

Recent Developments in the Russian Far East: The State of Education for Librarianship

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In this article, the author reports on a recent visit to the Russian Far East to lecture and consult with Russian universities interested in developing new library and information science programs, courtesy of the U.S. Department of State. It provides a brief geographical orientation to the region, background on the existing system of higher education in Russia, a case study of several universities in the region, and then adopts a social, technical, economical, political, and environmental (STEPE) analysis of the current situation. Rigorous formal education for library and information science in this region is embryonic, but most promising.

“The more educated a man is,
The more useful he is to his country.”
—Aleksandr Griboyedov, 19th Century playwright

Education for librarianship in Russia, especially in the Far East, is undergoing some profound changes. Remotely distant from Moscow by over 9,000 kilometers, the Far East includes the Primorskii and Khabarovskii Krai as well as the Amur, Magadan, Kamchatka, and Sakhalin regions—over 7.9 million people in 6.2 million square kilometers. Yet, outside their country little is known about these developments because most of the relevant literature is written in Cyrillic, not widely disseminated, nor well controlled bibliographically. Hence, the goal of this article is to resolve the knowledge void established above.

In order to inform the readers about the present conditions, this article has two main objectives: (1) to describe the current situation regarding the future developments of education for librarianship in the Russian Far East, focusing most notably on Vladivostok and Khabarovsk,¹ and in doing so, (2) to adopt a social, technical, economic, political, and environment analysis of the current situation. I hope readers will agree that it is worthwhile knowing what is occurring globally in other parts of the world, especially in a country which borders the United States, and that as scholars we face similar challenges as we develop our own library and information science (LIS) programs.

Vladivostok, Yesterday and Today

On the far eastern coast of Russia, “Vladivostok is situated at 43°6’40” North and 131°56’11” East. Considering its [most] southern location the climate seems to be

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rather harsh,"² but its Bukhta Zolotoi Rog, Primorskii (i.e., Golden Horn Bay) is "wide and deep. The harbour is surrounded by hills on all sides and therefore very convenient for moorage," according to the famous Russian geographer, N. M. Przhevalsky.³

Vladivostok, founded in 1860 upon the signing of the Treaty of Beijing that gave Russia extensive trading rights and land, is the largest port on the Russian Pacific Coast and serves as the metropolitan capital of the Primorskii Krai (i.e., the Maritime Territory, but also known as Ussuriland). Visitors, including President Gorbachev in July of 1986, find it reminiscent of San Francisco with its steep hills and waterside views of the Bay, which is an ideal port for the reasons stated above.

The first American Consul appointed to Vladivostok was William W. Morton, who was commissioned March 11, 1875. In 1948, however, the Soviet government closed the city to foreigners due to its geographical location and strategic importance as the homeport of Russia's powerful Pacific Fleet. The US Consul returned in early 1992, with the reopening of the city to foreigners.

Today, its 730,000 citizens have access to twelve universities (including two naval universities) within the city limits. In Vladivostok, however, the three main universities interested in raising the existing qualifications of librarians include: Primorskii Regional Cultural College, the Far Eastern State University, and the Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service.

The State of Russian Higher Education

Because the Russian system of higher education varies somewhat from that of the typical American's experience, it is necessary as well as useful to give some background information on its system, and on academic degrees in particular (see table 1), before discussing these three specific educational institutions.

After scoring well on university entrance examinations, a college student studies for five years and receives, at about the age of twenty-one, a "diplom" from a Russian university. If the student has earned "good" or "excellent" grades at the diplom level, he or she can take advanced study at the graduate level and earn a higher degree.

Russian universities, in general, are organized into *facultets* (composed of two or more *kafedra*) and which in turn can be discipline specific or university-wide. Faculty members in a university-wide department teach students from other departments. Groups of discipline specific faculty (*facultets*) are commonly organized into departments (*kafedra*); for example, children's librarianship, library science, humanitarian information, scientific and technical information, sociology and psychology of reading, or informatics/information science. In other words, these six

Table 1
Russian Higher Education Academic Degrees

Name of Degree	Activities	Time to Degree
Diplom	Coursework as well as oral and written examinations	5 Years Typically
Kandidat Nauk (K.N.)	Coursework in philosophy, foreign language, and a specialization plus oral examinations and a written dissertation (i.e., <i>candidatskaya dissertatsiya</i>)	Three Years
Doktor Nauk (equivalent to D.Sc.)	Research project and defense of doctoral dissertation (i.e., <i>doktorskaia dissertatsiya</i>)	Open Ended

SOURCE: Based on information in Erika Popovich and Brian Levin-Stankevich, *The Soviet System of Education*, PIER Special Report (Washington, DC: AACRAO and NAFSA, 1992) and updated by interviews with Tat'iana Sidorov and Elza Gousseva.

departments are the common divisions of faculties of information studies in the leading universities such as the St. Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts or the Moscow State University of Culture.

