The Bristol UK-Russia Research Symposium

Friday 19 & Saturday 20 January, 2018
At the George White Suite, The Bristol Hotel, Prince Street, Bristol, BS1 4QF

Bridging scholars of Russian culture, history and society in the UK and Russia

Sponsored by the British Academy with additional support from the University of Bristol

The UK-Russia Research Symposium is designed to bring together emerging and experienced researchers in Russian Studies (in disciplines including literature, linguistics, history, film, cultural studies, as well as political and social sciences) alongside academics working inside Russia. The symposium aims to build bridges between scholars in the two countries at a time when international relations have been challenging and some have talked of a ‘new Cold War’. The conference provides an opportunity to share research expertise, to examine the challenges and opportunities of transnational collaboration, and to create new networks that may form the basis of shared future projects and grant bids.

The conference is organized by Connor Doak from the University of Bristol, Claire Shaw from the University of Warwick, and Margarita Vaysman of the University of St. Andrews.

We are grateful to the British Academy, who have funded this symposium through an Rising Stars Engagement Award, and to the University of Bristol who have provided operational support.

We invite delegates to tweet the symposium using #BristolRussian. Follow the Bristol Russian Department @bristolruucz for updates and tweets.
Symposium Programme

Friday 19 January

12:00 – 12:50
Arrival, registration and lunch (provided)

12:50 – 13:00
Opening remarks
Connor Doak (University of Bristol)

13:00 – 14:00
Academies without Borders: Working Between Cultures
Opening keynote by Catriona Kelly (University of Oxford)

14:15 – 15:45
Russian Religious Culture

Words for ‘Sodomy’ in Muscovite and Imperial Russia
Nick Mayhew (University of Cambridge)

Religion and the Poetic Imagination in 1970s Russia
Josephine von Zitzewitz (University of Bristol)

Holy Quarter: Reshaping Urban Landscapes in Post-Secular Russia
Jeanne Kormina (National Research University, Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg)

Discussant: Ruth Coates (University of Bristol)
Chair: Margarita Vaysman (University of St Andrews)

15:45 – 16:00
Tea and coffee

16:00 – 17:30
Russian Literature and Society

Pin-Up Queer: Cavalry Maiden Durova As A Patriotic Icon
Margarita Vaysman (University of St Andrews)

Redressing the Balance: Reconsidering the Meaning of Futurist Costume
Jamie Rann (University of Birmingham)

Discussant: Maria Maiofis (Higher School of Economics, Moscow)
Chair: Rajendra Chitnis (University of Bristol)

17:45 – 19:15
Reading by Margarita Meklina with accompaniment by Maja Elliott

Margarita Meklina was born in St. Petersburg, Russia and now lives in Dublin, Ireland. She writes in Russian and English. Her work won a number of awards, including the Andrei Bely Prize in 2003 for her short story collection Battle at St. Petersburg and the 2008 Russian Prize for My Criminal Connection to Art. Her most recent work, A Sauce Stealer, came out in 2017 with New York publisher Spuyten Duyvil.

Maja Elliott trained as a concert pianist, composer and singer at the Guildhall School of Music in London. She has composed, played and improvised for documentaries and films, most recently for a short film starring Patrick Bergin called ‘Native.’ With Margarita Meklina, she played and composed music-to-text in Russia, Sweden and Ireland. She has played and toured internationally with David Tibet of ‘Current 93’ and Anohni, who wrote, ‘Maja Elliott’s playing has touched me. She is so expressive, holding notes in fearless witness to subtle emotions.’

