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## “A Long Way from Moscow”: A Collaborative Project between Archivists, Librarians, and Historians from the Steppes of Saratov Province and the High Plains of Colorado

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## "A Long Way from Moscow": A Collaborative Project between Archivists, Librarians, and Historians from the Steppes of Saratov Province and the High Plains of Colorado

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### Abstract

This article describes the authors interactions with Russian archivists, librarians, and historians during a 2008 delegation visit to Saratov Province, the state of archival holdings and special collections in the Saratov area, and preliminary discussions regarding proposed collaborative digitization and academic research projects. A reciprocal visit by Russian and Ukrainian colleagues the following year to participate in the *Inaugural Conference on German-Russian Studies* is also detailed. The authors, both members of the Joint Academic Board for the International Center for German-Russian Studies at Colorado State University, discuss outreach strategies and lessons learned regarding a wide-ranging collaborative international project with information professionals and academics in a region previously closed to the West.

### Keywords

collaborative digitization, Russia, Saratov Province, Russian archives, archives, international projects, international exchange, history, community outreach, German-Russians, Colorado State University

### 1. Introduction

In September 2008, a small delegation from Colorado State University (CSU) consisting of two top level university administrators, the faculty emeritus chair of the newly-formed International Center for German-Russian Studies (ICGRS) academic board, and the Coordinator for Archives and Special Collections traveled to Saratov, Russia to discuss possible projects related to a joint strategic partnership proposed for CSU and Saratov State University (SSU). In accordance with CSU's land grant mission of "teaching, research, and service", two members of the delegation examined the region's model farms and agricultural instructional and research activities. The remaining two members (the authors of this article) visited

SSU's Scientific Library and local archival repositories to examine materials related to Russia's historic Volga German ethnic population—the ancestors of approximately one-third of the current population of Colorado. This visit, two years in the making, marked the launching point for an ambitious international collaborative project that paired archivists and librarians with historians, university administrators, lawyers, business entrepreneurs, leaders of local and national heritage societies, and community members of a "hidden" ethnic minority.

In addition to outlining some of the collaborative archival and library-based projects proposed by the joint partnership and ICGRS, this article will describe the authors interactions with Russian colleagues during



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the 2008 visit, the state of archival holdings in the Saratov area, and the reciprocal visit by Russian colleagues the following year to participate in the ICGRS "Inaugural Conference on German Russian Studies". This article will also include an examination of the challenges these authors and other project members have faced in trying to maintain a fine balance between the academic objectives of ICGRS proposed projects and the more general genealogical interests of local constituencies – many of whom are alumni and supportive donors to CSU.

Lastly, this article will mention some of the "lessons learned" so far from this collaboration between professional colleagues who, despite differences in language, culture and experiences, share their love of preserving items that chronicle the cultural heritage of a people and making the historical documents accessible to a wider group of individuals. The activities that the authors describe in the following article definitely document a "work still in progress" involving a wide range of individuals and resting upon multiple conversations, consultations, intricate negotiations, unceasing e-mail and telephone communications, exchanges of international delegations and fact-finding missions, video conferences, and seemingly endless committee meetings from 2006 to the present day.

## 2. Background

German-speaking immigrants from Imperial Russia, primarily from the Saratov steppe region along the lower Volga River, arrived in large numbers in Colorado and the neighboring Great Plains states of Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas from the mid-1870s until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. In Colorado they comprised one of the largest ethnic minority populations and their presence in eastern Colorado's irrigated river valleys contributed impressively to the growth of the sugar beet industry and the overall agricultural productivity of Colorado's rural economy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As a land grant school and research headquarters of the state's agricultural extension service, Colorado State University (CSU) has long been interested in the accomplishments of the state's agrarian producers. Thus extension agents, agrarian researchers, and social scientists had noted across the decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the "Rooshuns" – the colloquial name English-speaking Coloradans early applied to the Volga German agrarian field workers – were diligent farm folk and hard workers with large families who, through their work ethic, had steadily risen from "stoop laborers" in the beet fields to tenant farmers, dependable renters, and ultimately increasingly prosperous farmers and agrarian landowners of vast irrigated enterprises across rural Colorado. The prosperous decades of the 1940s and 1950s brought expanding bounty from agrarian crops and livestock, plus opportunities to ambitious second generation Volga German Americans for education, commercial and professional employment, urbanization, and significant integration of a once separated and often misunderstood ethnic community into the wider social and economic fabric of mid-and late 20<sup>th</sup> century Colorado.

America's 1976 celebration of its bicentennial, accompanied by the widespread popularity of best-selling books such as Alex Haley's *Roots* and James Michener's *Centennial* – one of whose leading characters was the "canny Russian Hans 'Potato' Brumbaugh" – not only raised the historical consciousness of numerous Americans but also fostered Colorado's ethnic groups to take pride in their heritage and their predecessors' achievements. The bicentennial atmosphere, plus limited funding at that time for local academics to conduct research abroad, prompted some CSU historians, anthropologists, and linguists to consider research closer to home with local populations such as Colorado's "Germans from Russia".

Research documenting this unique ethnic population led to the founding at CSU of the "Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project" under the leadership of CSU pro-



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fessor of Russian history Sidney Heitman. This historical, ethnographical, and oral history project resulted in a number of publications, including monographs, papers, and reports as well as conferences and instructional courses at CSU throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Colorado State University Libraries (CSUL) Archives and Special Collections department was designated from the start as the repository for the project's oral history interviews, tapes, and transcripts, plus other collected photographs, manuscripts, books, and artifacts. Formal ownership of the project's materials was transferred to Colorado State University Archives and Special Collections in 1996. In 2002, the photographs, research files, and oral history tapes and interviews from this research project were fully processed and intellectually housed within the University Archive as the *Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project Collection*. Books and monographs collected by project researchers remained cataloged in Special Collections. An Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant in 2002, as part of the Colorado Digitization Program's Western Trails Project, allowed for the digitization of selected oral history tapes, transcripts and photographs by CSUL staff for web access. The resulting site is accessible today from the CSUL homepage: <http://lib.colostate.edu/gfr/>.

The remarkable events throughout 1989 that marked the collapse of Communist regimes throughout East Central Europe, the demise of the Soviet Union from August to December of 1991, the unanticipated termination of the "Cold War", and the subsequent evolution of the former USSR into the Russian Federation completely transformed the bipolar world of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century into an era of new beginnings, uncertainties, and expectations. It also realigned international political, economic, social, and academic relationships during the first decade of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. An important aspect of such sweeping change was that Russian intellectuals, research scientists, academics, scholars, librarians, archivists, and the general public sought to communicate with

others, literally everywhere, not only via the internet, but also via new associations, such as NGOs, international projects, and partnerships.

From such motivations there arose the CSU-SSU strategic partnership as well as the International Center for German-Russian Studies (ICGRS). Envisioned to foster original academic research in the history of Volga Germans by US and Russian students and scholars, as well as to disseminate information regarding German-Russian heritage to interested members of the local community, the ICGRS has as its mission to build upon and expand the "Germans from Russia" materials housed in the CSUL Archives and Special Collections. In this regard, a particular focus of the ICGRS has been to explore the possibilities of collaborative digitization projects that will make some of the materials housed in Saratov-based repositories more accessible, on an international scale, to the general public. Although still in its nascent stages, the proposed digitization of materials—many previously under "closed" access until the opening of the region in the early 1990s—is of great significance to researchers and local descendants of the Saratov Volga Germans.

