, helping them literally to express who they are and what matters to them. We must, as a profession, be clear and proactive with the message we send to our classes: that *all* students are welcome, included, and valued.

Thomas Jesús Garza  
University of Texas at Austin  
ACTR Past President



### ACTR National Russian Essay Contest

The NREC Co-chairs decided **to postpone** the contest this year until January or February 2021, due to organizational difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. This departure from the traditional November dates allows the Co-chairs to design protocols and procedures that will enable us to successfully conduct an equitable online contest. Please read carefully the following announcement, with attention to the new procedures and protocols for this year's contest.

Co-chairs: Paavo Husen, John R. Rook, Phillip Stosberg

Established thirty-nine years ago, the ACTR National Russian Essay Contest (NREC) provides US high school and middle school students the opportunity to demonstrate their writing proficiency in Russian. Students write essays in Russian on a topic announced at the beginning of a two-hour period.

#### Registration Information and Placement Guidelines

1. All participating teachers must be members of ACTR. Please use the online membership site to pay your dues if you have not already done so. The site can be accessed at <http://www.actr.org/membership.html>. For questions about your ACTR membership, please contact ACTR Membership Secretary Irina Dubinina at [idubin-in@brandeis.edu](mailto:idubin-in@brandeis.edu).

2. The registration fee per student is \$4.00. Write one check payable to AMERICAN COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION and indicate that the check is for "NREC fees." Please send your check to Co-chair Paavo Husen by December 14 at the following address: 355 Wildwood Drive, North Aurora, IL 60542.

3. Teachers are to send one registration form for their students via email to Paavo Husen by December 14 at: [paavohusen@gmail.com](mailto:paavohusen@gmail.com). The NREC registration form can be downloaded at <http://www.actr.org/national-russian-essay-contest-nrec.html>. The registration form must be typed and students must be grouped by separate levels. The registration form may not be altered and no changes are permitted after the December 14 deadline.

4. Teachers decide which levels are most appropriate for their students. Suggested guidelines for determining student levels are as follows:

- \*\*\*\*a) Beginner – Russian I or II
- b) Intermediate – Russian II or III
- c) Advanced – Russian III, IV, V, AP

#### Special Note about Heritage Speakers

For the above three categories, "yes" must be entered in the Heritage column on the registration form if the student came to the U.S. before age 10 or was born in the U.S. in

a family where Russian, Ukrainian, or Byelorussian is spoken.

d) Native Speaker – the student arrived in the U.S. at or after age 10, and is from a family where Russian, Ukrainian, or Byelorussian is spoken.

5. Teachers will receive one copy of all necessary NREC materials by email by the middle of January. Teachers are expected to make the necessary number of copies for their registered students. Teachers are responsible for providing hard copies of contest materials to their students, regardless of whether they meet students in-person or online.

#### Contest Guidelines

1. On the contest date you select for your school, students are to meet with teachers either in-person or online to write their essays. Teachers are to be present during the contest to act as proctors.

2. Students may use their print class textbooks for reference only. In the event of an online or electronic textbook, participating teachers may print out the glossary for their students to use as a reference. Advanced students with no regular classroom textbook may consult a print dictionary for looking up occasional single vocabulary words. Students may not copy entire sentences or paragraphs from their textbooks. Class notes are not allowed. Students MAY NOT use electronic devices (cell phones, Ipads, computers, etc.) to access any online resources during the course of essay writing.

3. Students may not work together or receive help from another person. Students and teachers will be asked to sign a statement certifying that the essays were written by the students without help of any other person.

4. The time limit for writing the essays is one two-hour session.

5. The essays must be written legibly on the paper provided in black or blue-black ink. Pencil is unacceptable.

6. The teacher must collect and send the original essays within 7 days of writing to Co-chair John Rook at the following address: 28 Northwood Street, Enfield, CT 06082-2825. Teachers are also expected to make photocopies of all essays. Photocopies of essays should be retained until students have been informed of the results of the contest. Originals will not be returned.

#### Judging of Essays

Essays will be distributed to a panel of judges for evaluation. No teacher who has a student participating will be allowed to judge essays.

1. Essays are judged at the Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, and Native Speaker levels. Heritage students are judged separately at the Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. All students whose essays receive Gold, Silver, Bronze, or Honorable Mention receive certificates. Gold, Silver, and Bronze essays also receive ACTR medals.