19.45
Conference Dinner at the Jetty Restaurant, Harbour Hotel
Saturday 20 January

09:00 – 10:30
Digital Humanities / Digital Cultures Workshop
co-led by Seth Bernstein (Higher School of Economics, Moscow) and Vlad Strukov (University of Leeds)

10:30 – 10:45
Tea and Coffee

10:45 – 12:15
Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Russian Society and Culture
‘Hating War, He Must Spare No Effort to Defend Peace’: Masculinity, War, and Peace in the Early Cold War Era.
Claire McCallum (University of Exeter)
‘I just don’t want to connect my life with this occupation’: Working-class young men, manual labour, and social mobility in contemporary Russia
Charlie Walker (University of Southampton)

The Sexual History of Russian Migration
Philippa Hetherington (UCL School for Slavonic and East European Studies)

Discussant: Jeanne Kormina (St Petersburg HSE)
Chair: Claire Shaw (University of Warwick)

12:15 – 13:00
The Concept of Domestication: New Tools for the Analysis of Soviet Children's Culture
Lunchtime keynote by Professor Maria Maiofis, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

13:00 – 14:00
Lunch (provided)

14:00 – 15:30
Soviet History and Culture
The politics of national history: Russia and the centenary of 1917
James Ryan (Cardiff University)

Claire Shaw (University of Warwick)

Inventing Soviet rock stardom during stagnation
Polly McMichael (University of Nottingham)

Discussant: Pavel Vasilyev (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute)
Chair: Josephine von Zitzewitz (University of Bristol)

15:30 – 15:45
Tea and coffee

15:45 – 16:45
Film History in Russia: Archives, Libraries, People
Petr Bagrov (Writer and film historian)

16:50 – 17:50
The French Language in Imperial Russia: A Transnational Project
Closing keynote by Derek Offord (University of Bristol) and Gesine Argent (University of Edinburgh)

17:50 – 18:00
Closing Remarks
Connor Doak (University of Bristol) and Claire Shaw (University of Warwick)

Abstracts are available on the pages that follow
Abstracts

Academies without Borders: Working Between Cultures
Catriona Kelly (University of Oxford)

Opening Keynote (Friday 1-2pm)

This keynote address, based on experience of working in (and between) academic cultures in Russia and the UK over many years, considers the challenges and rewards of attempting to build genuine collaboration that does not assume the necessary superiority of either side. As the geopolitical weather worsens, such partnerships become all the more important, and I hope to discuss how we can avoid returning to the parallelism and non-dialogue of the Cold War even as political exchanges start to resemble those of the past.

Words for ‘Sodomy’ in Muscovite and Imperial Russia
Nick Mayhew (University of Cambridge)

Russian Religious Culture (Friday 2.15-3.45 pm)

Historians of gender and sexuality in the Latinate Kingdoms have problematised the idea that ‘sodomite’ functioned as a synonym for ‘homosexual’, showing that ‘sodomy’ connoted a broad range of sexual sins. In the Russian context, by contrast, words now typically translated as ‘sodomy’—variations on sodomskii grekh and muzhelozhstvo—have been understood to refer unambiguously to same-sex activity. This view has been supported by the Russian Orthodox Church and put forward by conservative politicians as proof of a longstanding Russian ‘tradition’ of homophobia. This paper explores how terms for ‘sodomy’ were used in Muscovite canon law and anti-sodomy tracts, and then in Imperial law. It suggests that unambiguous readings of ‘sodomy’ as ‘homosexuality’ stem from contemporary prejudice, and that neither sodomskii grekh nor muzhelozhstvo had a fixed meaning.
Religion and the Poetic Imagination in 1970s Russia
Josephine von Zitzewitz (University of Bristol)

Russian Religious Culture (Friday 2.15 – 3.45 pm)

Much of 1970s Russian samizdat poetry, especially poetry written in Leningrad, featured religious imagery, most of it recognisably Christian. It is easy to ascribe the proliferation of Biblical references to the newfound fascination with Orthodoxy in unofficial intellectual circles, evident from numerous ‘kruzhki’ devoted to aspects of Russia’s religious heritage. While individual poets’ faith journeys certainly influenced their writing, such a reading is simplistic and belittles the literary dimension of the phenomenon.