While the CSU-SSU strategic partnership and joint center appear to be a unique collaboration amongst Russian and US academic institutions, it is important to mention that several other academic libraries of the Great Plains region have ventured into collaborative activities with Saratov-area institutions during the 2000s, both at an exploratory/temporary level and on a more ongoing basis. Of note are the collaborative projects spearheaded by our neighbors to the north at the University of Wyoming Libraries (UW Libraries) with Saratov State University's Scientific Library, including a joint publication chronicling the history of the two libraries from 1957-2007, as reported by M. Farrell, Dean of UW Libraries in June, 2010. Staying connected with UW Libraries activities, as well as keeping UW Libraries informed of our activities, is another significant aspect of the many-pronged collabora-



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tions that this project has created, as it helps us share significant "lessons learned" and encourage each other's progress.

Mention was also made of our CSU-SSU collaboration during the International Affairs Roundtable session at the 2009 Society of American Archivists annual convention in Austin, Texas. Brief follow-up conversations were held with archival colleagues from religious and privately-funded organizations to get a sense of their experiences in working with Russian repositories (primarily in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Samara Province). The authors would also like to note that organizations such as the Rotary Club are creating a presence in Saratov; a few US-based genealogists and members of heritage societies such as the American Historical Society for Germans from Russia (AHSGR) have also worked with Saratov-based archivists, researchers, and librarians from the mid-1990s onward to examine and investigate information pertaining to the German-Russian experience.

### 3. Literature Review

A review of literature related to the topics examined within this article was conducted via searches of two library science databases (*Library Literature and Information Science* and *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts*), the CSUL online catalog, and several books previously consulted by the authors. While articles have been written in Russian regarding USSR/Russian Federation library and archival issues (including professional training, organizational restructuring, methodology, and repository holdings), it should be noted that this literature review was restricted to English-language pieces and therefore only contains citations written in English.

Based on the issues that the authors are examining within this article, our literature review was focused on the following four topics which are described, in full, below.

### 3.1 Historic Challenges to Archival Research in Russia

Lenin's Decree of 1918, mandating that the majority of Russian records be managed under a Single State Archival Fond, has been recognized as the single most important factor influencing Russian archival policies throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, notably in articles by Grimsted and Allen & Baumann.<sup>1</sup> Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, the preeminent scholar on Soviet-era archives, notes that Bolshevik power "brought to Russia the most highly centralized state archival system and the most highly state-directed principles of preservation and management of documentary records ... the world had seen."<sup>2</sup> In addition, Grimsted theorizes that Marxist-Leninist ideology "gave unprecedented importance to the national documentary legacy and to the ... reorganization of a comprehensive state archival system."<sup>3</sup> Soviet-era decrees regarding the document types included in the State Archival Fond, issued at intervals throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, came to list almost every type of archival item that one could conceive of including: organizational, cultural, and religious records; scientific and research papers; manuscript collections and personal papers; census documentation and farm statistics; and non-print materials such as films and photographs.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the intellectual organization of these items within one fond did not preclude materials from being housed in repositories scattered throughout the USSR. Although archival management policies and funding for archival processing came from the federal level, day-to-day administration of these items fell to archival workers in local repositories.

Lenin's recognition of the importance of Russian records in documenting the historical record is, perhaps, reflected in his forbidding of the destruction of archival materials without the written permission of the Main Administration of Archival Affairs. While Soviet-era archival methodology placed great emphasis on preservation, organization, and description of items, access



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to materials by researchers, especially those outside of the USSR, was hard to come by. Application to do archival research in the USSR during the later years of the Soviet era usually required the researcher to be officially affiliated with an educational exchange program, such as the U.S.-based nonprofit organization The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), and sponsored by an educational institution in the USSR. Even with this sponsorship, access to repositories was not guaranteed as visas could be denied, topics of research rejected, and paperwork delayed. Much has been written about the challenges facing Western researchers. In the aptly titled *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present* researchers note their struggles in gaining access to Soviet-era materials.<sup>5</sup>

Great changes in archival administrative organization came about after the 1991 coup. Glavarkiv, which had been the central administrative unit for archival materials within the State Fond for almost a half century, morphed into Roskomarkiv. By 1996 this agency was known as Rosarkhiv, the Federal Archive Service of Russia. As we note in Section 3.3, by 1993 funding for cultural repositories was decentralized and shifted downwards from the federal level to regional governments. This had great impact on the daily operations of archival repositories. Paradoxically, while the period saw an opening of US research access to Russian repository materials, the very fate of these repositories was at risk.

### 3.2 Conditions Unique to Saratov Province Repositories

Because of its position as a military and manufacturing center, Saratov was classified as a "closed city" under the Soviet system from the mid-1940s to the early 1990s. All traffic into the city by Westerners was banned unless by special permission and Western researchers did not venture into the province's archives. Numerous archival collections were inaccessible as well to the

local Russian population because of their subject matter documenting the cultural and social life of the Volga Germans – many of whom, due to their German ancestry, were deported by Josef Stalin to Siberian gulags in 1941.

Due to these conditions, it is not surprising that our literature search revealed only one description of research specifically done in Saratov archives. In "A Journey from St. Petersburg to Saratov", researcher Donald Raleigh describes a fifteen year battle to gain access to Saratov-area repositories, ending in his hard-won arrival in Saratov in 1990.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Saratov, although less than 500 miles away from Moscow, has been, metaphorically speaking, a "long way away" for researchers, due to the closed nature of the city and the sensitive nature of materials documenting residents who came to be considered "enemies of the state". Natural disasters, political uprisings, governmental policy, and a national paper shortage have also contributed to gaps in documentation in Saratov-area archives, which has become a unique challenge for researchers now gaining access to these repositories. As Ivan Komarov, the director of the Engels Archive, noted in 2009:

Unfortunately [the] line-up of the documents of some [fonds] is not complete. In 1774 during the peasant uprising under [the] command of Y. Pugachev the majority of the documents concerning the early years of the colonists' stay on the Volga were destroyed. Natural disasters – fires and flood – did not help to preserve them either. The Soviet government's policy concerning religion [and the] "paper famine" of the twenties, when precious documents were used as drafts, are also to blame.<sup>7</sup>

Although little was found in our literature search specifically addressing these historic research challenges in the Saratov region, it is our hope that more research will be done on this fascinating topic.