Candidate of Sciences⁴

Upon three further years of guided study (called *aspirantura*) and a publicly defended and published 150-page thesis (*kandidatskaia dissertatsiia*), a student earns the scientific degree (science is broadly encompassing many disciplines in Russia), that of Kandidat Nauk (KN). Unlike the United States, the Academic Council of the local university in cooperation with the Highest Attestation Committee (*Vysshaia attestatsionnaia komissiiia*—VAK) awards this degree jointly. Under perestroika, universities have much more freedom, but VAK is likely to maintain its own archive of author abstracts (thesis synopses or *avtoreferat*). Nowadays, professional councils (of nine to twenty-one experts from the more than 3,000 specializations of which librarianship is only one), “under the auspices of the State Committee for Public Education and in conjunction with the institution of higher education”⁵ establish the degree criteria.

Technically, the KN degree (in pedagogic science or philological science) depends on the topic of the candidate’s thesis. There are two specializations: (1) library science, bibliography, and bibliology (what the State Committee labels 05.25.03) and (2) information systems (05.25.05). Kandidat Nauk students in the first area of specialization can earn degrees in either (1) philological science, or (2) pedagogic science while students in the second area of specialization (i.e., information systems) can only earn degrees in philological science.

Prior to writing the candidate thesis, the student must pass examinations in the three courses of study (philosophy—formerly Marxist-Leninist philosophy, foreign language, and their area of specialization—”problem-solving questions with a minimum

of theory”⁶ the student holds the status: *Kandidatskii minimum*. Sometimes the candidate will indicate on a business card or elsewhere that the degree is in a particular field such as bibliography and include the initials K.P.N. (Kandidat of Pedagogical Sciences). Note that the KN student is not required to attend classes, although many do so voluntarily.

The candidate thesis or dissertation defense is announced publicly by sending the synopsis to other institutions of higher education. Two critical reviewers are appointed to examine content and an opponent is appointed as well. A commission of the local institution handles the actual proceedings and a scientific council collects the comments and then votes in secret ballot. If approved by two-thirds votes, the student is awarded the degree. This degree is roughly equivalent to a doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) in the United States, but without examining the thesis first-hand, it may be difficult to know whether the student used original materials, or even its scope and quality.

Doctor of Sciences

Generally, only senior scholars hold this scientific degree, though to be eligible one is usually under forty years old. Upon completion of the Kandidat Nauk degree, the amount of time varies in order to receive a Doctor of Pedagogical or Philological Science (i.e., Doktor Nauk which is somewhat like a Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) degree, if the specialization is in philosophy). In addition to ten to twenty published papers, the scholar must complete a defense of a major dissertation based on original research (*doktor dissertatsiia*). Furthermore, the degree is awarded by the Highest Attestation Committee of the Russian Federation upon the recommendation of the local university's dissertation committee.

As mentioned above, students do not pick their dissertation committees. Russian universities have Administrative Boards, composed of elected university faculty members, which approve standing dissertation committees of three faculty members (who usually are full or associate professors) for the Candidate of Sciences or the Doctor of Sciences degrees. In other words, the student must satisfy these university certified faculty members; VAK still approves the results.