In his 1961 poem ‘Christmas Romance’, Joseph Brodsky described his generation as experiencing an ‘inexplicable longing’ that was essentially metaphysical and at the same time a ‘longing for world culture’ beyond the spatial confines of the Soviet Union and the present time period. Their quest to still this longing led the young poets towards the Russian literary tradition of the Silver Age and beyond.

Inhabiting Orthodox Russia: Orthodox Nomadism and the Puzzle of Belonging
Jeanne Kormina (HSE St Petersburg)

Russian Religious Culture (Friday 2.15 – 3.45 pm)

According to a survey conducted in November 2013 by the Levada-Center (a Russian nongovernmental polling organization), while 68 percent of respondents across Russia identified themselves as religious and Orthodox, 62 percent of those Orthodox Christians claimed they had never taken communion.

There are many ways to interpret this data. Church representatives would criticize the majority, who are not churchgoers, for not being true Christians and for merely roaming around the church instead of being in the church. Some analysts suggest that Orthodoxy in Russia is understood by many as a sort of official state religion, which helps people identify themselves with the Russian nation or Russian ethnicity but which, in fact, no longer has anything to do with lived religion, as it does not provide people with potential opportunities to have religious experiences. However, as a social researcher I take this data as an intellectual challenge. Where, for example, are those who state that they are Orthodox Christians and believers? If we take their statement of belonging to the church seriously, we can formulate a research problem in the following way: How do these people understand the idea of belonging to a church, and, more important, how do they practice their belonging? Furthermore, if we believe that they are believers, we have a chance to learn more about the fabric of religious life of a mainstream Orthodox person whose religion is culturally dominant in a post-Soviet, postsecular, and postmodern setting.

How do the majority of Orthodox people who are not churchgoers live their religious lives, and what concepts and practices of belonging to religious communities do they develop? To which religious communities do they belong? This alternate regime of belonging is developing alongside traditional modes of religious life within the framework of local, and originally peasant, parish communities; I will call it the nomadic religious regime. This religious regime will be the topic of the paper.
Pin-Up Queer: Cavalry Maiden Durova As A Patriotic Icon
Margarita Vaysman (University of St Andrews)

Russian Literature and Society (Friday 4.00 – 5.30pm)

The celebrated memoirs of Nadezhda Durova, a female cavalry officer who served in the Russian Army during the Napoleonic wars, have been popular with the readers since the moment of their publication in 1836. Published by Pushkin in Sovremennik, Durova’s Zapiski propelled her to fame and made her a welcome guest in the St Peters burg literary salons. Later on, in the twentieth century, with the inclusion of Zapiski into the school curriculum, the image of a brave female officer was used by the Soviet authorities to promote values of patriotism and service to the homeland. The 1962 Soviet musical Gussarskaia ballada, featuring the character of Porutchik Rzhveskii, one of the most popular heroes of Soviet anecdotes, transformed the narrative of Durova’s military adventures into a love story and glossed over any controversial issues of gender normatively raised in Durova’s original text. Thanks to the lasting popularity of the film, Durova remains a familiar character to the contemporary Russian audiences but recently there has been a surge of renewed interest in Durova’s literary and material legacy, due to the recent militarisation of public discourse in contemporary Russia. This paper will discuss the most recent instances of revising Durova’s autobiographical narrative in Russia, including the re-publication of her texts, museum exhibitions and commemorative events (the dedication of new monuments, issue of commemorative coins, etc.). Combining an analysis of recent local history studies texts from Elabuga, the home of Durova’s literary museum, with an exploration of commercial use of Durova’s image by the Russian tourist and food industry, this paper will approach the problem of the reception Durova’s legacy from the point of view of queer theory and celebrity studies.

