

From the Editors

This year—2021—has proven to be very challenging, once again, for many of us in the relatively small and widely dispersed community of scholars of Imperial Russia’s long eighteenth century. Yet, despite the difficulties we have all faced due to the on-going COVID pandemic, we, the editors of *Вивлюєніка*, wish to champion what Samuel K. Cohn Jr. has referred to as “mechanisms for unity” within our own field of study.¹ In his recent monograph on the history of epidemics, Cohn emphasizes how societies throughout history have engaged in adaptive strategies to meet the new daily realities brought by the onset of contagions. This has proven to be the case in our community, too.

In January, for example, the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia (SGECR), which was established back in 1968, held its first-ever online meeting.² Many of us at this time were not able to socialize with people outside our immediate households, so the possibility for scholars from across the globe to meet at a virtual “Hoddesdon”—thanks largely to the efforts of Paul Keenan, SGECR’s Secretary—provided an intellectual salve. The 63rd Annual Meeting of SGECR will soon take place on Zoom once again, with scholars delivering papers from Australia, the United States, Russia, Austria, and Canada.³ Moreover, throughout the year, the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Moscow has organized an impressive array of online events, including several book launch presentations related to the history of Russia in the eighteenth century.⁴ Similarly, the Research Center on Early Modern Russian History at the National Research University – Higher School of Economics (HSE) in Moscow organized a series of online events, including a presentation of Paul Bushkovitch’s new book on succession in early modern Russia, which covers the period from the mid-fifteenth to the first quarter of the eighteenth century.⁵ These are just some of many similar online events that have allowed scholars of eighteenth-century Russia from around the globe to connect with one another in a positive and stimulating manner.

But Zoom and YouTube are not the only online vehicles facilitating community building and research on eighteenth century Russia. As Simon Burrows and Glenn Roe

¹ Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *Epidemics: Hate and Compassion from the Plague of Athens to AIDS* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 68-92.

² See the program of the 62nd Annual Meeting of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, 4-6 January 2021: <https://www.sgecr.co.uk/hoddesdon-2021.html>

³ The 63rd meeting of the Study Group will take place via Zoom between Wednesday 5 January and Friday 7 January 2022. There will be no cost for attending the 2022 meeting, although prospective participants will have to register for it. Details of this registration process will be circulated on the SGECR’s mailing list – they can also be provided by the organizer, [Paul Keenan](#).

⁴ Recordings of all online events can be streamed via the GHI’s own YouTube channel. See “German Historical Institute Moscow,” *YouTube*, accessed December 10, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/c/DHIMoskau/videos>.

⁵ Paul Bushkovitch, *Succession to the Throne in Early Modern Russia: The Transfer of Power 1450–1725* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). Additional talks on eighteenth century Russia are listed on the research center’s website: <https://hist.hse.ru/source/>.

have recently argued, the opportunities afforded by the remarkable advances in digital media technology in the twenty-first century have transformed the way we study the past, including the long eighteenth century.⁶ There is now even an open access portal to digital humanities (DH) projects for our period, called *The 18th-Century Common*.⁷ However, even a quick glance at this website reveals that Imperial Russia is poorly represented among the projects on display. And certainly not because there are no DH projects on the topic.

To draw attention to this lacuna, the present, ninth issue of *Вивлиоика: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* features a special section devoted to highlighting current DH projects within our area of study. Specifically, we wish to showcase three ongoing projects that utilize computational methods to provide researchers of eighteenth-century Russian history and culture with a means to discern historical patterns, relationships, and trends that would have otherwise been impossible to detect. First, Evgenii Anisimov describes the history and main features of *Itinera Petri: A Day-by-Day Bio-Chronicle of Peter the Great (1672-1725)*. This database, which is hosted by the St. Petersburg branch of HSE, will be of interest to scholars not only of Petrine Russia, but also early eighteenth-century Europe more generally. Second, Viktor Borisov and Elena Smilianskaia outline the key features of a database on “Russia in the Western European Press of the Eighteenth Century.” Hosted by HSE Moscow, this ambitious digital project publishes student translations of articles about Russia from selected eighteenth-century European newspapers and periodicals. As the project organizers demonstrate, a deep dive into early modern mass media reveals some interesting patterns in the circulation of knowledge about eighteenth-century Russia. Lastly, Sergey Polskoy and Vladislav Rjéoutski describe the “Corpus of Russian Translations of Social and Political Texts,” a digital project sponsored by the GHI in Moscow. This endeavor seeks to provide an online means of charting the process of the transfer, adaptation, and reception of the main European political ideas and concepts into Russia in the eighteenth century and, as such, serves as a contribution to both social, cultural, and conceptual history.

We are grateful to the chief editors of all three projects for the comprehensive overviews of the main features of their online databases, which we hope will inspire not only awe and admiration, but also friendly imitation. This is one, concrete way, that members of the eighteenth-century Russian studies community can demonstrate the resilience and innovation that sustains us and our field.

Another way that the editors hope to keep our community plugged into the latest developments in the study of Russia’s long eighteenth century is by instituting a new and, we hope, regular column of “Field Notes,” which debuts in this issue of *Вивлиоика*. The items published under this rubric will feature such pieces as Tat’iana Kostina’s summary of the conference papers presented at a recent panel devoted to foreign language acquisition and use in eighteenth-century Russia. In her contribution, the author helpfully supplements synopses of the presentations with bibliographic references to any relevant publications of each speaker, thereby allowing our journal’s

⁶ See Simon Burrows and Glenn Roe, “Introduction,” in *Digitizing Enlightenment: Digital Humanities and the Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, eds. Simon Burrows and Glenn Roe (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 19.

⁷ “Digital Humanities and 18th-Century Studies,” *The 18th-Century Common*, accessed December 10, 2021, <https://www.18thcenturycommon.org/collections/digital-humanities-18th-century-studies/>.

readers to follow up on the available literature, should they be interested in pursuing this topic further. Furthermore, thanks to the Zoom’s recording functionality, Kostina is also able to include what amounts to a *stenograficheskii otchet* of the discussion that followed each talk. In this way, even scholars who could not attend (virtually or in person) the conference at which this panel took place will be able to experience the back-and-forth of the spirited but friendly question-and-answer sessions that followed each of the presentations. We encourage our readers to submit other ideas for items that might find a place in *Вивліоѳика*’s “Fields Notes” directly to Vladislav Rjéoutski, the editor of the new feature.