

Newsnotes: 2CUL Russian, Eurasian & East European Studies Resources. No. 3, Fall 2011

Dear Colleagues:

I trust you have had a most productive—and hopefully relaxing—summer, refreshed and ready to return to campus. I want to take a few moments to update you on recent developments impacting the collections of both Cornell and Columbia, as well as some significant acquisitions made since the spring 2011 *Newsnotes*.

Collections

2CUL boasts one of the largest collection development budgets for Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in the nation. This is one of the great strengths of this consortial arrangement, vastly increasing our collective ability to build broad and deep collections, capturing more of the output of the presses in our world areas. It also provides a degree of flexibility in our ability to acquire a limited number of rare antiquarian titles, and support first-time digitization projects. In spite of the continuing economic challenges faced by our nation, budget allocations for the new Fiscal Year (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012) are up over the past FY, so we look forward to another productive year for acquisitions.

Current Imprints. Although e-formats are becoming a larger proportion of university library holdings, print remains the sole format for majority of current publications in East Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia—particularly in the humanities and social sciences. In the first year of its existence, 2CUL has acquired a combined total of 11,866 new monographic titles via our coordinated approval agreements with vendors throughout the region. This *excludes* the hundreds of titles that were firm ordered on request, or the more than 1,200 titles received as gifts.

Retrospective Imprints. This year, Columbia acquired a collection of serials from Sarajevo CD-ROM and DVD, including the Bosnia serial *Bosanski prijatelj*, 1850-1870, *Bosanska vila*, 1885-1914, *Zidovska svijest*, 1918-1923, and *Pozoriste*, 1953-1991. In addition, both 2CUL partners benefitted from gifts as well. Among the largest gifts received were the Latvian-language library of the late Sigurd Grava, Professor Emeritus of Urban Planning at Columbia; materials on Eastern Orthodoxy and iconography from the library of the Rev. J. Robert Wright of the General Theological Seminary; a collection on Soviet foreign policy and Third World relations from the library of Dr. Jonathan Charnis; and a collection of Polish-language imprints and Polonica from the library of the Polish Dominicans in New York.

New E-Resources. Not surprisingly, commercial vendors of e-content remain reluctant to pursue collective licensing of their products, so the administrative streamlining that would accompany a true 2CUL joint license continues to elude us. Nevertheless, the prospect of having two institutions sign up at the same time has yielded some significant discounts. Minneapolis-based East View Publications has emerged as the leading

commercial developer of e-publications in our field. Both 2CUL campuses have access to a number of their products, and this past summer, Cornell students and faculty gained access to a digitized, searchable version of the newspaper *Izvestiia* covering the years 1917-2010; while Columbia will get access by the end of September.

Digitization Projects. By the end of September, a long-awaited group of six early 20th century Russian serials hitherto unavailable anywhere outside of Russia will arrive in Ithaca. Microfilmed at the behest of the Cornell Library and then digitized, the material will support the immediate research needs of a Cornell faculty member. Although dealing with the still-entrenched bureaucracies in the homelands remains a challenge, this first cache of materials suggests that, with patience, it is possible! In the last *Newsnotes*, I mentioned that we were involved in a three-way discussion between the Hungarian National Széchényi Library and the Center for Research Libraries to digitize the newspapers *Népszava* (1887-1940) and *Pesti Hirlap* (1840-1939). This would be a pilot project, supported largely by Cornell funding, which could set a precedent for future library digital partnerships. Alas, the wheels grind slowly, but... at least they continue to grind!

Rare Books. One of the terms you often encounter in library strategic plans is the notion of creating “destination” collections---that is, collections of materials that are unique or available at only a handful of institutions world-wide. Since the fall, we have supplemented rare book “destination” collections at Columbia (and, beginning this year, Cornell as well) via purchase and gift.

This summer, Columbia purchased a private collection of twenty-nine rare Latvian modernist works, circa 1918-1934. These works of poetry, experimental literature, and serials were designed by some of the country’s leading avant-garde artists, including Niklaus Strunke and Sigismunds Vidbergs. The majority are not found in any other scholarly collection in North America. Most recently, Columbia negotiated the purchase of a complete set of the Romanian Surrealist compilation *Infra-Noir*, consisting of eight unnumbered *cahiers*. When received, this collection will become part of Columbia’s [Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Classics](#) collection, and reflects Columbia’s ongoing interest in building its holdings of the underrepresented modernist traditions of Eastern Europe.

