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			Published by the Reading Primers Special Interest Group (RP-SIG) of the International Society for Historical and Systematic Research on Schoolbooks		

□ Editorial

Dear readers,

2010 has been another good year for our network: RP-SIG has grown in numbers, with members now in ten countries (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Russia and Spain), and the network could in many ways stimulate the exchange of information on textbooks for initial reading instruction and its study between different groups of actors and across academic disciplines.

Our sincere thanks go to all members and friends who have shared their knowledge by actively participating in this exchange, and this includes the contributors to the forth issue of RPI: *Juris Cibuls* (Latvia), *Wolfgang Fickert* (Germany), *Honoré Vinck* (Belgium) and *Joanna Wojdon* (Poland). We are particularly grateful to *Catriona Kelly*, Governing Body Fellow and Professor of Russian at New College, University of Oxford (UK) for acting as co-author of the report on the *Muzej "Alifba"* in Arsk/Tatarstan (Russia).

We look forward to your feedback and to your proposals for future issues of the newsletter.

December 21, 2010

Vitaly Bezrogov & Wendelin Sroka

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- **RP-SIG News**
- **Developments and plans**

RP-SIG Meeting in Ichenhausen, Bavaria (Germany), September 2010

The meeting was held on September 30, 2010, at the occasion of the Annual Conference of our parent organisation, the International Society for Historical and Systematic Research on Schoolbooks. The participants welcomed the activities of the network, especially the publication of the newsletter and of the planned international bibliography of studies on reading primers and elementary readers. Furthermore, the following issues were discussed and agreed:

Correspondents: RP-SIG will introduce a system of (National) Correspondents with the main objective to overcome language barriers. The main role of Correspondents will be to support specialists in their countries or linguistic communities who may not feel prepared to actively communicate in English to participate in the network's activities.

Institutional Membership: As of October 2010, RP-SIG offers membership also to organisations who share the aims and who are interested to participate in the activities of the network.

RP-SIG governance: The Provisional Executive Board with *Vitaly Bezrogov*, Moscow, and *Wendelin Sroka*, Bonn, as members of the board will continue its activities until the next RP-SIG meeting, i.e. in September 2011, the date of the Annual Conference 2011 of the Society for Research on Schoolbooks. This event will take place in Bozen (South Tyrol/ Italy).

Talk with Ushinski Library representatives, Moscow, November 2010

On November 8, 2010, *Vitaly Bezrogov* and *Wendelin Sroka* visited the Ushinsky State Scientific Pedagogical Library in Moscow, Russia's largest pedagogical library (<http://www.gnpbu.ru/>). Participants of a talk with representatives of the library about possibilities of co-operation in the future included *Anatoly Mihailovich Tsapenko*, deputy director, *Larisa Nikolaevna Averjanova*, scientific secretary and head of the rare books department, *Olga Vladimirovna Kabasheva*, head of the department for resource support and RP-SIG member *Galina Makarevich*, senior librarian.

RP-SIG session in Kazan, November 2010

An RP-SIG open session, chaired by *Vitaly Bezrogov* and *Alla Salnikova*, was held as part of the roundtable "Childhood in scientific, educational and artistic texts: efforts of comprehension and interpretation" on November 11, 2010 in Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan/Russia). The session attracted more than 20 scholars from Russian universities and research institutions, and the ideas and activities of RP-SIG were well received by the audience.

International bibliography of studies on reading primers and elementary readers

An agreement was reached in October 2010 between the MANES Research Centre, Madrid/Spain (www.uned.es/manesvirtual/ProyectoManes/index.htm), represented by the director of the Centre, Professor *Gabriela Ossenbach-Sauter* and by *Kira Mahamud Angulo*, and RP-SIG concerning cooperation in the bibliography project. The agreement regulates that MANES is an official collaborator of the bibliography, represented in the editorial board by *Kira Mahamud Angulo*.

The editors are grateful for advice received by *Anette Uphoff*, deputy director of the Georg Eckert Institute Library (Braunschweig, Germany) and by *Kathleen Reiss*, research fellow on the Edumeres project (the Information and Communication Platform for International Educational Media Research) at the Georg Eckert Institute, concerning the use of electronic tools in the preparation of the bibliography.