2. No awards are assigned to essays of less than five comprehensible Russian sentences or to essays with inappropriate content.

3. Gold-medal essays at the Advanced, Advanced Heritage, and Native Speaker levels are forwarded to the State Pushkin Institute in Moscow for a second round of judging. Writers of second-round essays that are awarded gold medals in Moscow will receive certificates and pins, while writers of silver and bronze medal essays will receive certificates.

4. Co-chairs Paavo Husen, John Rook, and Phillip Stosberg have final say on appropriate level placement and awards.

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF RUSSIAN THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL NATIONAL  
RUSSIAN ESSAY CONTEST JANUARY 25-29, 2021

REGISTRATION MUST BE COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 14, 2020

## POST-SECONDARY RUSSIAN SCHOLAR LAUREATES

### PSRSLA-2020

This spring, thanks to the efforts of dozens of Russian program directors, coordinators, and lecturers, we had another very successful award campaign. [Seventy-eight students became recipients of the ACTR Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Award-2020](#) (see the list of this year institutions and laureates below). We welcome five Russian-language programs whose students have received the ACTR Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Award for the first time--*New College of Florida, the University of Vermont, Roanoke College, St. Olaf College, and Western Kentucky University*. Welcome!

Following tradition, each laureate receives a *Gramota* as well as a congratulatory letter that commends awardees on their success. [It was so energizing to read the nomination letters for 2020 nominees. We are very fortunate, indeed, to keep attracting to our programs such high-quality students who are so enthusiastically dedicated to the study of Russian and Russia.](#)

The ACTR Board of Directors thanks all Russian language programs that participated in the 2020 nominations. Although the COVID situation slowed down the process this year and the letters were mailed in August instead of April, nevertheless, thanks to the unwavering support and passionate commitment of faculty in Russian-language programs nationwide, we made it work this year as successfully as in all previous years. We encourage you to continue to participate in this program and celebrate your outstanding students. If you have not yet done it, join the program in the spring of 2021.

The spring of 2020 marked the 13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the PSRSLA program. In 2007, **Ben Rifkin** and **Jane Shuffelton**, suggested expanding the ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award, which at that time was open only to secondary-level Russian language programs, to college and university programs. That marked the beginning of the ACTR Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Laureate Award (PSRSLA). **Cynthia A. Ruder**, a member of ACTR Board of Directors and PSRSLA Chair from 2007 to 2012 designed the format of this award and worked hard to reach out to as many Russian programs as possible, bringing the number of participants from twenty in 2007 to fifty in 2012. **John Schillinger**, Chair of the Committee on College and Pre-College Russian (CCPCR) and **SEELANGs** have continuously provided invaluable help in spreading information about this award to an ever-growing number of programs.

**New development.** Since 2019, this award is open to community colleges with two years of Russian. These colleges are welcome to nominate one of their students who will be continuing on to a four-year university to major in Russian. I cannot thank enough **Jim Bernhardt**, ACTR member, professor at Northern Virginia Community College who shared with me his concern that “PSRSLA program was limited to Juniors and Seniors and excluded all community college students while community colleges support four-year college programs by supplying them with a number of students for advanced courses.” I brought professor Bernhardt’s concern to the attention of the Board of Directors at its meeting in April, 2019. The Board members voted unanimously in favor of the motion to include two-year college programs into PSRSLA.

**Some statistics.** Since 2007, one hundred and thirty-eight programs have recognized over eight hundred outstanding students who embody excellence and enthusiasm for knowledge and cultural literacy in Russian (the list of programs and all PSRSLA recipients is available at <http://www.actr.org/past-psrsla-laureates.html>). Five programs have never missed a year in nominating their student for this award: Binghamton University, Columbia University, Lehigh University, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Oklahoma. Thirteen programs have nominated their students at least for the last ten years in a row: Barnard College, George Mason University, Purdue University, Rutgers University, the College of William and Mary, the University of Alabama, the University of Florida, the University of Kansas, the University of New Hampshire, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Texas-Austin, the University of Utah, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Thank you, Colleagues!

## Russian Scholar Laureate Award, Pre-college

The year 2020 has been a very interesting year, full of changes and challenges. However, we have 28 schools and 33 outstanding Russian students who were nominated for the prestigious annual ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award.

These students were nominated by their school administrators and by their Russian teachers to proudly represent their school and its Russian program.

