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Illinois Wesleyan Scholars Travel to Russia for Children's Conference

Sept. 20, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan's Isaac Funk Professor and Professor of Russian Studies Marina Balina, will lead a multi-disciplinary delegation of faculty members from Wesleyan, Illinois State and the University of Illinois on a weeklong conference to Russia, where they will discuss global children's issues. The group leaves on Sept. 23 for Moscow and St. Petersburg for their second international colloquium with prominent Russian scholars.



Isaac Funk Professor Marina Balina (far right) was one of the translators when Russian scholars visited Illinois Wesleyan in 2010.

The conference, titled "Transforming Childhood," is the second organized by Balina, who has written extensively on Soviet-era children's literature and modern Russian life. The colloquium is supported, in part, through funds provided by the Funk Foundation endowed professorship she holds. This second gathering will build on the dialog that began in September 2010 when eight Russian scholars from several of that country's most prominent institutions visited Illinois Wesleyan.



Professor Vitaly Bezrogov (left) joins a discussion led by Associate Professor of History April Schultz (right).

"The significance of this project is that it unites scholars from three institutions across a number of disciplines in the social science and humanities, who deal with issues of childhood in one way or another," said Balina.

"An important product of this two year program, besides sharing our work at the colloquium, will be a volume titled 'Constructing Childhood' that will be published by the Russian State University for the Humanities. This new volume will include our collective research and papers, along with other noteworthy works by colleagues who were unable to attend this year's colloquium."

Other Illinois Wesleyan faculty participating in the conference include:

- Irv Epstein, associate dean of the faculty and professor of educational studies;
- Rebecca Gearhart, chair of sociology/anthropology and associate professor of anthropology;
- William Munro, professor of political science;
- April Schultz, chair and associate professor of history; and,
- Scott Sheridan, chair and associate professor of French and Italian studies;

Also presenting at the colloquium will be Karen Coats, professor of English at Illinois State who is an authority on children's literature, and Deborah Stevenson, director for the Center for Children's Books at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The group will be meeting with Russian colleagues from Moscow's Russian State University for the Humanities, St. Petersburg State University for Culture and Arts, and the European University in St. Petersburg.

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