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### 3.3 Traditional Training of Russian Archivists and Professional Status/Separation of Archival Training from Library Science Training

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Moscow State Historico-Archival Institute (MGIAI) was the main training school for Russian archivists. Grimsted, Burke, Blouin, and Bolotenko have noted the rigorous and thorough training this institute has provided—especially in the areas of historical study and research, records management, preservation, organization and description of materials, foreign languages, and antecedents of the Russian language.<sup>8</sup> Introduction of information science-based classes came to MGIAI in the early 1980s and as of the late 1980s this department emphasized “work with scientific and statistical data”.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to American archival programs, topics such as reference services, public outreach, and access do not appear to have been emphasized in the traditional course of training for Russian archivists. MGIAI was incorporated as a department of the Russian State University for the Humanities in March 1991, several months before the coup and formal dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the time of its incorporation Natalya Bassoovskaya, the Provost of the University, noted that the MGIAI was continuing in its leadership in Russian archival education by introducing training in oral history methodology as well as offering courses to Russian archival students in the field of Jewish history, culture, and archives.<sup>10</sup>

While archival training within the US is increasingly based within Library Science graduate programs—and the terminal degree of many US academic archivists is an MLS/MLIS—it is of special note that, traditionally, there has been a separation in Russia between the training of archivists and the training of librarians. In his 1988 article, Blouin affirmed that “The Moscow State Institute of Culture trains individuals for work in libraries. There is little interchange between that institute and the MGIAI”.<sup>11</sup> That said, in our literature search we found articles by Richardson and

Donchenko & Kersum mentioning the changing status of library and information science education in the first decade of the 2000s.<sup>12</sup> This hints that there may be some overlap in areas of specialization for library science and archival students. We also sense that training for the two disciplines may be merging in cities in the Russian Federation far removed from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. For example, in his article on the state of library education in the Russian Far East, Richardson makes mention of “the Librarian---archivist” certification for graduate students at Khabarovsk State Institute of Art and Culture.<sup>13</sup>

Given their rigorous training and the Soviet emphasis on the importance of records, it is not surprising that Russia’s archivists traditionally had an esteemed spot in the Soviet hierarchy and were “designated ‘intellectual workers’ (nauchnye sotrudniki) in the Soviet archival system.”<sup>14</sup> Paradoxically, while Gorbachev’s period of *glasnost* brought hope to Russia’s archival community that there would be a new openness in information dissemination, the period after the 1991 coup severely compromised the fortunes of Russian archivists and signified an identity crisis with regards to their status. True suffering came about in Russian repositories as the ruble went into a freefall and funding for cultural repositories was decentralized and shifted downwards from the federal level to regional governments.<sup>15</sup> Salaries were reduced to the bare minimum, heat turned off, rooms closed. It was only through the strong dedication of archival staff and directors—many of whom were juggling two or three jobs to stay afloat—that materials were saved. Throughout his article “Frost on the Walls in Winter: Russian and Ukrainian Archives since the Great Dislocation” George Bolotenko reports stories of repository space being rented out by archival directors for use as bars, banks, and youth hostels during the years between 1991 and 1999, all with the purpose of garnering auxiliary funds to preserve the historical record.<sup>16</sup>



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The points noted in Bolotenko's article were especially relevant to us in light of our conversations with colleagues from Saratov-area archival repositories, both during our trip to Saratov in 2008 and during their visit in conjunction with CSU's *Inaugural Conference on German-Russian Studies* in 2009.

### 3.4 Visits to Russia by American Library and Archival Professionals/East-West Exchanges and Collaborative Projects (mid 1980s to present)

Various visits to Russia by American library and archival professionals, from the time of Gorbachev's era of *glasnost* through the first decade of the 2000s, have been reported, in brief and at great length.<sup>17</sup> Many of these accounts note the exhilaration felt by visitors to be traveling to Russia, the overwhelming wealth of information exchanged, and the immense courteousness and warmth that they were shown by their Russian hosts. Significantly, several authors noted an "all too brief" quality to their visits, similar to our experiences in traveling to Saratov.

East-West exchanges and collaborative projects between libraries and librarians during the last three decades of the Soviet era were primarily based on book and periodical trades wherein—in theory—a US library would send duplicate stocks or free samples of American publications to a library in the USSR which would, in return, send Russian publications to the US library, thus sparing "the bother and expense of dealing with international vendors".<sup>18</sup> Although complexities and complications existed in the functioning of these exchange programs, Olsen notes that they remained a popular collaborative effort and were viewed as an "important aspect of international communication".<sup>19</sup>

As is noted by Grimstead and confirmed by our literature review, many of the US-Russia library-based exchanges in the years after the 1991 coup were continuations of these Soviet-era exchange arrangements—especially "given the persisting budgetary problems and inadequate book distribution

in Russia" in the late 1990s.<sup>20</sup> A twist on this traditional type of exchange program was the "American Corners" program reported in the library literature, where designated areas of Russian Federation libraries were devoted to English-language collections<sup>21</sup>—including a core collection "on the United States, its history, government, language, culture, and people"<sup>22</sup> managed by English-language staff. The American Library Association (ALA) has also looked towards funding for Russian libraries for books, software, and library systems. One example of this is Michael Dowling's description of Carnegie Corporation's awarding of a 2001 grant to the ALA International Relations Office in order that this office might aid libraries in the South Caucasus.<sup>23</sup>

Due to established international protocols regarding cultural heritage objects, the basic tenets of provenance, and the intrinsic nature of primary source materials, East-West exchanges involving US and Russian archivists from the time of Gorbachev's era of *glasnost* have been based on the sharing of information regarding archival theory, practice and training; establishing protocols; working towards establishing international standards of description; and increasing intellectual access to Russian archival collections, rather than on physical exchanges of original materials. Of note in this respect is the three-year project between Russia's Rosarkhiv, the US-based Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) and the Hoover Institution to work on developing standards for exchanging Russian archival description through RLIN using MARC AMC format.<sup>24</sup> The one proposal that we found of physical exchange of US-Russian archival materials referred to the not-for-profit trade of copies (surrogates) rather than original documents.<sup>25</sup>

An early example of a *glasnost*-era archival exchange was the meeting between US archivists and scholars with representatives of the main Archival Administration of the Council of Ministers of the USSR in 1986 in order to delineate "areas of cooperation and exchanges between the soviet Archives and





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American archival institutions".<sup>26</sup> These areas included the Exchange of Specialists in the Field of Archival Affairs, Exchange of Publications on Archival Affairs, Joint Documentary Exhibitions, and Access of Researchers to Archives.<sup>27</sup> Subsequent to this meeting, Allen and Baumann note many other visits by US archival delegations, up to the 1991 coup.<sup>28</sup>

Although somewhat outside of the scope of our literature search, mention should also be made of the web-based ArcheoBiblioBase (<http://www.iisg.nl/abb/rusfed.php>) hosted by the Netherland's International Institute of Social History and spearheaded by US-based Patricia Kennedy Grimsted. This massive database contains a listing of regional and provincial archives throughout the Russian Federation with bibliographies of available finding aids to Russian Federation collections. Reflecting the fluidity of Russian politics, the database notes that,

"...the present listings encompass administrative-territorial units for Subjects of the Russian Federation as of January 2008. However, with the recent abolition of some 'autonomous okrugs' the full implementation of corresponding archival arrangements have not yet been carried out. Researchers interested in those regions should anticipate further archival changes and should try to get in touch with local authorities...to verify current arrangements".<sup>29</sup>

Through conversations with colleagues both stateside and in Russia we are aware that large-scale microfilming projects of Russian genealogical materials have taken place in the years after the 1991 coup—notably by church historians working with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Samara Province. Little mention of these microfilming projects was found in our literature review. Our review also revealed little mention of digitization of local collections conducted by Russian repositories in collaboration with US repositories. This is understandable, especially given the dire economic conditions in post-1991 archives mentioned

in the previous section. Sadly, we suspect that, even into the first decade of the 2000s, the establishment of an information technology infrastructure that would support such collaborative digitization projects was hard to establish "within a transitional, economically chaotic, and only partially democratized political milieu."<sup>30</sup>