Faculty Rank

Faculty titles indicate one's rank within the system, ranging from Docent to Professor (see table 2). Only holders of the *Doktor Nauk* degree can serve as professor; department heads at tertiary-level institutions often hold DN degrees. The Russian Academy of Science meets once a year to conduct business and elect new members who are called *Akademik*. For example, a full professor can become an *akademik*, a position held for life. At present, the Academy has 380 members and 770 corresponding members.⁷

Primorskoe Regional'noe Uchilishche Kul'tury (PRUK)

Located in Ussuriisk (to the north of Vladivostok and the third largest city in the Krai with a population of 159,000), the Primorskii Regional Cultural College offers

Table 2
Russian Academic Titles of the Russian Federation's Higher Attestation Committee

Academic Title	Local Action	Russ. Fed. Action
Instructor or Docent	Non-Elective; Appointment by Dean	None
Senior Instructor	Non-Elective; Appointment by Dean	None
Associate Professor	Departmental Vote	None
(Full) Professor	Departmental Vote	Based on experience, publications, and personal characteristics
Akademik		Same as Professor

SOURCE: Ubasulev et al., *Ekonomika i Organizatsiia Upravleniia Vuzom* (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo <<Lan'>>, 1999).

specialized secondary education in the cultural professions including a specialization in librarianship. Its director is Oleg A. Grinchenko and they have a collection of approximately 53,000 items, but the necessary coursework in library automation and other new technologies is not present due to the absence of requisite equipment.

Far Eastern State University (FESU/DVGU)

FESU/DVGU is the oldest and largest university in the Primorskii Krai (Maritime Territory), this university was founded in October 1899 as the Institute of Oriental Studies.⁸ In 1920, it merged with several private colleges to become the Far Eastern State University, but closed in 1939 “for political reasons” and did not reopen until 1956.⁹

Despite being the classical university for Vladivostok, it has schools of mathematics and computer science (including a department of information science and a department of computer technologies that offers courses in banking information systems) as well as an institute of physics and information technologies including the Russian Universities Network (RUNNet) Federal Communications Center. Only contract students (i.e., foreign students) pay \$120 to \$270 per month for a dormitory room—the upper rate is for a single, bathroom, stove, refrigerator, international phone, television, and laundry room service!¹⁰

Headed by its Rector, Vladimir I. Kurilov, FESU students number more than 14,000 and include “334 postgraduate students working toward their candidate (N = 328) and doctoral degrees (N = 6), which makes it the largest graduate school in the region.¹¹ The prospective candidate student “should be under 35 years of age” while doctoral students must be “under 40 years of age.”¹² At present, its library, headed by Olga Pavlovna Yelantseva, contains more than 1,300,000 items including 750,000 books (of which 80,000 are in foreign languages), 280,000 periodical holdings, and 660,000 books of literature. Among its special collections are 15,000 rare books and a Museum of Books, devoted to the history of printing and the Russian Far East. The Rector's near-term plans (i.e., within the next two-to-three years) call for a new library by reconstructing an

existing building and a new OPAC provided by an outside vendor rather than continuing to support the in-house legacy system.

Established in 1982, the FESU University Press publishes about sixty scientific and educational books annually and supports the Information Laboratory as well as the Publishing Laboratory of the Institute of Oriental Studies. Its chief librarian is Anna G. Tretiakova. The university's website is <http://www.dvgu.ru/> and the library's website is located at http://www.dvgu.ru/donald/fesu_library/index.htm. Preliminary discussions about a library and information science program have focused on a major in history or philology with an LIS minor, discussion of a possible high school major in LIS, as well as an Institute program for those who already are working in a library, but without a diplom degree in LIS.

Vladivostok State University of Economics (VSU/VGUE)

Founded in 1967 as the Far Eastern Technological Institute, VSU was granted university status in July 1996. Today, VSU enrolls more than 3,750 students and has an academic staff (i.e., faculty) of more than 300.¹³ Along with elected members from faculty, its rector (president) and prorectors (vice-presidents) serve as the Academic Board of the university. The sixty-five board members serve for a five-year period and meet on the last Thursday of each month. The University's 1997 financial situation showed a positive balance of .5 billion rubles based on a revenue of 41.6 billion rubles and expenses of 41.0 billion. Student tuition provides 50 percent of the revenue, government funding another 30 percent, and the remaining 20 percent comes from "courses and programs for Vladivostok and other towns."¹⁴ More recently, the university reports .8 million rubles earned on revenue of 80.7 million rubles and expenses of 75.8 million. Now, "student tuition provides 33.6 percent of the revenue, government funding another 40 percent, and the remaining 26.3 from city governments."¹⁵ The university's website is posted at <http://www.vvsu.ru/index.asp>.