Redressing the Balance: Reconsidering the Meaning of Futurist Costume
Jamie Rann (University of Birmingham)

Russian Literature and Society (Friday 4.00 – 5.30pm)

Scholars have long acknowledged the contribution of the Russian Futurists to the development of performance art and drawn attention to the parallels between the Futurists’ linguistic challenge to preconceived notions of sense and good order, notably in the non-semantic poetry zaum’, and their use of stunts and outlandish clothes to challenge contemporary mores. However, this equation, while undoubtedly justified, frequently overlooks the complexities of both zaum’ and the semiotics of Futurist costume. In this paper, I present a more nuanced view of the purposes and the meaning of Futurist dressing up and explore its relationship to zaum’. I argue that, just as the neologistic strategies of Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh reflect different attitudes to sign and signifier, so Futurist costume, in their performances and in their poetry, embodies two different attitudes to form and content – the more prominent ‘Kruchenykhian’ approach that embodies an urge to iconicity, abstraction and estrangement, and a ‘Khlebnikovian’ tendency to seek structure and harmony.
**Reading by Margarita Meklina, accompanied by Maja Elliott (Friday 5.45 – 7.15pm)**

**Margarita Meklina** was born in St. Petersburg, Russia and now lives in Dublin, Ireland. In Russia, she received the 2003 Andrei Bely Prize (Russia’s first independent literary prize, which enjoys a special reputation for honouring dissident and nonconformist writing) for her short story collection *Battle at St. Petersburg* (Moscow, NLO, 2003) and the 2008 Russian Prize, awarded by the Yeltsin Center Foundation, for her manuscript *My Criminal Connection to Art* (later published by ‘Russkii Gulliver’, 2012). In 2013 and in 2016, she was a finalist for the ‘Nonconformism’ prize given by Nezavisimaya Gazeta for her novellas *Cervix* and *Slony Gannibala*, and in 2014 she was short-listed for ‘NOS’, a prize given by the fund of Mikhail Prokhorov for ‘new social trends’ in literature, for her book *Vmeste so vsemi* (Moscow, EKSMO, 2014). She co-authored the epistolary novel *God na pravo perepiski* with poet Arkadii Dragomoschenko and completed a novel *The Little Gaucho Who Loved Don Quixote* (Black Wolf Edition & Publishing, Scotland, 2016). Translated into French and Swedish, two of her novellas are available as chapbooks *Poussière d’étoiles* (Etoiles, Paris, 2016) and *Linea Nigra* (Ars Interpres, Stockholm, 2017). Her new prose collection, *A Sauce Stealer*, was just published by NY Publisher Spuyten Duyvil. In Spain, her two novellas were also included in *El Armario de acero* (Dos Bigotes, 2014), an anthology of queer writing translated from Russian. In Russia she participated in many queer-themed literary anthologies published by KVIR (Moscow), and is currently assembling, with the American translator Annie Fisher, a portfolio from LGBT writers from Russia (to be translated to English). She writes in Russian and English.

**Maja Elliott** trained as a concert pianist, composer and singer at the Guildhall School of Music in London. She has composed, played and improvised for documentaries and films, most recently for a short film starring Patrick Bergin called ‘Native.’ She has performed and toured worldwide. With Margarita Meklina, she played and composed music-to-text in Russia, Sweden and Ireland. For ten years, she played and toured internationally with performance poet David Tibet of ‘Current 93’ and also Anohni, who wrote, ‘Maja Elliott’s playing has touched me. She is so expressive, holding notes in fearless witness to subtle emotions.’
Digital Cultures & Digital Humanities in Russia

Workshop (Saturday 9.00 – 10.30am)

Is there a Russian DH?
Seth Bernstein (HSE Moscow)
In the past ten years, Russian academia has become more internationalized. Compared to humanities departments in Anglo-American academia, however, Russian universities have only recently shown interest in digital humanities (DH) as so-called tsifrovye gumanitarnye nauki. Even at the start of 2018, only a handful of Russian universities will house DH centers. The absence of an institutional DH footprint in Russia, though, belies alternative forms and genealogies of digital work in academia and in para-academic settings. Exploring the development of Russian digital humanities work can reveal broader divides between Anglo-American and Russian academic cultures, and present opportunities for international cooperation.