### 4. The CSU Fact-Finding Delegation and Visits to Saratov-Area Repositories, September 2008

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, preparations for the 2008 fact-finding delegation to Saratov were two years in the making and were preceded by several visiting delegations from the Saratov area. Through a lead from a former CSU alumnus and member of the State Board of Agriculture (now the Board of Governors), CSU administrators were alerted in early 2006 that there was potential for an academic cooperation between CSU and SSU to facilitate access to significant historical documents from heretofore closed archives in the Saratov area that documented the Volga German experience in Imperial and Soviet Russia. Ensuing talks with this former board member and a locally-based doctoral student and expatriate alumnus of SSU laid the groundwork for reciprocal exploratory visits between SSU and CSU delegations to examine future academic, archival, and agricultural cooperation between the two institutions. Support for this unique endeavor was widespread, both within Colorado and the Russian Federation. As then-Senator Ken Salazar noted to SSU Rector Dr. Leonid Kossovich and copied to the Honorable Vyacheslav V. Volodin, Vice Chairman of the Federal Duma of the Russian Federation on April 28, 2008,

"...the more citizens and institutions...of different countries can work together, the better we are able to understand each other and, more importantly, jointly solve global problems and challenges. Academic institutions are ideally suited for these kinds of partnerships and exchanges."



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Subsequent to these interactions, on August 29, 2008, SSU formally announced the creation of its International Center for Russian-German History and Cultural Studies. A week later, on September 2, 2008, the CSU Faculty Council authorized the creation of CSU's International Center for German-Russian Studies (ICGRS). So it was that the stage was set for our small delegation to "journey to Saratov" in mid-September. The composition of this delegation was somewhat unique as it mixed two university administrators (the Vice Provost for Strategic Outreach and Planning and the Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture/Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station) with two members of the faculty from different—but complementary—disciplines, history and archival/library science.

After 32 hours of travel, including a domestic flight out of Moscow on a Soviet-era YAK plane that had seen better days, the delegation arrived at Saratov's regional airport and was escorted by interpreters to the appropriately-named "Oasis Hotel". After a morning press conference with the Rector of Saratov State University (where the CSU-SSU joint university strategic partnership was officially announced), the CSU administrators toured agricultural research extension sites in rural areas of Saratov province to discuss possible research and development initiatives, while SSU historians escorted the CSU faculty delegates to a cluster of villages that were once former Volga German colonies on the western hill side of the Volga River, including Beideck, Schilling, Krasnoarmeisk (Balzer), and Grimm (Kamenskii).

This was an important preamble to our week-long visit to area archives and repositories, and reinforced the strong influence of Volga German culture on the region. In addition to learning that a chilly wind—reminiscent of the winds of eastern Colorado and the Great Plains—blows across the Volga Steppes, we discovered sturdy wooden and brick hip-roofed houses that had been built by 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers and were currently inhabited by Russian villagers.

While we encountered desecrated Volga German churches in ruins off the main roadway in Grimm's cemetery, where the majority of recent graves and metal Orthodox crosses memorialized deceased Russians, we encountered a circular Volga German tombstone with a well-worn date of death indicating the year 1786. The obviously dire economic straits of the area were sobering, but the kindness and good nature of our hosts and the area residents we encountered was heartwarming.

#### 4.1 Records of Interest in Saratov-Area Repositories

In preparing for our visits to Saratov-area repositories, we were especially interested in confirming the presence of the following documents that are of high importance to documenting German Russian culture:

- **Imperial Government Records of the Chancellery for the Supervision of Foreign Settlers (Kontora/Tutel-Kanzlei Records):** The Russian Kontora (Tutel-Kanzlei in German), founded in 1766 and lasting until 1870, was the office of supervision over foreign settlers such as the Volga Germans. Kontora officials provided colonists with land, material goods and building permits; they also were responsible for giving approval for the most basic elements of settler life—including moving residence and marriage. The Kontora also acted as a conflict-settling office.
- **Imperial Provincial Records:** Saratov government materials pertaining to passports issued from 1870 to 1917. We were also looking for any provincial governmental records that would document economic, agrarian, and social life in the community—as well as general census records.
- **Soviet-Era Records:** We were looking for information on the Volga



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German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (lasting from 1918-1941), as well as any records documenting Stalin's drive for collectivization of agriculture and the deportation of the Volga German population to Siberian gulags starting in August 1941. We were hoping to find documentation of the Cold War experience of the Soviet Union's remaining German-speaking citizens, as this has been a period lost in mystery since all such records were classified/closed until the era of glasnost in the late 1980s.

- **Religious Records:** We were looking for any records that would shed light on the religious life of the Volga Germans such as:
  - **Records of the Protestant Consistory –Lutheran, Reformed, and Mennonite Churches**
  - **Records of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tiraspol (Kherson):** It was our understanding that the Bishop of Tiraspol was responsible for oversight of all Russian Catholics in the empire—save those of Polish ancestry. Although Tiraspol was in the Black Sea Area (currently Moldova—the would-be independent state between the border of Ukraine and Romania), we understood that copies of these records had been kept in the “safety” of Saratov Provincial archives—away from the vulnerable borderlands prone to invasion by non-Russian Germans.
  - **Local Protestant and Catholic Parish Records:** We were on the lookout for any birth, confirmation, marriage, and death certificates from the Volga German villages surrounding Saratov.
- **Miscellaneous Photographs, Maps, Blueprints, Ephemera**
- **Monographs related to Volga German culture (primarily at the SSU Library)**

While we had a list of “items of interest”, it is important to note that, for the most part, we had no idea whether we would find these materials in the repositories that we were slated to visit. Although we knew that, realistically speaking, the whirlwind nature of our weeklong visit meant that we were only going to get a “gist” of each repository's holdings, we had determined that we would attempt to get a general assessment of the volume of materials held at each one that we visited and the general condition and arrangement of items with an eye towards preservation needs, facilitating description and access to collections, joint academic research possibilities, and the digitization potential of select items. In some cases, we were more successful than others in achieving our assessment goals—although getting exact figures for materials footage and items held usually remained elusive. What we found, though, in all cases, was that the directors and staff of the repositories that we visited were friendly and excited about our visits, intensely curious about our professional opinions and outlook, and immensely proud of their collections. Initial reserve often gave way to open and relaxed rapport—especially between the director and staff of the GASO archives.

#### 4.2 The V. A. Artisevich Zonal Scientific Library, Saratov State University

Our visit to the SSU Scientific Library was primarily to meet with librarians and IT staff to discuss the possible digitization of German-language publications salvaged from the Engels (Poskrovsk) library of the former Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1918-1941) after the deportation of the Volga German population to Siberian gulags. We also wanted to explore the possible involvement of Scientific Library staff in digitizing materials within



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other regional repositories. A sampling of over 60 publications, representing the Scientific Library's larger German-language print holdings, was arranged on a table for us to examine.

While at the library, we were also privileged to view SSU's Rare Book Room and its impressive collection of antique and rare books and drawings, many of which dated from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A pleasant surprise was the tea party – complete with samovar and plates of cookies – set up for us in one of the Scientific Library meeting rooms. This gave us the opportunity to chat with the director and IT staff and answer questions about technical services, digitization projects, and fundraising initiatives for libraries and archives in the United States. The director and staff seemed especially intrigued by some of our recent outreach and events at CSUL, including the traveling exhibits that we have set up for the Agricultural and Natural Resources Archive at Denver's National Western Stock Show, the annual fundraiser for the Water Resources Archive, and "Friends of the Library" events highlighting Special Collection materials. We started to examine the make-up of the potential donor base of Saratov. What sort of individuals would the library court if they embarked on development and donor efforts?