Administratively, the university has a president, Dr. Gennadii I. Lazarev, who is assisted by five vice presidents. Organizationally, it has four schools, headed by deans, including a School of Information Technology and Electronic Systems.¹⁶ They also have professional development courses for librarians and wish to develop these more fully into a new school. In 1996, the university library contained more than 230,000 items and 300 periodicals accessible via alphabetical and systematic catalog are now entirely bar coded for circulation. Recently, they developed their own automated in-house library circulation system for registered users; the director of the university library is Tat'iana Grekhova.¹⁷ Today, the library holds 300,000 items and has 429 periodical subscriptions.¹⁸ The library's Webpage is <http://www.vvsu.ru/LIBRARY/index.htm>.

Khabarovsk

Located 750 kilometers to the north of Vladivostok, about a fourteen-hour train ride on the Trans Siberian Railroad's "Okean," lies the city of Khabarovsk, population 615,000, and which is situated on the right bank of the Amur River, just above where the Ussuri River splits. The town is named for Erofei P. Khabarov who founded "the first Russian settlement on the Amur River in 1651"¹⁹ and served as the capital of the Far East from 1926 to 1938. Founded in 1968, the Khabarovsk State Institute of Art

and Culture, located at 112 Krasnorechenskaia Ul., offers training in three professional areas including library science and bibliography; Aleksandr N. Farafonov served as the Institute's first rector. Graduates receive qualifications in several areas: "Analitik—reviewer of the business information," "Marketolog—information manager," "Organizer of computer communications," "Librarian—bibliographer" as well as "Organizer of psychologo-pedagogical service," "Librarian—bibliographer of children's and school libraries," "the Librarian—archivist," and "Bibliographer of the book-selling enterprise." At present, the seventeen-member faculty is headed by senior lecturer A.V. Vishnevsky. With a collection of 116,100 items (of which 6,950 are the library science fund), its library director is Irina Vladimirovna Safronova, a young graduate of their program.

Quite nearby is the Far Eastern State Research Library (at <http://www.fessl.ru/>), one of only four regional depository collections in Russia. According to its director, Aleksandr I. Bukreev, it requires five buildings to house the 2.5 million-item collection that serves 350,000 registered users.

So, it appears that there is a job market for these students. "They usually try to get jobs even before they graduate (part-time). They can find jobs through recruiting agencies, newspaper ads, and through contacts. Some schools have placement centers that try to help their graduates," according to Tat'iana Sidorova.²⁰

STEPE Analysis

I have adopted the STEPE model,²¹ which is widely used in business-oriented reviews of the literature, as a way of analyzing the context within which the forementioned changes are occurring. Here, STEPE stands for the social, technological, economic, political, and environmental or ecological factors that may constrain or enhance Russia's likely actions in the near-term. The advantage of the STEPE analysis is that it does not unduly privilege one perspective, such as the technological or economic, over another. Under each heading, I organize the discussion by advantageous (sometimes called enhancements) as well as disadvantageous (called constraint, technically speaking) situations for developing LIS programs. Finally, I understand, of course, that many of Russia's strategic options for higher education should be considered together, so I address them at the end of this article.

Social (Demographic and Educational) Factors

The demographic factors, which may constrain LIS program development, include low fertility rates and high death rates; another constraining social factor is the low quality of life. Positive factors include universal education, a high literacy rate along with the large number of well-educated people, and a graying population. Table 3 provides some insight into the social dynamics of Russian society.

Demographically speaking, the area's urban population is modest—730,000 live in Vladivostok and 615,000 in Khabarovsk and a total of 2.2 million people in a region of 3.5 million square kilometers of mountainous terrain, though nothing rises more than 1000 meters. By analogy, similar sized US metropolitan areas of two

Table 3
Most Valued Possessions for a Russian, Pre/Post Perestroika

Pre-Perestroika	Post Perestroika
Television Set, VCR or other home appliance Refrigerator, furniture, cut glassware or carpet Car or Dacha (mentioned 2 times)	Cell Phone (3 times)/Pager/Computer Good/Foreign Automobile or expensive dog Own Good/Luxury Flat (2 times) or Overseas vacation/travel

SOURCE: Interview with Inna Ilinskaya, 30 March 2001; Elza Gousseva, 21 June 2001; Nick Nezlin, 21 June 2001; and correspondence with Arkhadiy Khomenko, 11 May 2001; and Elena Valinovskaya, 7 February 2001. For insight into the role of dachas in Russian life, see Lovell.²²

million inhabitants such as Baltimore, Maryland, Denver, Colorado, and Seattle, Washington can, however, support their LIS programs enrollments.²³