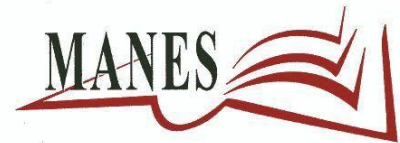
The new opportunities for the development of the bibliography have made it necessary to postpone the publication of the first version of the bibliography to spring 2011.

□ New RP-SIG members

New institutional member

MANES (<http://www.uned.es/manesvirtual/portalmunes.html>), the research centre on school textbooks, emerged in 1992 within the Department of History of Education and Comparative Education, in the Faculty of Education of the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia* (UNED) in Madrid, Spain. The Project responds to a new historiographical trend that gained relevance and strength in the early 1990s and that made it possible for historians to investigate the processes that have taken place over time within educational institutions. The need for access to new sources -such as school textbooks- in order to get closer, familiarize and examine the "school culture", is a consequence of this new stream of research.

Initially, the MANES project proposed extensive research on Spanish textbooks published between 1808 and 1990. For this purpose, two clearly distinct lines of action were drawn: on the one hand, to make primary sources available to researchers; on the other, to promote and publish historical research on textbooks from



the most diverse perspectives. From the beginning, the MANES project was designed with an interuniversity nature, and at present, it counts with 22 adhered universities and research centres from Spain, 6 from Europe, and 22 from Latin America. Thanks to these relationships with research centres in other countries, the project has also incorporated the study of textbooks in Portugal, Belgium, and Latin America.

As an institutional member of RP-SIG, MANES is represented by its director, Professor **Gabriela Ossenbach Sauter**. Mrs. *Ossenbach* is Professor of History of Contemporary Educational Systems at UNED. Her research work has focused on the origin and evolution of public educational systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from a comparative perspective, with special emphasis on Latin America. From this research field, she has actively contributed to the creation and academic organization of Ibero-American Congresses of History of Latin American Education, which are held biannually since 1992. As director of the MANES Research Centre she has coordinated and participated in a great number of national and international projects. She is an Editorial Board member, amongst others, of *Paedagogica Historica*, published by the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), of the *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society*, published by the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, and of *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação*, edited by *Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação*).

New individual members

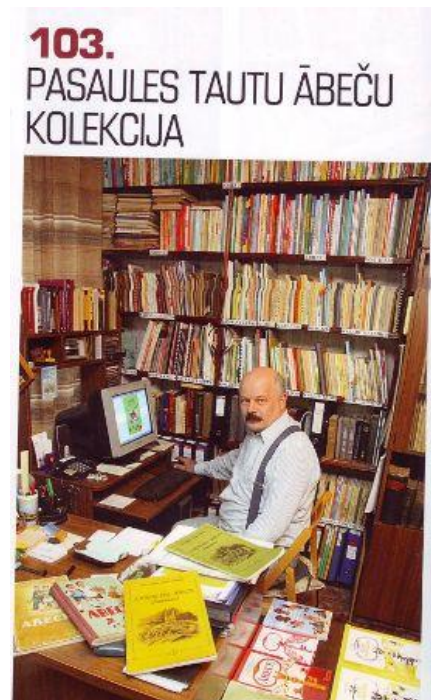
Kira Mahamud Angulo, Madrid (Spain) is assistant professor (*Profesora Ayudante*) at the Faculty of Education of the National University of Distance Education (UNED). She holds a BEd in primary education with a specialisation in English philology, a BA in philosophy and educational sciences with a specialisation in school counselling and an advanced Studies Diploma with a certification of research aptitude in theory and history of education. In 2007 she earned the Elisa Pérez Vera Prize (annual prize for research on gender). She has published, amongst others, on motherhood and the family in school textbooks published during the Franco dictatorship. Currently she is working on her PhD. Her research topics include: history of education, school culture, school textbooks, school exercise books, gender studies and sociology of emotions. E-Mail: kmahamud@edu.uned.es

Mare Mürsepp, Tallinn (Estonia) is associated professor at the Institute of Educational Sciences of the University of Tallinn and a member of the board of the Estonian Reading Association (*Eesti Lugesühing*). She has compiled, amongst others, the primer *Hubert teeb aabitsat ehk hiirepöegade seikused laias ilmas* (1994), and she has contributed to the virtual primer "Virbits" (<http://virbits.artun.ee/virbits-en.html>). Her doctoral thesis compared the image of the child in Estonian educational sciences and in children's books during the 20th century, and she is author of a monograph on beginning reading (*Laps on hakanud lugema* = The child is reading already). Her research interest is the cultural background reflected in school textbooks for the primary stage. E-Mail: mare.muursepp@tlu.ee