#### 4.3 The State Archive of Saratov Oblast (GASO) and the State Historical Archive of the Volga Germans in Engels (the "Engels Archive")

We paid extensive visits to the State Archive of Saratov Oblast (GASO) and Engels Archives – the region's two largest repositories of Volga German materials – on two separate days over the course of our week-long visit to Saratov. At GASO we formally met Director Natalia Shirova and her archival staff who had prepared for us an initial and fascinating viewing of significant archival and special collection items, including marginalia from a 16<sup>th</sup> century Bible that first mentioned the existence of Saratov, documents bearing the signatures of Empress

Catherine II, and materials on the 1773-1774 Pugachev uprising in the Saratov region. After viewing these selected materials, we were invited into the stacks in order to gain some comprehension of GASO's massive collections of materials on the Volga Germans, including administrative, village, and parish records for Saratov Province, from the Saratov Gubernia, the Zemstvo (provincial assembly), and the Duma. Of major significance are GASO's 1173 files of Kontora materials dating from 1766-1780, as reported by N. Shirova in an e-mail attachment to the authors, 31 January 2010, translation A. Kuraev-Maxah. We have since learned that GASO has recently published an annotated inventory of Kontora records as a result of a two-year collaboration with German scholars.

As we examined such historic materials in the archival stacks with mounting excitement, emotion, and appreciation, a lively discussion spontaneously evolved about professional archival procedures, the preservation of valuable historical sources, academic research in archives, and the reputation of archives and archivists in Russia and the United States. One especially poignant moment was when one of the authors was directly asked if she was happy in her profession as academic archivist (to which the author replied "yes" and gave a brief description of what made her happy on a daily basis). The authors sensed the subtext of this question might be related to the issues mentioned by writer Bolotenko as outlined in the previous section. We were deeply moved by the connection we felt toward Director Shirova and her staff and the mutual academic and archival respect that was displayed by all.

Our cordial host and guide at the Engels archive was Sveta Gotsko, who first led us to the reading and museum rooms, where we viewed display cases containing Volga German historical documents, photographs, and paintings, and then into the repository's new addition which houses the bulk of materials documenting Volga German history, culture, and politics. One item of particular



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interest was the original manuscript of the 1916 diaries of Jakob Dietz, a Volga German who served in the State Duma in the years prior to the First World War and the 1917 Russian revolutions.

We understood Ms Gotsko to say that the bulk of the materials from Engels were especially important in documenting the 1917-1941 era covering the Russian Revolutions, the subsequent 1918-1921 Civil War, and the two decades of the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic from 1918 through the Stalinist deportation of 1941. Thus the Engels archive is a very important repository of material on the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century experiences of the Volga Germans in the Saratov region. As Director I.N. Komarov noted during his presentation at CSU's *Inaugural Conference on German Russian Studies*, "[The] State Historical Archive... was closed for researchers for a long period of time and therefore attracts... attention because its resources are poorly studied." Director Komarov also noted that "[a]bout 180,000 files (out of 229,000 files stored in the archive) are the documents on the history of the Volga Germans."<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly enough, we have since discovered that the Engels archive has significant holdings documenting the historical agrarian activities of Saratov-region residents, which complement the holdings in our Agricultural and Natural Resources Archive at CSUL. In addition to documents contained within the Fond of Administration of National Accounting (1918-1941), which contains statistical information on animal stock, fruit plantations, crop condition and drought, the Archives' Fond of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture contains information on "field-seeding, harvest-works, land measuring works and reclamation works, [and the] development of forestry"<sup>32</sup>. Thus, between the CSUL archives and the Engels archive we have an exciting continuum of documentation on the rural traditions and practices of Colorado's "Germans from Russia" and their Volga German ancestors.

#### 4.4 The State Archive of Contemporary History of Saratov Oblast (GANISO/"KGB Archives")

In addition to the visits mentioned above, we made an all-too-brief, somewhat impromptu, late-afternoon stop at the State Archive of Contemporary History of Saratov Oblast (GANISO), which contains the former Communist Party and KGB archives. After meeting formally with Director Anatolii Gerasimov and his assistants, we were ushered into the stacks, where we were courteously shown ranges of Communist Party records and individual membership identification cards once belonging to Volga Germans during the 1918-1941 era of the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Several dozen photographs of local residents and villages taken during this era were also laid out for us to see, presumably part of a larger collection of visual materials. Unfortunately we penetrated no further into this archive's holdings, since it was by now closing time and we could not help but be aware that we were keeping staff from getting to their homes. Despite the rushed nature of our visit, we found Director Gerasimov cordial and curious to hear about life on the High Plains.

#### 4.5 Initial Observations Regarding Our Russian Colleagues' Receptiveness to Digital Initiatives versus Print-Based Initiatives

One of the chief benefits of being "on site" in Saratov was a clearer understanding of the significant challenges faced by our Russian counterparts – best demonstrated by our sense of the varying levels of enthusiasm for proposed collaborative digitization initiatives versus creation of print-based inventories. While digitization of local collections has been a major thrust of ARL institutions during the 2000s and is a major goal of CSUL, there appeared to be a polite reticence on the part of our some of our Russian colleagues to entertain conversation regarding creation of digital collections, and more eagerness to steer our conversations towards discussions of material surveys leading to published inventories. The au-



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thors speculate that there may be a variety of issues, perhaps, at work with regards to what we sensed during our 2008 visit. One may be the focus on preservation and description of materials – rather than open public access to materials – that has traditionally been the case in educational programs for Russian archivists and in repositories throughout the Federation. Another factor might be that there still remains "much work to do" just in identifying and describing the thousands upon thousands of previously-closed documents housed in Saratov repositories.

A third factor may be the funding potential that inventories and registries – sometimes printed with a eye towards translation – promise for cash-strapped Russian repositories, many of which have, ironically, faced much harder times after the 1991 coup than before. While there definitely is a scholarly, academic, and altruistic desire amongst our colleagues to disseminate information that is publicly and freely accessible, there is also the realistic and very understandable desire to find more immediate sources of profit that could go to enhancing the infrastructure of repositories (materials, computers, building maintenance, heating) as well as the salaries of staff. Thus, we suspect that the strong desire for scholarly discourse and cultural exchange sometimes runs in conflict with very basic economic needs and daily practicalities. This is, perhaps, most true for librarians and archivists working in provincial repositories, especially since 1993 when the Russian Federation's "Law on Culture" decentralized administration of funding from one federal source to many regional governments. After the passage of the law, funding levels for Russian Federation libraries and archives "varied greatly from region to region".<sup>33</sup>

Although our situation is certainly much less dire than our Russian friends and colleagues, the U.S. economic downturn and cutbacks in state support for higher education in Colorado have made us especially empathetic to this plight. It is our wish and goal that future grant funding – perhaps

through a collaborative project with neighboring institutions or cultural heritage societies – and the entrepreneurial monies we hope to raise through for-profit projects sponsored through the proposed German-Russian Research Assistance Center (LLC) will help make Saratov's valuable collections available via the web. Outreach activities, as outlined in the next section, are also an important goal through which we hope to heighten awareness of repository holdings in Saratov and perhaps raise funds from US donor contributions that will facilitate digitization and improve the plight of our archival colleagues. This said, our Saratov colleagues have, fortunately, started to procure some funding to enhance the infrastructure of their repositories – most notably demonstrated in the new building addition at the Engels archive and the purchase of copiers and computers, funded by monies from the German Federal government and the private donations of U.S. donors of German-Russian ancestry.