Obviously, one might question Russia's long-term ability to support any educational program given their lower fertility rates and higher death rates than during Soviet times.²⁴ The latest demographic analysis of the Khabarovsk for 1992–1999 indicates that the region “has grown appreciably older.”²⁵ In another recent survey, G. N. Plenkova and O. V. Kiselëva, estimated that 50 percent of working librarians were of pension age.²⁶

Certainly, most “Quality of Life” surveys rate Russian cities such as Moscow (much less Vladivostok or Khabarovsk) toward the lower end of their scales.²⁷ One response might be a kind of Malthusian economics—allow more open immigration from countries such as nearby China.²⁸ Nation-wide, immigration is primarily from the Russian-speaking population in the former Soviet republics.²⁹ At present, the primary immigration in this region has been the approximately 3,000,000 people from China, Korea, and Mongolia.

Surveying more than 230 experts, Plenkova and Kiseleva conducted a formal needs assessment in 1998. They found that the top three needs were for: 1) librarians who could step into management roles –27.8 percent; 2) business librarians –27.8 percent; and 3) marketing experts –26.4 percent.³⁰ One could, in addition, measure actual demand by counting the number of application forms received, the number of students returning for their Certificate of Secondary Education, or the number of satisfactory scores on the university's entrance examinations. Generally, though, Russian students³¹ are well above the world's average students, according to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.³²

In another report, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study of middle school children demonstrates that Russia ranks among the top twelve out of thirty-eight countries for mathematics and among the top sixteen in science; by contrast, the United States is ranked relatively lower.³³ In other words, an institution could offer a relatively rigorous LIS program in this region because many Russian students have the necessary natural science and engineering backgrounds.

One approach being considered is simply to create a major based on course offerings already available. My analysis of the existing course offerings of several universities in the Far East suggest that the following LIS courses could be offered

(see table 4), especially if undergraduate students could cross-enroll in different existing academic departments—for example, business administration; computer science; English as a foreign language; and information technology. Within the LIS faculty, the information science coursework might include an introduction to scientific literature, citation indexing, and information storage and retrieval while the library and information studies work could include archive management, document studies and government protocol, information access (reference process), and library automation. An ideal curriculum would also include internships in local libraries, laboratories (i.e., publishing houses), methods courses (e.g., historiography; statistics—theory, business and legal as well as social-economic statistical sources; and interviewing as a methodology), and study abroad opportunities. Why, or even whether, these courses should be offered may be different questions since the only formal needs assessment has been conducted based solely on the personal opinions of informants.

Technological Factors

Access to advanced information systems in a global environment depends upon a strong technological infrastructure. At home, few Russians own a personal computer; in fact, only two percent of the population own a computer, have a phone line, and access to the World Wide Web (WWW).³⁴ So, it is important that Russian schools, libraries, and businesses provide such access. For universities, Federal Centre for Computer University Networks (RUNNet) provides reliable (i.e., good, if not speedy) Internet connections to the rest of the world. “The network development, operations and maintenance (sic) are supervised by Federal Centre RUNNet (Federal Centre for Computer University Networks) under the contract from the Ministry of Education of [the] Russian Federation;” see <http://www.informika.ru/eng/>. The

Table 4
Cross-Disciplinary Courses for a Proposed Faculty of Information Studies

Discipline	Potential Courses
Business Administration (including mass communications)	Advertising in a marketing system; public relations; international relations; organizational theory
Economics	Russia and the global economy; project management
Information Technology	Introduction to computers, word processing, spreadsheets, databases
Computer Science	Applied software packages including PC business graphics; bank and library information systems; computer networks (Internet, Novell, Relcom); relational databases
English as a Foreign Language	American studies—language and culture and geography; business English; phonetics and pronunciation; reading analysis, along with abstract and annotation writing; theory of translation and ethics and etiquette

actual nodes in the Russian Far East are located at: 1) the Far Eastern State University, and 2) the Khabarovsk State Technical University.

On the other hand, the sad state of the current economy can explain why some Russian facilities, such as university buildings, are not in good repair.