Tatyana Anatol'evna Vlasova, Dr. (*kandidat filosoofskih nauk*), Ishevsk (Russia, Udmurt Republic) is a lecturer at the Chair of Philosophy and Sociology of Culture of the Udmurt State University. She has authored a range of articles in visual studies, and she is co-author of the book "Research of Visual Aspects of the Culture" about family photo albums. Her current research project concerns the phenomenon of the school uniform. School uniform is submitted as a performance activity that is discussed in media, pictured in school textbooks and the way of interaction between parents, teachers and school students. Wearing school uniform is identified as a disciplinary practice, a method of manifestation of social inequality and an element of social aesthetics. E-mail: tavlasova@yandex.ru

▣ Members' news

Juris Cibuls' collection of reading primers from all over the world is presented in the new book *111 Privātie Muzeji un Kolekcijas Latvijā*, (111 Private Museums and Collections in Latvia), compiled by *Ilze Būmane* and published by *Lauku Avīze* publishing house. With around 7.500 units (primers, workbooks etc.) in more than 800 languages the collection is the largest of its kind in the world. It is often used as a resource for exhibitions in museums, libraries, schools and clubs of Latvia and abroad. Outside of Latvia, the collection was presented amongst others in 1987 in Moscow at the Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy of the USSR, where the collection was awarded a silver medal, in 2002 in Berlin (Germany) and in 2006 in Saloniki (Greece).



During winter semester 2010/11 **Carsten Heinze** (University of Augsburg, Germany) is holding a temporary professorship (*Vertretungsprofessur*) at the University of Education in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Baden-Württemberg. His new e-mail address is: carsten.heinze@ph-gmuend.de.

Joanna Wojdon is spending the winter semester 2010/2011 teaching the history of Poland at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She also makes use of the HU library resources concerning reading primers and slowly but constantly works on her comparative study of the reading primers from the countries of the Soviet bloc.

- Research
- Paper

Olga Filippova: Politics of Identity through School Primers: Discursive Construction of Legitimate Image of State, Nation and Society in Soviet and Independent Ukraine. // *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2009), pp. 29-36

(ws) Social and political discourses in primers and elementary readers of Central and East European countries have changed tremendously since the 1980s. Yet so far these developments have only rarely been the object of studies, and if so, the focus has usually been on Russia. Now a paper published in English in the *Anthropology of East Europe Review* promises to widen our horizon in that it considers the case of primers in the Ukraine. The author, a sociologist in Kharkiv, examines images and texts in school textbooks for initial reading instruction to demonstrate changes in "identity politics". The general theoretical and analytical framework is convincing, and readers which are not familiar with political key messages of primers in the Soviet Union will highly appreciate the reproductions of illustrations analysed for this study. *Olga Filippova's* analysis provides valuable insights in research questions and concrete findings, but it also has methodological weaknesses which impair the conclusions.



Identity politics, Soviet Ukrainian style (1): "Our Moscow" (with St. Basil's Cathedral, Kremlin and Lenin Mausoleum), followed by "Our Kiev" (with central post office). Detail from B.S. Sazhenjuk, M.T. Sazhenjuk: Bukvar (Ukrainian primer for schools with Ukrainian as the language of instruction). Kiev: Radjanska Shkola 1982, pp. 84-85

In the introductory part, the author states that the central issue of identity politics is "who controls the meaning and concept of identity in the society" (p. 29). She also argues that, while in principle identity politics may concern various types of identity – from gender through professional to religious, ethnic and national identity – in the post-socialist space it "finds especially vivid expression in the fields of national and ethnic identity" (ibid.). Lastly, she



Identity politics, Soviet Ukrainian style (2): "Great Russian poet Pushkin", followed by "Great Ukrainian poet Shevchenko". Detail from B.S. Sazhenjuk, M.T. Sazhenjuk: Bukvar. Kiev: Radjanska Shkola 1982, pp. 90-91

concludes that the primer "reflects the epoch and its dominating values and identity politics" (p. 35). Texts and illustrations of three primers, described as "Soviet primer" (published 1989), "primer of transition period" (1992) and "Ukrainian primer" (2004) are considered in this diachronic analysis, and the textbooks are introduced as representations of "important stages of political and social transformations" (p. 31).