#### 4.6 Conversations with SSU Academics and Our Presentation to the Association of Researchers of the History and Culture of the German Russians (Moscow)

In addition to our visits to Saratov-area repositories we also spoke with numerous academics, both in Saratov and Moscow, about research projects related to Volga German culture. This included participation in a round robin meeting with SSU faculty from the departments of History, Linguistics, Sociology, and Theology, as well as the privilege of being invited as "honored guests" to the annual conference of the Association of Researchers of History and Culture of the Russian Germans in Moscow after our week-long delegation visit to Saratov. After giving an impromptu presentation on the nature of the ICGRS and some of our proposed collaborative projects, we were struck by the high interest of the academicians in the technical aspects of digitization, archival methodology, and German-Russian related materials held in our special collections. We also saw significance in the fact that members of this association in-



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cluded archival directors as well as researchers and scholars from many provinces of the Russian Federation, Belarus, the Ukraine and the German Republic. The rapport we established with these researchers and scholars set the stage for further scholarly interaction leading up to our Conference on German-Russian Studies, held at the end of June 2009.

### 5. The ICGRS Inaugural Conference on German-Russian Studies ("From the Russian Steppes to the American Plains"), June 2009

As noted in our recent report to CSU's Faculty Council Committee on University Programs we believe that one of the most significant achievements of ICGRS activities to date has been its hosting of the *Inaugural Conference on German-Russian Studies: From the Russian Steppes to the American Plains*, held at Colorado State University in late June of 2009.<sup>34</sup>

Preceded by numerous organizational and planning meetings, the ICGRS was able to bring and host seven Russian and Ukrainian academics and archivists as speakers to this conference, as well as a half dozen American scholars, archivists, librarians, and media specialists from CSU and North Dakota State University. Prior to the conference, CSUL hosted an opening reception where our Russian and Ukrainian guests had a chance to mingle with CSU administrators and faculty, local-area politicians, a representative from Colorado Senator Mark Udall's office, and members of the German-Russian community. Prominent at this pre-conference event was an exhibit of archival items from the *Sidney Heitman Germans from Russia in Colorado Study Project Collection* as well as a display of surrogates of documents housed in Saratov repositories and photographs of Volga German buildings in the Saratov region, taken by a journalist for the Saratov Regional Media Complex. CSU President Tony Frank and SSU Rector Leonid Kossovich formally opened the conference, which consisted of a one-day Aca-

demical Symposium and a one-day Public Forum.

#### 5.1 Academic Symposium

The Academic Symposium offered an opportunity for American, Russian, and Ukrainian academics and archivists to meet one another and share information in their respective specialties of German-Russian history, anthropology and archival-library science. Topics of presentations included "The Religious Heritage and Russian-German Churches Along the Volga River", "The Black Sea Germans of the Dakotas and the Volga Germans of Colorado and the Central Plains", "The Volga German Autonomous Republic and Deportation of 1941", "Russian-German Archival Sources and Materials in Saratov", "Information Technology Opportunities and Prospects: Researching the Germans from Russia in North America and South America", and "The CSU Germans from Russia Special Collections and Digitization Projects".

#### 5.2 Public Forum

The Public Forum featured more informal presentations by all the Academic Symposium speakers, plus media and video demonstrations and a presentation from CSUL colleagues on workflow and metadata issues involved in digital projects. The Forum drew an appreciative audience of over one hundred attendees.

The opportunity to make an international audience aware of their academic research and scholarship proved particularly significant to many of our invited guests, as all Saratov academics and archivists had limited interaction with the international academic community and next to no contact with the Western public from the years 1941 to 1991. Of special note, too, is the fact that the Directors of the GASO and Engels Archive, Natalya Shirova and Ivan Komarov, had not had the opportunity to travel outside of the Russian Federation until this conference. Finally, the conference offered an opportunity for Saratov-area archivists and



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SSU administrators to discuss their shared goals regarding the SSU-CSU Strategic Partnership and begin to explore a possible coordinated policy towards the publication of materials related to the Volga Germans.

Although we had hoped to hold a follow-up conference in 2010, the dip in funding due to the global economic downturn and the pending issues of project planning (including the crafting of contracts and agreements) have prevented us from holding a conference this year. We hope to remedy this situation in time to have our next conference within the next two years.

## 6. Outreach to Local Constituencies and Heritage Societies/Project Fundraising

### 6.1 Presentations to Local Constituencies

Throughout the course of our project we have felt it important to reach out to local residents who have expressed interest in our Center and pending projects – especially those of German-Russian ancestry. In addition to the Public Forum held at last year's Inaugural Conference, the authors created a PowerPoint presentation (entitled "Journey to Saratov") which they have given to local constituencies and chapters of heritage societies during the spring of 2009. This fall we are planning to update our PowerPoint, as we have been asked give further presentations to a variety of Colorado audiences.

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, we have found it necessary to maintain a fine balance in explaining the academic objectives of ICGRS-proposed projects while respecting the more general genealogical interests of local constituencies. Understandably, in their excitement about the project and the potential to conduct genealogical research using documents hitherto "closed", many local residents come to our presentations with the impression that the entire holdings of Saratov-based repositories will be physically transferred to CSUL. This cannot be a realistic outcome of our project. In addition to discussing standard archival ethics and practices, we have had to explain

that Russian federal law forbids the sale and transfer of cultural heritage objects to foreign entities – and that our project is intended to be collaborative with, and collegial towards, our Russian colleagues, as well as facilitative to the numerous Russian researchers we have met. We have had lively exchanges with local constituencies about the challenges and the large amounts of pre-planning involved in large-scale digitization projects – especially one spanning two countries and two cultures.

We have learned much from our interactions with local residents and have enjoyed hearing stories of their experiences and heritage, as well as appreciated their support for our activities.

### 6.2 Meetings with Representatives of German-Russian Heritage Societies

In addition to our outreach efforts we have strived to be respectful of the bonds already forged by German-Russian Heritage Society representatives and Saratov-based researchers and genealogists. In this respect in August 2009 the ICGRS hosted day-long discussions with Colorado chapter representatives and board members of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR), including the current AHSGR President Jerome Siebert. Both parties expressed a willingness to engage in future collaboration on German-Russian topics of mutual interest.

Correspondence and discussion regarding ICGRS and AHSGR cooperation have continued in the spring and summer of 2010. A second meeting with President Siebert in March 2010 resulted in more focused conversations and further investigation into the translation and possible future publication of two "designated projects", one regarding a monograph by SSU historian, Arkadiy German, entitled *The Bolshevik Power and German Autonomy on the Volga, 1918-1941*.