Digital Contexts, or speaking in favour of a new project of resistance
Vlad Strukov (University of Leeds)
The project of digital cultures is linked – in name and purpose – to the project of cultural studies and its preoccupation with the question of power and the question of resistance. I argue that to read digital contexts is to resist the dominance of ‘big data’. To be precise, the notion of big data has been used to impose certain forms of culture, social conditions and political regimes, all conceptualised through and with the help of the language of hegemony understood in Gramscian (2011) and neo-Gramscian terms (see, for example, Apeldoorn 2004; Cohn 2010; Williams 2014). The workshop will include a discussion of this new project of resistance and a demonstration of some case studies.

‘Hating War, He Must Spare No Effort to Defend Peace’: Masculinity, War, and Peace in the Early Cold War Era.
Claire McCallum (University of Exeter)

Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Russian Society and Culture
(Saturday 10.45am – 12.15pm)

In January 1968, the popular women’s magazine Sovetskaia zhenshchina opened the proverbial can of worms when it launched its survey of what constituted the ‘Ideal Man’. The survey prompted more than 500 people from around the world to write to the magazine with their thoughts on the subject. From the selection that appeared in the magazine over the course of the next 12 months there was one striking quality that was singled out time and again: alongside being a hard worker, a loving father, and a caring husband, the ideal man was now someone who was completely committed to and actively working towards world peace.

Often thought of as a ‘women’s issue’, this paper will present some preliminary thoughts on the significance of peace to the conceptualisation of Soviet masculinity in the two decades following 1945. It will explore the relationship between the ideal of world peace and the shifting model of the New Soviet Man in the aftermath of the Great Patriotic War, examining how the fight for peace shaped not only the vision of the military hero presented in contemporary culture, but how it impacted upon other male identities as well, especially that of the father.
‘I just don’t want to connect my life with this occupation’: Working-class young men, manual labour, and social mobility in contemporary Russia
Charlie Walker (University of Southampton)

_Article Title_ (Saturday 10.45am – 12.15pm)

A key strand in the Western literature on working-class masculinities focuses on whether young men are capable of the feminized performances apparently required of them in new service economies. However, the wider literature on processes of neoliberalization – emphasizing the ‘hollowing out’ of labour markets, the cultural devaluation of lower-skilled forms of employment, and the pathologization of working-class lives – would suggest that it is as much a classed as a gendered transformation that is demanded of young men leaving school with few qualifications. This dimension of neoliberalization is highlighted by ethnographic data exploring the experiences and subjectivities of young workers in St. Petersburg, Russia, where traditional forms of manual labour have not given way to ‘feminized’ work, but have become materially and symbolically impoverished, and are perceived as incapable of supporting the wider transition into adult independence. In this context, young workers attempt to emulate new forms of ‘successful masculinity’ connected with novel service sector professions and the emergent higher education system, despite the unlikelihood of overcoming a range of structural and cultural barriers. These acquiescent, individualized responses indicate that, while ways of being a man are apparently being liberated from old constraints amongst the more privileged, neoliberalization narrows the range of subject positions available to working-class young men.

The Sexual History of Russian Migration
Philippa Hetherington (UCL-SSEES)

_Article Title_ (Saturday 10.45am – 12.15pm)

In recent years, scholars of contemporary migration and historians of migration in the British Empire and the Americas have examined the ways in which discourses of sexual 'deviance' were used historically to bolster regimes immigration restriction and to manage and channel migration flows in particular and nationally contingent ways. However, thus far this scholarship has not touched on Russia, or the sexual histories of Russian migration. This paper will examine some of the ways in which particular ideas about (in)appropriate sexuality framed and infused efforts to securitise the Russian border and prevent mass emigration in the late imperial period. It will draw in particular on research from my forthcoming book _Circulating Subjects: The Traffic in Women and the Russian Construction of an International Crime_, but it will also look beyond attempts to prevent trafficking to think more broadly about regimes of migratory prostitution, cross-border marriage, and the sexualisation of the male migrant to interrogate the relationship between sex and migration management in Russian history.
The Concept of Domestication: New Tools for the Analysis of Soviet Children's Culture
Maria Maiofis (HSE Moscow)