*Congratulations to our 2020 Scholar Russian Laureates for their constant dedication and enthusiasm for Russian.*

### ПОЗДРАВЛЯЕМ!

*Katya Ratushnyuk, Co-Chair ACTR RSLA*

*Nina Vaykhanskaya, Co-Chair ACTR RSLA*



**Lydia Beralis  
Centeno**  
Teacher-  
**Elizabeth  
McLendon**

Bellaire World Languages  
Academy,  
Bellaire, TX



**Jenifer Grace  
Katzen**  
Teacher-  
**Elizabeth  
McLendon**

Bellaire World Languages  
Academy,  
Bellaire, TX



**Zachary  
Thibodeaux**  
Teacher-  
**Iryna  
Dovzhanska**

Bishop Dunne Catholic  
School,  
Dallas, TX



**Hannah  
Holloway**  
Teacher-  
**Zana  
Sukaj**

Bowie High School,  
Bowie, MD



**Ahava  
Dear**  
Teacher-  
**Nina  
Vaykhanskaya**

Bruriah High School,  
Elizabeth, NJ

*Russian Scholar Laureate Award, continued from p. 11*



**Matthew  
Fitzgerald**

Teacher-  
**Joshua  
Walker**

Buckingham Browne &  
Nichols School,  
Cambridge, MA



**Veronica  
D'Amelio**

Teacher-  
**Julia**

**Kriventsova Denne**

By the Onion Sea,  
Arlington Heights, IL



**Aisha  
Knotts**

Teacher-  
**Maria  
Goebert**

C.D. Hylton High School,  
Woodbridge, VA



**Samuel  
Ogbara**

Teacher-  
**Danine  
Falcon**

Central High School,  
Forestville, MD



**Stephanie  
Micken**

Teacher-  
**Marian  
Barnum**

Cherokee High School,  
Marlton, NJ



**Patrick  
Duffy**

Teacher-  
**Richard  
Uzzell**

Enloe High School,  
Raleigh, NC



**Morgan  
Burk**

Teacher-  
**Ekaterina  
Myakshina**

Gatton Academy of Math  
and Science in Kentucky,  
Bowling Green, KY



**Lenka  
Kristinova**

Teacher-  
**Jan  
Eklund**

Glastonbury High School,  
Glastonbury, CT



**Katie  
Avery**

Teacher-  
**Debra  
Solomon**

Hollidaysburg Area Sen-  
ior High School,  
Hollidaysburg, PA



**Yihan  
Deng**

Teacher-  
**Paavo  
Husen**

Illinois Mathematics and  
Science Academy,  
Aurora, IL



**Zhen  
Henrikson**

Teacher-

**Ted Krejsa**

Kenston High School,  
Chagrin Falls, OH



**Victor  
Mou**

Teacher-

**Valentin**

**Cukierman**

Langley High School,  
McLean, VA



**Grace  
Fairchild**

Teacher-

**Jessica**

**Kelly**

Lexington High School,  
Lexington, SC



**Hannah  
Ray**

Teacher-

**Michael**

**White**

Maggie L. Walker Gover-  
nor's School,  
Richmond, VA



**Vanessa  
Horner**

Teacher-

**Ludmila**

**Yuzhbabenko**

Ocean Lakes High  
School,  
Virginia Beach, VA



**Lisa  
Carlen**

Teacher-

**Anna**

**Carlen**

Perspectiva Online Rus-  
sian Educational Center,  
Oakton, VA



**Jaylene  
Llamas**

Teacher-

**Lauren**

**Nelson**

Pritzker College Prep,  
Chicago, IL



**Joel  
Legorreta**

Teacher-

**Lauren**

**Nelson**

Pritzker College Prep,  
Chicago, IL



**Benjamin  
Walsh**

Teacher-

**Robert**

**Chura**

St. Louis University High  
School,  
St. Louis, MO



**James  
Hoke**

Teacher-

**Carrie**

**Hoke**

The Thinkers Cottage  
Foreign Language  
Academ  
Montgomery, TX

*Russian Scholar Laureate Award, continued from p. 13*



**Matthew**

**Wilson**

Teacher-

**Kateryna**

**Ratushnyuk**

Staten Island Technical High School,  
Staten Island, NY



**Ellie**

**Vaserman**

Teacher-

**Nataliya**

**Ushakova**

Staten Island Technical High School,  
Staten Island, NY



**Rishi**

**Lahoti**

Teacher-

**Betsy**

**Sandstrom**

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology,  
Alexandria, VA



**Yana**

**Patel**

Teacher-

**Betsy**

**Sandstrom**

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology,  
Alexandria, VA



**Julia**

**Robinson**

Teacher-

**Svetlana**

**Filkova**

Thunder Mountain High School,  
Juneau, AK



**Samuel Anthony**

**Drews**

Teacher-

**Yelena**

**Reep**

West Anchorage High School,



**Athena**

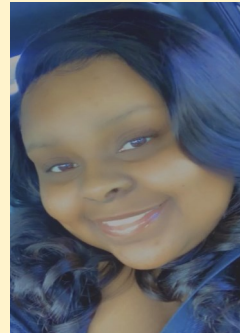
**Clendaniel**

Teacher-