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**6.3 The German-Russian Research Assistance Center (LLC)**

While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss it in great detail, we would like to make mention of the German-Russian Research Assistance Center (LLC) that has been conceived as a for-profit arm of the ICGRS. In the tradition of CSU's recent research-based entrepreneurial enterprises, it is the goal that the LLC would create for-profit items related to our international academic projects that could allow additional stipends and funding for our project researchers and staff in the Russian Federation. In our service to local constituencies, we also hope that the LLC will be able to assist local area residents in their genealogical needs. A former member of CSU's State Board of Agriculture with ties to the regional farming community and Denver-based businesses has been working on putting together the details of the LLC, with input from members of the ICGRS academic board, the ICGRS administrative director, and staff from the Office of the Vice President for Outreach and Engagement (formerly the Office of the Vice Provost for Outreach and Strategic Planning).

**7. Next Steps and Lessons Learned**

As we noted in our recent biennial review of the ICGRS, the original list of goals and objectives of the Center contained these ambitiously proposed activities:

- Inventory and digitize original materials on German-Russian communities housed in Saratov provincial repositories and create global public access to these digitized items.
- Create an academic collection of online resources (i.e., papers and proceedings) in partnership with the Colorado State University Libraries and Saratov State University.
- Develop archival and international study opportunities for CSU and Russian partner faculty and students.

- Work with partners on Center funding.
- Publish in scholarly journals the results of material inventories and research.
- Become a focal point for scholars working on the unique history and culture of German-Russians over three centuries on three continents.
- Hold public lectures and events to highlight special facets of research.

Intellectual property and copyright issues, language and translation challenges and changing policies within the Russian Federation regarding research and cultural heritage objects and reforms in higher education have all played roles in the fine tuning of some of our objectives. The global economic downturn and sluggishness in our state's economy has also slowed the pace of funding for some of our projects. Also because of the historic differences in US and Russian archival methodology, practice, and policy we feel that we need to continue our dialogue with our Saratov-based colleagues about their wishes (and what they perceive to be the benefits and challenges of our proposed joint digitization initiatives) before any specific project workflow for digitization projects is planned. One of the most important lessons we have learned so far has been the lesson of humility – as we realized we needed to put aside the digital-centric sensibility that we cultivate at CSUL to understand the operational, economic, and historic reasons behind the print-based sensibilities of our Russian colleagues.

With that said, here are a few "next steps" and short term activities planned for the ICGRS.

**7.1 MOUs and International Agreements of Cooperation/Investigation of Grants**

One important "next step" that we have been working on is the drafting of an IMOU Addendum between SSU and CSUL to create a set of standards and protocols for future digitization projects. We are also working with CSU legal counsel to draft an



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"International Agreement for Implementation of Cooperation" outlining protocols for ICGRS joint academic research projects and publications. In addition to these activities, we are also researching possible grant funding for our projects that could augment the external donor funding that we have received to date.

## 7.2 Digital Projects

During a 2009 meeting with his Presidential Council for the Development of the Information Society, Russian Federation President, Dmitry Medvedev "stressed the need for the digitisation of the resources of major archives, museums, and libraries".<sup>35</sup> Thus, digitization of cultural heritage materials for the purposes of preservation and access has become a priority for government officials in a way not previously seen in the Russian Federation. This bodes well for future collaborative digitization efforts – both on a national level between Russian institutions and on an international level as well.

As part of our collaborative digital initiatives we hope to see the day when we will have the equivalent of an online finding aid to a collection in a Saratov repository, linked at the item level to the digital object. While we are optimistic that such a day will come, we have come to learn that there is much groundwork to be laid before this becomes a reality. Collaborative analysis of equipment and staffing needs, and condition assessment of items needs to take place before digitization commences. We also need to examine workflow and quality protocols, as well agreed-upon description standards, with our Russian colleagues. Due to these realities, we have downscaled our digitally-based projects for 2009 to include the following:

- Loading of Conference Papers and Photographs into the CSUL Digital Repository

We have approximately 500 photographs of Saratov-area villages, churches, and cultural sites which currently are being identified

and labeled in English in order that they may be ingested into the CSUL digital repository with the proper accompanying metadata. We also plan to digitize selected proceedings and presentations from the June 2009 *Inaugural Conference on German-Russian Studies*.

- Updating the ICGRS Website and Adding Links to Holdings in CSUL Special Collections

Our ICGRS website

(<http://outreach.colostate.edu/GRcenter/index.asp>) is our principal source of communication and information about our ongoing activities. In addition to sections on meetings with visiting scholars and representatives of German-Russian heritage organizations, we have narratives on our delegation visits, postings of "future events", and a selection of photographs documenting activities. As a short term project we plan to add links to related German-Russian sites.

Currently there are over 100 books and monographs listed in the CSUL online catalog under the term "Russian Germans". We are planning to provide a list of these items on the ICGRS website.

## 7.3 Research and Scholarship Using Archival Materials/Future Publications

Joint academic board members from CSU and SSU have held numerous conversations and planning sessions concerning collaborative academic research and publication, focusing on feasible "short term" projects as well as a few desired "long term" projects. The following is a listing of a few of our proposed short term research and publication projects:

Monographs

- Translation and publication of a monograph by SSU historian, Arkadiy German, *The Bolshevik Power and German Autonomy on the Volga, 1918-1941*, originally published in Rus-



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sian, Saratov 2004. (Also mentioned in Section 6.2)

### Annotated Inventories

- Publication of a research project by GASO archive director Natalya Shirova and GASO archivists entitled *Annotated Inventory of the Fond of the Kherson Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical Consistory, 1801-1864*, translated by A.S. Bolshakova, originally published in Russian, Saratov, 2008.
- Publication of a research project by Saratov historian Olga Litsenberger and former Engels archive director Elisabeth Erina, *An Annotated Inventory of the Files of the Collection of Documents of the Roman Catholic Churches, 1789-1934*, translated by A.S. Bolshakova, originally published in Russian, Saratov, 2009.

### Photographs and Visual Materials

- Publication of a research project proposed by SSU historian Arkadiy German and SSU graduate students documenting the photographic history of selected Volga German villages (Grimm, Balzer, Norka, Frank, Hussenbach).
- Publication of a scientific research project by SSU researcher A.N. Bashkatov, *Study of the German Legacy in the Volga Region: A Photo Presentation*.
- Creation of a DVD presentation produced and written by Saratov regional media specialist and historical researcher Elena Sofinskaya, *Voga Heimat Legacy: The Germans from Russia*.

A desirable longer term research project repeatedly contemplated would be collaboration on a history of the Saratov Kontora (Chancellery) of Foreign Settlers, 1766-1876 accompanied by images of selected docu-

ments from Saratov-area archives. It is our understanding that Saratov historians and archivists have initiated such a project but that it has lapsed for lack of funding.

### 8. Conclusion: The Challenges and Rewards of Our Journey to Saratov

Since the professional career of one of the authors was long conditioned by the tense atmosphere of the Cold War era the fact that we could actually journey to Saratov in 2008 was in itself remarkably stimulating. Our welcome in Saratov by academics and archival hosts eager to interact and willing to cooperate proved to be emotional and humbling. Our visits to colleagues in libraries, archives, and Volga German villages opened up exhilarating research possibilities both academic and archival. Our challenges to convert the promises of our collaborative partnership are still existent. After the euphoria come the years of work at hand to bring some of our proposed projects to reality.