Lunchtime Keynote (Saturday 12.15pm – 1pm)

The concept of domestication is commonly interpreted according to its two basic meanings: 1) as a synonym of ‘taming’ when we describe how wild animals and plants were (and still are) domesticated by humans; 2) (in media studies) as a synonym of adapting and adjusting to the structure and interface of new digital devices. These two meanings and their semantic contexts can serve as descriptions of two Soviet strategies of cultural interaction with ‘strange,’ ‘new,’ ‘unknown,’ ‘foreign’ phenomena. The first approach implied thorough work of the author (translator, journalist, film director, actor, etc.) and, as its direct consequence, quick perception and adaptation of the ‘strange’ and ‘foreign’ elements by the audience. The second was not so widespread, it was presumed that the ‘strange’ and the ‘other’ would be discerned and represented in a penetrating image, no matter how ‘unknown,’ ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘uncanny’ it was. The presentation will be focused on the special traits of the first and the second approaches, on the strong connection of the first approach with the collective emotion of ‘Soviet nostalgia’, and, last but not least, on the significant shift made by Russian culture of the 2000s and 2010s towards the second strategy of adapting and adjusting. We can suggest that in recent years Russian children’s culture has undergone an essential transformation, as the latter strategy demands thorough inner work not only from the author but also from the audience.

The politics of national history: Russia and the centenary of 1917
James Ryan (University of Cardiff)

Soviet History and Culture (Saturday 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

The focus of this paper will be the approach of the Russian state to the challenges of commemorating the centenary of the Russian revolutions of 1917, at precisely a time when the Russian state has been acting as a bulwark against revolutionary situations in Ukraine and Syria, and has been attempting to undercut the bases for upheaval at home in Russia itself. The central questions that I want to address are the following: What do we learn about the mindset of Russia’s ruling elite through examination of their approach to the centenary? (And) How does their representation of their country’s past reflect the concerns and policies of the state today? We will see that it is possible to identify a particular, statist approach of the Russian elite to the centenary, based primarily on stressing the dangers of revolution, the idea of the historic continuity of the Russian state through modern Russian history, and the importance of a strong Russian state. We will also see that the state has avoided attempts to silence more pluralistic voices, and indeed that it appears committed to respect the independence of professional historians. However, the approach of the state is not without tensions and contradictions.
Claire Shaw (University of Warwick)

Soviet History and Culture (Saturday 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

This paper explores the dissemination and reception of Soviet visions of deafness in the World Federation of the Deaf, a global advocacy body formed after the end of the Second World War. The WFD was conceived as a forum in which a globalised and unified understanding of deafness – and of the social support needed by deaf people – could be conceived and advertised to the world at large. In the context of the Cold War, however, the WFD became a battle ground on which competing notions of welfare, utility and deaf identity played out. As the USSR advertised itself as the most ‘humane’ place in the world to be deaf, its fear of consumerist and technology-driven models of the Western deaf self led to the denigration of some of the fundamental tenets of Soviet deaf identity.

This paper thus explores how a supposedly ‘neutral’ global forum fostered and amplified ideological divisions, and led to fundamental misunderstandings of Soviet deafness on the world stage. The paper will also consider the legacy of this international deaf miscommunication, for Russian deaf people today, and for those who seek to write their history.