**Yelena**

**Reep**

West Anchorage High School,



**Brionna**

**Demi' Miller**

Teacher-

**Ludmila**

**Mitchell**

Whitehaven High School,  
Memphis, TN

*Вы получили достойную награду, вы заслужили ее, упорно трудясь. Вложили немало сил и терпения. Поздравляем от всей души с этой победой. Победой в первую очередь над собой. Желаем вам и в дальнейшем, всегда добиваться желаемого, всегда быть впереди, всегда побеждать и выигрывать. Успехов вам во всем, пусть все вершины всегда покоряются вам без труда. труда.*



**AMERICAN COUNCILS**  
FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION  
STUDY ABROAD

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Questions? Contact us: [outbound@americancouncils.org](mailto:outbound@americancouncils.org)

*Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Laureates, continued from p. 10*

**I look forward to getting your nominations in 2021!**

The nomination period is from January 1 to March 1. Thanks to the mastery of **Evgeny Dengub**, a member of ACTR Board of Directors, now we can submit nominations online at <http://www.actr.org/guidelines.html> The form will be open for submissions starting January 1, 2021. As always, the call for nominations will be posted on ACTR and SEELANGS lists--stay tuned! And at any time you are welcome to contact me directly with questions, suggestions, and complaints at [as2157@columbia.edu](mailto:as2157@columbia.edu)

With appreciation and best wishes. Stay safe and healthy, Alla A. Smyslova, PSRSLA Chair.

**Comments from Nominators in 2020**

*Many thanks for making this opportunity available to Russian students! It is a terrific way to recognize their achievements.*

*Janneke van de Stad, Williams College*

*Thank you for doing this, we love being able to award this every year!*

*Tom Dolack, Wheaton College*

*Thank you for continuing to organize this!*

*Benjamin Sutcliff, Miami University*

*Thank you very much for giving us this nation-wide opportunity to recognize one of the best students in our Russian program each year.*

*Olga Scarborough, United States Air force Academy*

*Thank you SO much for continuing to run this wonderful program. It is such a great motivator for our students and our program. You are fabulous!*

*Clint Walker, University of Montana,  
Still a Proud Member of ACTR*

*Thank you for all that ACTR are doing to support the field during the COVID shutdowns.*

*Kristen Welsh, Hobart and William Smith Colleges*

*I am a small-college Russian program nominator, and I want to thank you for such a great opportunity to recognize a hard-working, dedicated and very talented student!*

*Tatyana Munsey, Roanoke College*

*Thank you so much! We really appreciate the program and all you do to organize it every year. I know how much work this is.*

*Emily D. Johnson, University of Oklahoma*

*Thank you for this valuable service!!*

*Cori Andersen, Rutgers University*

**LAUREATES-2020**

**Whole-hearted congratulations to Post-Secondary Russian Scholar Laureates-2020! Поздравляем!**

Appalachian State University	<i>Jakeb A. Lucas</i>
Arizona State University	<i>Jenna Brady</i>
Barnard College	<i>Greta Schatz</i>
Binghamton University	<i>Alexandra Reksten</i>
Boston University	<i>Nina Maitland</i>
Bowdoin College	<i>Kitrea Takata-Glushkoff</i>
Brandeis University	<i>Micah Pickus</i>
Brigham Young University	<i>Matthew Cheney</i>
Bryn Mawr College	<i>Marit Eiler</i>
Case Western Reserve University	<i>Jeremy Wall</i>
Colgate University	<i>Lydia Culp</i>
Columbia University	<i>Perry Young</i>
Connecticut College	<i>Jack Rider-McGovern</i>
Defense Language Institute, FLC	<i>Olga Kuderyavets</i>
Fordham University	<i>Nicholas Catapano</i>
Franklin & Marshall College	<i>Kimberly Brandolisio</i>