Enhanced Access to Other Collections. As promised, Cornell and Columbia faculty and students now have reciprocal onsite borrowing privileges! Huzzah!

Beyond 2CUL. Advances in document-delivery technology, the expansion of Borrow Direct (which now includes the libraries of MIT and Harvard), coupled with the burgeoning publishing industries in Central and Eastern Europe are making it possible to capture more of this world region’s output, *provided* we work collaboratively to minimize duplication in acquisitions. To that end, this year the 2CUL librarian met with counterparts at Harvard, Yale, and—most recently—Princeton to discuss strategies to better coordinate collection development efforts among the five largest and most linguistically diverse university collections of Slavic, Eurasian and East European

materials in the Northeast. (Coordination, of course, that must be ever mindful of our “in-house” faculty and programmatic needs, as well as our traditional strengths). In the case of Princeton, with whom Columbia and NYPL share an offsite facility, ReCAP, coordination is especially important, as we want to avoid having multiple copies of the same new imprints in the same secure facility. To that end, the 2CUL librarian will be meeting in October with his counterparts at NYPL and Princeton. In November, the entire East Coast Consortium of Slavic Collections (Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Duke, Harvard, the Library of Congress, NYPL, NYU, North Carolina, Princeton, Toronto, and Yale) will convene in Washington.

Hathi Trust is a digital resource that is becoming more and more useful for researchers in our field. Established by a consortium of academic libraries (including both 2CUL partners), Hathi Trust provides a gathering spot for digital content, and tries to organize it in a user-friendly, non-commercial fashion. It is a digital archive, so it includes content that is both out and in copyright (and in the latter case, therefore not accessible until some distant future date). Remember those volumes digitized from university collections by Google Books? Well, since ownership of the digital files was retained by the contributing libraries, those that are legally out of copyright are here and freely accessible.

In my own experience, Hathi has been especially useful for conjuring up clean digital copies of, say, 19th century Russian “Thick Journals”. Try it—go to the search page <http://www.hathitrust.org/> and type in, say, *Otechestvennyia zapiski*. Click the first one on the right, and you are presented with links to all of the digitized volumes. Note that more than one library’s contents have been digitized, and in some cases sets are more complete than others. Hence you have several “Otechestvennyia” entries to look at off of that initial page.

You can Pdf entire volumes, pages, or same links to a particular page or section. You can search by page or section (less useful, given all of the numbering sequences of many 19th century journals!), scroll or “flip” pages, and there are links directly to Hathi from CLIO when you search for a title. In short, Hathi provides us with a very useful research tool.

Grants. As mentioned in the Spring *Newsnotes*, in June the 2CUL librarian co-directed with Edward Kasinec a Summer Institute, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. We were joined by a number of Columbia and Cornell faculty as Presenters and Discussants. Among the “2CUL” Presenters were Valerie Bunce, Cathy Nepomnyashchy, and Tim Frye. Their videotaped presentations will soon be made available on the Institute website (<http://nehsummerinst.columbia.edu>). During the three weeks of the Institute, the collections were heavily used by the diverse group of twenty-five Summer Scholars drawn from colleges and universities across the country.

The Year Ahead. One event that I want to give an early “heads-up” on is the New York BookExpo America, to be held at NYC’s Javits Convention Center June 5-7, 2012. This massive exhibit includes publishers from around the world, and this year the featured country is Russia. The Russian Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications is investing quite a bit in this initiative. Peter B. Kaufman, founder and president of

Intelligent Television (and himself a product of the Cornell and Columbia Slavic studies programs) is coordinating local events connected with BookExpo. According to the BookExpo press release, in addition to exhibiting works by Russian publishers, a core goal will be to

“...shed light on Russian publishing and contemporary literature in one of the world's most diverse, yet least known book landscapes... The presentations, debates and readings in 2012 will proudly further develop this exchange. Russia plans to have 50 Russian writers plus another 50 editors and publishing executives coming to New York for these events, which will include both a cultural and a professional component.”

(www.bookexpoamerica.com/)

I will have more specific information on related programming—lectures, presentations, conferences--in the spring of 2012. Columbia will host the Spring 2012 meeting of the East Coast Slavic Consortium during BookExpo, on June 4th and 5th, allowing our colleagues from geographically distant institutions to attend and participate in related programming.

Travel Schedule. I am planning on traveling to **Ithaca** on **TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 & 28**, and I would welcome the opportunity to meet informally with my Cornell colleagues—faculty, staff and students.

As always, I welcome your suggestions, and hope to see or speak with you soon.

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