Economic Factors

Overall, the economic factors appear to be guardedly optimistic: 1) the recent shift to a market economy; 2) government spending on transportation infrastructure; 3) federal reserves are at an all time high, and the Gross Domestic Product is up 6.8 percent over last year. Recently, Standard and Poor's upgraded their rating of the Russian Federation's projected economy.

Despite a shift from a centralized to market economy (or, what some have called a move from Marxism-Leninism to Chaos-Capitalism³⁵), Russians in the Far East still have China, Korea, and Japan as their primary trading partners. Understandably, much of the business in Vladivostok focuses on its 70,000 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEUs) local cargo hub, especially container traffic for the Trans-Siberian railroad. The port serves fishing companies (second only to Japan, Russia is the largest producer of fish in the world),³⁶ a military complex as well as passenger ports and the extensive ship repair trades. Timber and mining are significant economic components and customs is an important governmental activity. These activities suggest the need for a particular kind of librarian or information professional.

According to *EB Online*, Khabarovsk's industries "include a wide range of engineering and machine-building industries, oil refining, timber working, furniture making, and many light industries" while the *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* says that Khabarovsk has "oil refineries, shipyards, wood processing plants, and factories that produce farm machinery, trucks, aircraft, diesel engines, machine tools, and consumer goods." Environmental issues, such as forest conservation and pollution, and their attendant costs must be considered.³⁷ For example, effluents have caused the Vladivostok's Bay not to freeze in recent years.

One visible economic shift in recent years is the relatively good state of road repair and the large number of right-hand cars imported directly from Japan; interestingly, there are no advertisements for the Russian four-wheel drive vehicles such as the Lada Niva or the UAZ's "Kozël" GAZ (sure-footed goat), but the Mitsubishi Pajero for \$7,800 or American Jeep Wrangler for \$6,950 is available.³⁸ At the same time, however, the Vladivostok city government owed the monopoly power company so much in back fees that the coal-fired state-owned power company³⁹ with its four generating plants has turned power off, in a series of rolling blackouts, to its own paying citizens, so that people have been going to bed in their clothes for several recent winters. In the winter of 2000/2001, the coal-mining town of Kemerovo in south-central Russia recorded minus seventy-one Celsius (i.e., -95.8 Fahrenheit) and Khabarovsk reported twenty deaths due to the cold.⁴⁰ A fortunate few have oil heaters or homemade coal burners, and the fewer still go to the woods to cut their own firewood for their kitchen's potbellied stoves.⁴¹ The 2001/2002 winter seems to have been as bad as the previous year; Dalen-ergo reports "it has only 40 percent of the needed coal reserve {while} the local authority says it lacks 1.3 billion roubles (\$45m) to get ready for the winter."⁴²

On the other hand, one of the Soviet achievements in the 20th century will be nearly universal higher education and extremely high literacy rates. Nonetheless, post-perestroika changes are occurring—for instance, many university students now pay tuition; in some universities the split approaches 50 percent scholarship versus 50 percent commercial students. Housing in campus dormitories is comparatively low cost and, interestingly, college textbooks can be borrowed from the respective university library, which has a textbook department.

The local library economy is not strong. According to a recent directory, there are more than sixty libraries in the Vladivostok region alone including twelve vocational college libraries, eleven technical libraries, and eleven academic libraries.⁴³ However, librarian salaries are low, but well above the minimum monthly salary of \$4.74 set by President Vladimir Putin. A typical university librarian might earn 1,000 to 1,200 rubles (the equivalent of \$34–\$41) per month, a public librarian perhaps more, but even a head librarian might make only 5,000 rubles (i.e., \$172). By comparison, a prosperous businessperson in Vladivostok might make \$1,000 per month or more. In other words, the economic challenge to the federal government is to provide better support to libraries or else stagnate.

At the national level, much of Russia's recent good economic fortune depends on higher oil prices (although pincushion drilling in Siberia reduces cheap recovery); foreign reserves, estimated at 24.6 billion dollars, are at an all time high, but consumer prices are almost 24 percent over last year.⁴⁴ However, the centralized command and economic control has been missing since perestroika; Vladivostok is 9,301 kilometers from Moscow, so Moscow plays a somewhat lesser economic role today than in the more recent past.

Political Factors

The constraints appear to include: 1) a *bespredel* attitude; 2) widespread corruption; and 3) lack of autonomy. The good news is: 1) that the region is a long way from Moscow, and 2) autonomy seems to be increasing so that personal initiative may be allowed to develop.

