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Funk Professorship Re-established After 86-Year Absence

June 8, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan University President Richard F. Wilson announced that Professor of Russian Studies Marina Balina has been appointed to the Isaac Funk Professorship, a title that has not been given since 1921.

Named in honor of one of the University's founders, the Isaac Funk Professorship was originally established in 1865—the first endowed professorship for the University. Instructors were named until funds were deemed no longer sufficient to maintain the professorship. In the fall of 2004, the Paul A. Funk Foundation made a major gift to re-establish the fund, with plans that the professorship would be awarded this spring.

"It is a priority of this University to build endowments to support faculty members and students, with generous support from donors such as the Paul A. Funk Foundation," said Wilson. "Dr. Balina's imaginative, innovative, and creative approach to teaching exemplifies an enduring commitment to education, which pays tribute to one of the founders of this University." The Isaac Funk Professorship is one of 11 endowed professorships at Illinois Wesleyan.

"This is a wonderful honor," said Balina, who will continue her pioneering work with Soviet and post-Soviet children's literature. "This will give me the opportunity to stimulate research for my students by taking them to various conferences and workshops, strengthen my international contacts, and invite more renowned speakers to campus to offer our students diverse educational experiences."

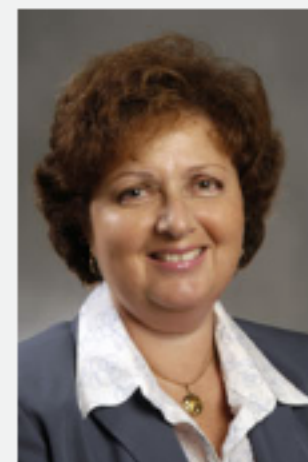
A native of Russia who earned her doctorate at Leningrad State University (now St. Petersburg), Balina joined IWU's faculty in 1989 and is a member of the University's Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures.

A former chair for her department at Illinois Wesleyan, Balina teaches the Russian language and has helped shape the department's curriculum. She leads travel courses to Russia and Eastern Europe and contributes to the offerings in Literature and Culture in English Translation by teaching such popular courses on campus as *Fairy Tales of the 20th Century*, *Dangerous Texts: Russian Literature and Politics*, *Yiddish Culture of Eastern Europe* and *Russian Women in Literature and Film*.

A prolific author, Balina has published 23 articles and five books in three languages—Russian, German and English—and earned an international reputation for work with Soviet literature. She was recently the invited speaker at an international symposium at Lund University, Sweden.

Balina has been the recipient of grants from the U.S. Department of Education, the Austrian Ministry of Culture, the American Association of Learned Societies, the National Endowment of Humanities and the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies of the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

Balina has a long history of dedication to her students, and was recently named the recipient of the 2008 *Pantagraph Award* for Teaching Excellence at Illinois Wesleyan.



Marina Balina

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