Inventing Soviet rock stardom during stagnation
Polly McMichael (University of Nottingham)

Soviet History and Culture (Saturday 2.00pm – 3.30pm)

This paper examines Soviet rock musicians’ sense of themselves and as public figures during stagnation. In lyrics, writings and performances Moscow and Leningrad musicians represented themselves as followers of a form that transcended material and social concerns (rock music as ideal, or as essential drive). Going against the grain of this quasi-spiritual interpretation of involvement in rock music, though, is a curiously prominent evocation of the notion of fame, and particularly its ‘dark side’ – the pressures of commercial success, the trappings of wealth, etc. I argue that such discussion should be interpreted partly as a mimetic/parodic reflection on the figure of the rock star in the West (informed by a characteristically Soviet view of popular music and its dangers) and partly as a response to social pressures as rock music began to transcend narrow social circles. The imagined figure of the rock musician that emerges from meditations on fame and stardom in rock culture is very different from the image constructed of rock musicians as public figures during perestroika, but its influence can be traced in rock culture up to the end of the Soviet era and beyond.
Film History in Russia: Archives, Libraries, People
Petr Bagrov (Writer and film scholar)

Workshop (Saturday 3.45pm—4.45pm)

Researching Russian film history poses challenges even for the most seasoned scholar. Film history in Russia can be divided into three periods: the pre-Soviet years (1896-1919), the Soviet years (1918-1991) and the post-Soviet years (1991—until present). Each requires an entirely different approach. This workshop will discuss the possibilities of using both archival sources and oral history in film research.

The archives of most of the early Russian filmmakers are lost – so one has to rely on the (not very reliable) memoirs and trade press. While the latter is properly catalogued and easily accessible, the former are scattered around various libraries, archives and even private collections. While Soviet film history has been a trend for decades, it is remarkable how many essential figures and films have never been properly researched, either by Russian or by foreign scholars. The reason for that is a lack of proper source studies. There is a large variety of most useful periodicals which are rarely accessed by researchers. As are some of the public archives – there are popular ones, such as RGALI and Gosfilmofond of Russia, and yet there are almost century-old collections that only few scholars are aware of.

A vitally important source is oral history. In an ideology-driven country one cannot put full trust in written documents. Very often memoirs – especially oral ones, the ones not intended for publication – prove to be a much more reliable source. Interviews provide another valuable source of information. Yet a research interview requires careful preparation and asking the right questions.

Perhaps surprisingly, the post-Soviet years perhaps represent the most complicated case of all. With companies opening and closing down constantly throughout the last quarter of a century, it is extremely difficult to trace documents. Even films are not always preserved; the survival status of post-Soviet film heritage is depressingly low.

The French Language in Imperial Russia: A Transnational Project
Derek Offord (University of Bristol) and Gesine Argent (University of Edinburgh)

Closing Keynote (Saturday 4.50 – 5.50pm)

This project, funded by the AHRC from 2011 to 2015, will come to an end with the publication in 2018 of an overarching book co-authored by Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski and Gesine Argent. The project itself has been transnational, involving publication of outputs from over 40 scholars from more than a dozen countries and other multinational collaboration. Its subject-matter has been transnational in the sense that it investigates the integration of the Russian court, nobility, literary community and intelligentsia into the European political, social and cultural landscape from the early eighteenth century to the revolutions of 1917, focusing on the role of language use – especially Franco-Russian bilingualism but also broader knowledge of foreign languages – in this process. We have examined the attention paid in pre-revolutionary Russia to the teaching and learning of French, the use of French at court and its functions in high society, the diplomatic service and other branches of administration. Next, we have surveyed both the large corpus of Russian writing in French, which extends from nobles’ personal correspondence, through many forms of ego-writing to women’s prose fiction, and Russians’ use of French as an international language of cultural propaganda, historiosophical speculation and political polemic. We have considered language attitudes, especially the prolonged debate from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth about language choice. We also discuss the treatment of Russian francophonie in the classical Russian novel. This presentation will end with reference to flaws which our findings expose in influential narratives about language use in pre-revolutionary Russia and about the history of Russian culture, especially narratives about Russian exceptionalism and about the supposed ‘binary oppositions’ detected between ‘Russia’ and ‘Europe’ and between Russia’s own constituent parts.