George Mason University	<i>Dylan Finley</i>
Georgetown University	<i>Rebekah Borah</i>
Hobart and William Smith Colleges	<i>Alexandra (Alex) Curtis</i>
Hofstra University	<i>Ernesto Bertoli-Escarola</i>
Indiana University	<i>Zachary Hollis</i>
Kenyon College	<i>Grace Harris</i>
Lehigh University	<i>Evan Berke</i>
Miami University	<i>August Hagemann</i>
Missouri University of Science and Technology	<i>Ashley Worley</i>
Mount Holyoke College	<i>Nora Cyra</i>
<b>New College of Florida*</b>	<i>Eshel Rosen</i>
<b>Northeastern University</b>	<i>Chang Gao</i>
Pomona College	<i>Kamil Lungu</i>
Portland Community College	<i>Rasnaam Singh</i>
Purdue University	<i>Micah J. Graber</i>
Rhodes College	<i>Jenny Sanders</i>
<b>Roanoke College*</b>	<i>Samuel McKnight</i>
Rutgers University	<i>Harry Manning</i>
Stetson University	<i>Louisa R. Gonsecki</i>
<b>St. Olaf College*</b>	<i>Gretchen Ohlmacher</i>
Swarthmore College	<i>Rina Kiyohara</i>
Texas Tech University	<i>Claudia Muñoz</i>
The College of William and Mary	<i>Grace Kier</i>
The University of Alabama	<i>Alexis Ilanna Saldivar</i>
The University of Arizona	<i>Jahnvi Akella</i>
The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville	<i>Shannon Wilson</i>
The University of British Columbia	<i>Emmett Mark</i>
The University of California, Los Angeles	<i>Tyler Le</i>
The University of Central Florida	<i>Eric Tangarife</i>
The University of Florida	<i>Riley Bailey</i>
The University of Georgia	<i>Meghan O'Keefe</i>
The University of Iowa	<i>Dalton Heffernen</i>
The University of Kansas	<i>Shimon Rosenblum</i>
The University of Kentucky	<i>Anna Wagner</i>
The University of Maryland	<i>Noah Kayne Dulski</i>
The University of Massachusetts-Amherst	<i>Jamie Henle</i>
The University of Michigan	<i>Laine Boitos</i>
The University of Mississippi	<i>Amy Cain</i>

## Russian Numismatics

Coin collecting first attracted me as a hobby when my father, who ran a jitney service in San Francisco during the Depression and WWII, showed me his many Barber dimes, quarters, half dollars and Morgan silver dollars he had amassed on the job. Evidently, fate had determined the importance of this impression, because when I first traveled to the Soviet Union in 1975 to study at MGU, my Russian roommate Yuri Alab'yev (from Sevastopol) generously presented me with a 1924 Silver Ruble depicting two Soviet citizens staring at the rising sun—a symbolic promise of a new world of hope in the years following the Revolution and Civil War. Two years later in

1977 while staying at LGU, an unknown Russian gave me a series of copper coins from eighteenth century Imperial Russia in exchange for purchasing items for him at the Beryozka. The most cherished coin of this group is a 1790 huge five kopeck piece which surprisingly is still offered on the web for under fifty dollars for those who might wish to add it to their memorabilia collection.

After these two fortuitous events I was hooked on Russian coins. During each of my thirteen subsequent student trips to the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, I always visited the Foreign Trade Bank (*VneshTorg Bank*) in Moscow, purchasing silver rubles with Czars Alexander III and Nicholas II on the face of the coin along with a commemorative marking the three hundredth anniversary of the Romanov dynasty. Sadly, I never advanced to Russian gold coins because of their prohibitive cost. And these days that seems impossible since gold on the world market has currently doubled to nearly two thousand dollars an ounce while silver, while also doubling, remains quite affordable at twenty eight dollars.