Under the Soviet system, universities possessed little autonomy; Moscow made centralized decisions. In fact, “compared with the Soviet era, most people can choose where they work and live, travel abroad, meet foreigners, try to get rich without being punished for it, worship freely, set up political parties, and complain individually or with others about most of the country's plentiful problems. Some can even send their children to private schools.”⁴⁵ The result is substantially increased university autonomy.

Yet, a 1920s Chicago-style kind of corruption seems rampant and the political influence of robber baron capitalism—Mafiosi, a loosely net social group of corrupt workers and officials—still seems widespread.⁴⁶ The situation in Moscow is well laid out in a recent issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* and if the reader is looking for book-length treatments, Braithwaite and Talbott have been well received.⁴⁷ For example, in the Russian Far East not so long ago *The Economist* called the Primorskii governor, Evgeny Nazdratenko, a “rotten governor.”⁴⁸ In the wake of the worst bad weather in more than a decade, the current energy crisis, and poor economic

planning, Nazdratenko resigned as the regional governor in early 2001. Many of the intelligentsia seem to think that no one is in charge, that there are no checks and balances, and that no one reports to the public—an attitude called *bespredel* in Russian. Without a doubt, though, profound political changes are afoot from greater freedom from a central government—this region is a long way from Moscow.

Environmental and Ecological Factors

The two-headed eagle (see figure 1), the Russian national symbol dating to Ivan III, captures the ambivalence of Russia's attitudes—look west or to the east?

Historically, Russia missed the Enlightenment and the Reformation while protecting all of Europe from successive Mongol-Tartarian invasions, and sees itself playing a unique role in the world—superpower to “safeguard world peace.”⁴⁹ Russian librarians and educators are joining the world community rather than limiting their contact with the outside. Hence, they too are beginning to “Think globally, but act locally.” They understand that information age means that they must retrain librarians and recruit a new generation capable of thinking for themselves, who are industrious and not lazy, who are bright, not stupid. Yet, there are others, neo-isolationists, who would argue that Russia should go its own way—that *Novinka prinosit bedstvie* (i.e., “Novelty brings calamity”)—and that Russia must work things out for itself.

Strategic Options

An examination of table 5, which summarizes the STEPE analysis, reveals that Russia faces eleven identifiable constraints as well as ten opportunities that may enhance the development of LIS programs in the Far East. Understandably, many of the STEPE factors inter-relate: low population growth relates to lowered economic prospects that in turn influence potential technological developments. As an outside observer, it will be interesting to see what strategic options or action plans develop. Obviously, whatever response develops will fall within either of two extremes: 1) the temptation to do nothing given the staggering identifiable constraints, yet



Figure 1
Russian Eagle.

Table 5
Summary of the STEPE Analysis

Factors	Constraint	Enhancement
Social, Demographic, and Educational	Small population; lower fertility rate; higher death rate; low quality of life; no formal needs assessment	Well-educated population, especially in science and mathematics; universal education; high literacy rate
Technological Economic	Facilities development Low salaries of librarians	Reliable Internet access Shift to market economy; government spending on transportation; federal government reserves at all time high
Political	<i>Bespredel</i> ; corruption and lawlessness; historical lack of autonomy	Long distance from Moscow; increasing autonomy
Ecological or Environmental	Isolationist attitude; superpower ambitions	Global community attitude

2) large opportunities to make a difference in the Russian Far East given the stunning enhancements present.

Conclusions

In summary, this article has articulated the most likely limitations as well as enhancements in the future by 1) presenting a brief case study of several universities in the Russian Far East, and 2) a STEPE analysis of the constraints and opportunities available. The Russian Far East evidences strong social and cultural values related to higher education, which should continue for some time. Their economic environment should improve given the shift to a market economy, and especially when banks provide more services and the government loosens currency exchange regulations. And the political stability seems to be improving, although, crime and law enforcement concerns still exist. As described above, the natural environment is rather harsh and the risk of natural disasters is present. Candidly speaking, of course, uncertainty always arises from the inability to predict any of these outcomes confidently. And as mentioned above, the world is multivariate, and these STEPE factors interrelate. Nonetheless, we can wish our LIS colleagues in the Russian Far East, the best of success and hope that Vladivostok lives up to its literal name: “Proprietor of the East.”

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