
From the Editors

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We will soon be living in the second quarter of the twenty-first century. Our journal only came into digital being in December 2013, at what, in hindsight, was a pivotal moment in our field. We were excited—somewhat naïvely no doubt—about the trajectory of our discipline. Increased scholarly mobility and interactions enabled us to undertake research, attend conferences and seminars, and to collaborate with colleagues from across the globe. To be sure, the financial shockwaves of the Great Recession of 2008 were felt in our field of study. Yet, the technological advances that occurred in the first decade of the twenty-first century seemed to open new vistas in which we would be able to connect with a community of scholars, wherever they were based, via the medium of an open-access journal on the Internet that would be free and *freely* accessible.

The initial announcement regarding the establishment of such a journal was sent out to members of the Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies Association (ECRSA) in 2011. As Gary Marker, one of the journal's co-founders, points out in his contribution to the present volume, that announcement emphasized the editors' intention to include contributions relevant to "the entire Imperial space as it was in the eighteenth century." Yet, the original title of our journal—*Vivliofika: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies*—did not indicate this fact as clearly and as unambiguously as we assumed it did. For two years, we worked tirelessly, and at times cluelessly, to publish the inaugural issue of the journal, which appeared online in December 2013 as seismic demonstrations were unfolding in and around Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv. The subsequent events that transpired in 2014 shocked us, but we must admit that we did not fully appreciate at that time the extent to which the regime of Vladimir Putin was seeking to shift geopolitical tectonic plates, first and foremost, at the expense of the Ukrainian people. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the military of the Russian Federation that began on February 24, 2022, jolted us permanently out of our own presupposed, but not fully articulated, approach to eighteenth-century studies. After consulting with our editorial board and more broadly with members of ECRSA, we decided unequivocally that a name change was long overdue – for both the journal and the academic association. Consequently, in 2023 ECRSA became the Eighteenth-Century Russian Empire Studies Association (ECRESA).

Now, as 2024 draws to a close, we publish our newest volume with a shortened title. We prefer the brevity of *Vivliofika*, as this name still honors our debt to the spirit of our eighteenth-century forerunner but jettisons the problematic and contentious sub-heading. Of course, we do not assume that by simply shortening the title of this journal that we have hit upon a solution to

¹ For an abridged version of this email, see Gary Marker's essay in this volume. Gary Marker, "Vivliofika and the World 2024," *Vivliofika* 12 (2024), 4-5.

the broader crisis that is currently affecting scholars who study the Russian Empire in the long eighteenth century. The need to decentralize and decolonize the historical study of this imperial space is something that we champion, yet it is a complex undertaking that warrants an open and honest conversation among all of us in the field. With this in mind, we thought it would be fitting to invite three eminent scholars in the field—Gary Marker, Gregory Afinogenov, and Volodymyr Sklokin—to contribute their thoughts on this topic at the beginning of this volume. Professor Marker recently retired from the State University of New York, Stony Brook and also stepped down from the editorial board of *Vivliofika*. We are delighted to announce that Volodymyr Sklokin has agreed to take his place on the board and to share his thoughts on the potential benefits of decolonizing our field of study. We also solicited the thoughts of Professor Afinogenov, who served as President of ECRSA between 2021-2023, and chaired the meeting at which the members of that scholarly association voted to formally rename it.

We are delighted that this volume contains contributions from scholars based in three continents (Europe, North America, and Oceania) and eight different countries (Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and the United States). We believe this broad mix of scholars—including one who has recently retired (Gary Marker) and one (Marie-Thérèse von Streng) who recently completed her graduate thesis at the Sorbonne under the supervision of Professor Rodolphe Baudin—continues our goal “to bring together scholars from all points in our scholarly galaxy.”² Last, we wish to thank Maria Candida Ghidini, who kindly agreed to write in honor of the memory of her colleague and friend, Michela Venditti.

² Marker, “*Vivliofika* and the World 2024,” 5.