The 1825 Constantine Silver Ruble worth over seven million dollars-- only eight in the world (two at the Smithsonian)

In the long run this may not be regarded as a disappointment since I am pleased to inform the reader that the most valuable Russian coin in existence is a silver ruble from 1825 depicting the middle royal Romanov brother Constantine, who was in line to inherit the throne after his elder brother Alexander I strangely died in Taganrog or was transformed into the Siberian peasant Fyodor Kuzmich. Under the influence of the Decembrists, the hopeful chant of the time became *Konstantin i Konstitutsiya*, but a democratic government, as usual in Russian history, was not to be. Constantine passed the throne on to his younger brother Nicholas I, who introduced thirty years of despotic rule crushing all hope for reform until Czar Liberator Alexander II's reign began in 1855. However, because the mint

thought Constantine was to be the new Czar, they minted eight silver rubles with his face on the front of the coin. But these never saw the light of day avoiding a possible scandal. The coins quickly acquired such incredible value that they are currently appraised at between five to ten million dollars!

Very few gold coins anywhere can match this price.

In fact, among the five most valuable Russian coins, four of them (the Constantine ruble, the Ivan Antonovich ruble (1740) depicting the royal baby overthrown by Peter's daughter Elizabeth and sequestered till his death at age twenty-three, the Reichel ruble (1845) rejected by Nicholas I because it showed him unfavorably with an unattractive elongated neck, and Anna with Chain (1720) which because of its two parts was too cumbersome and subsequently was reissued without chain. Each of these are valued at over one million dollars. Only the twenty-ruble Elizabeth gold coin (1757) joins this group of numismatic Russian rarities.

In addition to purchasing Czarist rubles at the Foreign Trade Bank, I also found there proof sets including all dominations from one kopeck to a ruble in brilliant uncirculated condition. I can't remember how much I paid for four of them (1957,

1965, 1980, and 1985) at the time, but the web informs us that together they have a value of nearly a thousand dollars. This confirms a cardinal coin collecting rule that coin condition is almost as important as rarity in determining a coin's true value.

After many successful visits to the Bank, I also discovered coins for sale at DOM KNIGI in Moscow. This store features ruble coins devoted to virtually all the great Russian celebrities from the nineteenth century golden age of culture (e.g.,



Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Gorky, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Prokofiev, Mendeleev, Marks, and countless others). Since these coins are not of silver composition, they are very affordable. Just as in the U.S.A where silver was removed from coins after 1965, the Russian mints have also found copper-nickel alloy substitutes. Fortunately, the beauty of these coins has not been diminished by this cost saving measure. Someday I plan to display them at an appreciative library if an invitation is ever extended.

Predictably, also for sale at the iconic book store are coins depicting the four stellar events of twentieth century Russian history: 1) The Russian Revolution, 2) The WWII victory over the Nazis, 3) The Sputnik space adventure with Yuri Gagarin and 4) The twenty-second Olympics held in Moscow in 1980. With respect to the world's third great revolution (after the French and American ones), I have acquired the coin showing the fiftieth year anniversary of the event (1917-1967) and the one hundred birthday ruble of its architect Vladimir Lenin (1870-1970). The WWII defeat of the Nazi war machine after a most inauspicious start is celebrated with both a twentieth (1965) and thirtieth (1975) year coin. The space trip in 1961 which is responsible for many of us beginning our study of Russian at the high school level in the 1960's, is commemorated by a ruble coin marking its twentieth anniversary (1981). The Olympics was the source of several coins. The two I have show the Olympic flame and the five continent circles respectively.

As is evident by this survey of Russian coinage, it can also provide an opportunity to study Russian culture and history as well a chance to venture into the wonderful hobby of Numismatics. I hope here will be a similar study of Russian medals, stamps and pins (znachki), where, not surprisingly, the same themes will appear on a regular basis. Oh yes, and let's not forget about Russian paper money which is yet another realm worthy of serious exploration.

*Harold Schefski, Ph.D.  
Emeritus Professor of Russian*

## Знакомьтесь

**Harold Schefski** is Emeritus Professor of Russian Studies at California State University, Long Beach where he taught for thirty years. Before that, he taught at University of Minnesota and University of Georgia. He has a Ph.D. from Stanford University, where he wrote a dissertation on Boris Eichenbaum. He has published articles on Tolstoy, Turgenev, Russian Culture and Russian Language. Over the years, he escorted twelve student groups to the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Among his students was Lynne Tracy-- the current U.S. Ambassador to Armenia. While teaching Russian, Prof. Schefski raised a \$75,000 endowed scholarship for students of the language. In retirement he continues to read and write about Russian Studies.