Modern archives management involves a variety of skill sets including knowledge of copyright, project management, digitization technology, preservation, budget analysis, creation of agreements, and diplomacy – all of which has been in play during this project. Much of what has been drawn upon during this project is “what they don’t teach you in school”. Flexibility, a sense of humor, a thick skin, and a ability to “go with the flow” – as well as cultivating the art of knowing when to refocus and “downsize” goals when necessary – have been essential for participants in this project. Not all days have been easy, nor have all meetings gone smoothly.

We have tried to stress throughout this article that our collaborative project is a “work in progress”. This said, we hope that others might gain information about the vast wealth of primary source materials in Russian regional repositories and glean some ideas about potential international collaborative projects they could consider for their own institutions. The authors have learned



much from each other, and have been greatly enriched by their interactions with new-found friends and colleagues, both stateside and abroad. This is probably the best reward of our collaborative endeavor.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See the following articles by Patricia Kennedy Grimsted: "Lenin's Archival Decree of 1918: The Bolshevik Legacy for Soviet Archival Theory and Practice." *American Archivist* 45, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 429-43 and "Increasing Reference Access to Post-1991 Russian Archives." *Slavic Review* 56, no. 4 (1997): 718-59. See also "Historical Survey [Part 2]: "The Development and Organization of Archives Since 1917" in Grimsted's *Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the USSR: Moscow and Leningrad* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 23-60. A quick mention of the Decree of 1918, as well as a thorough description of the structure of Glavarkiv – the central administrative archival unit of the USSR prior to 1991 – can be found in Marie Allen and Roland Baumann's "Evolving Appraisal and Accessioning Policies of Soviet Archives." *American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991): 96-111.

<sup>2</sup> Grimsted, *Archives and Manuscript Repositories*, 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> See Grimsted, *Archives and Manuscript Repositories*; Allen and Baumann, "Evolving Appraisal and Accessioning."

<sup>5</sup> See author reminiscences in Samuel H. Baron and Cathy A. Frierson, eds., *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present*. (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003). See also "Procedural Information [Parts 3 and 4]: Access to Records; Application for Archival Work" in Grimsted's *Archives and Manuscript Repositories*, pp. 70-79.

<sup>6</sup> Donald J. Raleigh "A Journey from St. Petersburg to Saratov." in Baron and Frierson's, *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present*, pp. 139-152.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan N. Komarov, "State Historical Archive of Volga Germans in Engels: [A] Golden Source of Information on the History, Genealogy, and Culture of German Colonists in Russia of 1767-1941." Translated by Ivan Kuraev. Presentation at the Inaugural Conference on German-Russian Studies, June 2009, [1].

<sup>8</sup> In addition to Grimsted's *Archives and Manuscript Repositories* see the following articles: Frank G. Burke, "Soviet-American Archival Exchange Meeting in Moscow." *American Archivist*, 50, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 254-61.; Francis X. Blouin, "Moscow State Historico-Archival Institute and Archival Education in the USSR." *American Archivist* 51, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 501-11.; and George Bolotenko, "Frost on the Walls in Winter: Russian and Ukrainian Archives Since the Great Dislocation (1991-1999)." *American Archivist* 66 (Fall/Winter 2002): 271-302.

<sup>9</sup> Blouin, "Moscow State Historico-Archival Institute," 506.

<sup>10</sup> See Natalya Basovskaya, "The Russian State University for the Humanities: A New Home for Archival Scholarship in Russia." *American Archivist* 55 (Winter 1992):128-29.

<sup>11</sup> Blouin, "Moscow State Historico-Archival Institute," 510.

<sup>12</sup> See two recent articles by John V. Richardson: "Recent Developments in the Russian Far East: The State of Education for Librarianship." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 44, no.2 (Spring 2003): 137-52, and "Education for Librarianship in the Russian Far East: An Update on the Vladivostok State University of Economics and Services." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 47, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 160-64. See also: Natalia Donchenko and Irina Kerzum, "Between Slump and Hope: Library and Information Science Education in Russia." *The International Information & Library Review* 38 (2006): 181-4.



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- <sup>13</sup> Richardson, "Recent Developments in the Russian Far East," 143.
- <sup>14</sup> Bolotenko, "Frost on the Walls," 275.
- <sup>15</sup> For mention of Russia's 1993 "Law on Culture" see Ellen Knutson, "New Realities: Libraries in Post-Soviet Russia." *Library Trends* 55, no. 3(2007): 716-29.
- <sup>16</sup> Bolotenko's account of the personal struggles of Russian archivists during the 1990s is one of the most poignant found in our literature search. For various accounts of hardships in Russian libraries during the later years of *glasnost* (1988-1991) see Dennis Kimmage, ed., *Russian Libraries in Transition: An Anthology of Glasnost Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1992).
- <sup>17</sup> In addition to articles already cited by Burke; Blouin; Allen and Baumann; Bolotenko; and Richardson, see the following: Roxanne B. Mendrinis, "Inside Russian Libraries: An Information Technology Perspective." *American Libraries* (June/July 1998): 78-80.; Eric Johnson, "The American Corners Program in Russia: Building Successful Partnerships." *International Leads* 16, no. 4 (2002): 1-2,8.; David Grimes, "Turning Corners: American Librarians in Post-Soviet Russia." *American Libraries* (October 2003): 56-8.; Susan Leach-Murray, "To Russia ... with Books, Archives, and Libraries." *Indiana Libraries* 25, no. 1 (2006): 36-8.; and Sha Zhang, "From North Carolina to Russia." *International Leads* 22, no.1 (2008): 6.
- <sup>18</sup> Margaret S. Olsen, "The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: East-West Exchanges, 1960-1993." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 39, no.1 (1995): 5.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>20</sup> Grimsted, "Increasing Reference Access", 747.
- <sup>21</sup> See Johnson, "American Corners Program"; Grimes, "Turning Corners".
- <sup>22</sup> Johnson, "American Corners Program", 1.
- <sup>23</sup> Michael Dowling, "Aid to Struggling Libraries in the South Caucasus." *American Libraries* (September 2005): 24-5.
- <sup>24</sup> See Natasha Lyandres, Natasha and Olga Leontieva, "Developing International Cataloging Standards for Archival Holdings: Rosarkiv-RLG-Hoover Project, 1994-1997." *American Archivist* 61 (1998): 441-452.
- <sup>25</sup> Burke, "Soviet-American Archival Exchange," 258.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.
- <sup>27</sup> See "Protocol of the Commission on Archival Cooperation between the American Council of Learned Societies and the Main Archival Administration of the USSR Council of Ministers for 1987-1988" included in Burke, "Soviet-American Archival Exchange", pp. 257-259.
- <sup>28</sup> See footnote in Allen and Baumann, "Evolving Appraisal and Accessioning," 97.
- <sup>29</sup> ArcheoBiblioBase: Archives in Russia Online <http://www.iisg.nl/abb/rusfed.php> (accessed June 6, 2010).
- <sup>30</sup> Grimsted, "Increasing Reference Access," 749.
- <sup>31</sup> Komarov, "State Historical Archive of Volga Germans in Engels," [1].
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, [5].
- <sup>33</sup> Knutson, "New Realities," 719.
- <sup>34</sup> International Center for German-Russian Studies. *Biennial CIOSU Review: International Center for German-Russian Studies*. Internal University report to the Colorado State University Faculty Committee on University Programs, February 2010, 6.
- <sup>35</sup> Website of the President of Russia <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/sdocs/theme.s.htm> (accessed February 12, 2009).



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