PSRSL Results , continued from p. 17

The University of Missouri-Columbia	<i>Griffin Johnson</i>
The University of Montana-Missoula	<i>Nathan Saunders</i>
The University of New Hampshire	<i>Jonah Toledo</i>
The University of New Haven	<i>Nikolai Daume</i>
The University of North Texas	<i>Brody Davis</i>
The University of Notre Dame	<i>Anthony Stoner</i>
The University of Oklahoma	<i>Beatrice Anne Cooper Wilson</i>
The University of Pennsylvania	<i>Tathagat Bhatia</i>
The University of Pittsburgh	<i>Marika Olijar</i>
The University of Tennessee	<i>Audrey Jean Culpepper</i>
The University of Texas at Austin	<i>Kira Azulay</i>
The University of Utah	<i>Josh Burgoyne</i>
<b>The University of Vermont*</b>	<i>Braxton Birchard</i>
The University of Virginia	<i>Bijan Ahmadi</i>
The University of Wisconsin-Madison	<i>William Maher</i>
United States Air force Academy	<i>Tara Marie DeGeorge</i>
United States Military Academy-West Point	<i>Galen Quiros</i>
Vanderbilt University	<i>Jonathan Lawrence</i>
Wayne State University	<i>Wolfgang Lohrer</i>
Wellesley College	<i>Mariela Dyer</i>
<b>Western Kentucky University*</b>	<i>Mario Hernandez</i>
Wheaton College	<i>Lucia Almeida</i>
Williams College	<i>Holly MacAlpine</i>

\* institutions that joined the PSRSLA-program in 2020

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*Александр Сергеевич Пушкин*

## ACTR SERVICE AWARD

This award, originally established in memory of Jane Barley and Fred Johnson, is given annually to recognize outstanding service to ACTR. The award is traditionally presented at the annual ACTR membership meeting.

Nominees must be members of ACTR in good standing. They should have demonstrated prominent service to ACTR in the form of active involvement in the work of the organization and promotion of its goals. Additional considerations include demonstrated devotion to the profession in terms of activities such as teaching, professional involvement, and activities in the field beyond ACTR and the classroom. Those were qualities exemplified by Jane Barley and Fred Johnson.

Members of the awards committee are Elena Farkas, Betsy Sandstrom, and Jane Shuffelton. Nominations for the award may be addressed to Elena Farkas: [Russianaz@alaskan.com](mailto:Russianaz@alaskan.com). Nominations for future awards may be forwarded at any time,

### Past recipients:

- 1995 – George Morris
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- 1998 – John Schillinger
- 1999 – Irwin Weil
- 2000 – Elizabeth Neatrou
- 2001 – Renate Bialy
- 2002 – Jane Shuffelton
- 2003 – John Mohan
- 2004 – Halina Danchenko
- 2005 – John Sheehan, Richard Brecht
- 2006 – Robert Channon
- 2007 – Betty Leaver
- 2008 – Elizabeth Sandstrom, Vitaly G. Kostomarov\*
- 2009 – Maria Lekic
- 2010 – Patricia Zody
- 2011 – Thomas Garza
- 2012 – Peter Merrill
- 2013 – Benjamin Rifkin
- 2014 – Dan Davidson (special lifetime award)
- 2015 – Cynthia Ruder
- 2016 – William Rivers
- 2017 – Camelot Marshall
- 2018 – Olga Kagan (in memoriam)
- 2019 – Paavo Husen

\*special award

### Telescope Film Website

I have recently developed a website for finding international film online, [telescopefilm.com](http://telescopefilm.com). The site offers a database of 450,000 films, which users can search by film title, country, language, genre, director, etc. We will tell them everything that's out there, if it's available to watch online, and where. Then they can click through to the streaming service of their choice (we are connected to 110). The site is free to use. We also offer curation in the form of Telescope Recommends and our [Spotlight](#), a weekly selection of films focused around a particular theme. The site is free to use.

Film and video content can be a useful tool in teaching languages – perhaps even more so with the rise in online education/distance learning. One feature that has proven especially popular is the shareable watchlist, which allows teachers to create watchlists of films for different courses, and to share them with students if they wish.

*Justine Barda, CEO of Telescope Film,  
Senior programmer with the Seattle International Film Festival*

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- The Russian Scholar Laureate Award program
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Newsletter of the American Council of Teachers of Russian

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