The main part of the study has three sections. The first section, devoted to "political-ideological socialisation", compares the very first pages of primers, and it describes the development from displaying the portrait of Lenin as the main symbol of Soviet ideology in the "Soviet primer" through a "neutral picture representing school life without an ideological message" (p. 31) in the "transition period primer" to the state symbols of independent Ukraine (coat of arms, flag and national anthem) found on the first page of the "Ukrainian primer".

"National identity" is the topic of the second section, and here the author presents particularly rich material concerning symbols of national identity: capitals and other cities, historical figures, costumes, symbols of religion, national holidays and "events of pride". As stated by *Filippova*, a unique characteristic of the 2004 primer is that it presents, in contrast to the 1989 and 1992 editions, illustrations with religious content, e.g. a photograph of Kyiv with Orthodox churches or images of the *kulich* (Easter bread). Another topic worth the attention is what *Filippova* calls the "development of the space industry". While *Yuri Gagarin*, the first man to fly into space, is presented in the "Soviet primer" as a Soviet man, the "transitional primer" introduces *Gagarin* as the "first cosmonaut on planet earth" and as a model for children who also dream to travel to space. Finally, the "Ukrainian primer" presents a Ukrainian cosmonaut: *Leonid Kadenyuk*.

The last section deals with the school as a social institution, and the change described in this area is one from a strictly hierarchical education system, as indicated in the "Soviet primer", to the "Ukrainian primer" where, according to *Filippova*, "the school is represented as a democratic institution" (p. 35).



A Soviet achievement to be proud of: Yuri Gagarin and cosmonautics. Detail from N.S. Vashulenko et al.: *Bukvar'. Uchebnik dlja 1 klassa chetyrehletnej nachal'noj shkoly (Russian primer for grade 1 of the 4-grade primary school in the Ukraine)*. Kiev: Radjanska Shkola, 3rd edition 1989, pp. 112-113

Interpretations of this type demonstrate a first area where *Filippova's* analysis has its limits. What does a "democratic school" look like, especially in the perspective of the child and under the conditions of compulsory education? Which indicators allow for identifying representations of the school in a reading primer as documents of a democratic institution? *Filippova's* analysis of relevant parts of the "Ukrainian primer" combines description and interpretation as follows: "Children are relaxed at their desks, they feel free to turn around and speak to their neighbour, and they are not confined by strict discipline. Through these images, school is constructed as a fun and interesting place to learn and receive knowledge. Children are actively involved in the learning process." (p. 35) It is unfortunate that no illustrations are provided in the paper related to its last section. But we know from other examples of "children at their desks" as illustrated in Soviet and post-Soviet primers that the "Soviet" picture of children who, often in school uniform, attentively listen

to the teacher has been gradually replaced by the "post-Soviet" picture of pupils who indeed "turn around and speak to their neighbour". There is certainly no doubt that this development marks an important change in the philosophy of school education, of didactics of classroom instruction and of the psychology of the child, in favour of more constructivist approaches of learning, and thus of a change in identity politics. But is this really proof of the school as a democratic institution? And what is the measure to distinguish between "strict discipline" – associated with the Soviet system – and "not so strict discipline"? Lastly, taking into account educational achievements of the Soviet Union, which in Western countries once led to the "Sputnik shock": Has all this learning in Soviet times taken place without children and young people being actively involved in the learning process?

A second and greater area of concern is the sample of primers *Filippova* has chosen for her analysis. It consists of the following school textbooks:

- *Bukvar'* by Goreckij, Kirjushkin and Shanko, Moscow: Prosvesheniye 1989 ("Soviet primer")
- *Bukvar'* by Vashulenko, Matveeva, Nazarova and Skripchenko, Kiev: Osvita 1992 ("Transition primer")
- *Bukvar* by Vashulenko and Guzdik, Kiev: Osvita 2004 ("Ukrainian primer")

It is basically justified to consider these three primers in a Ukrainian context because they all have been used in schools on the territory of the Ukraine. But selecting only one item per historical period implies that a) these items can truly represent the respective period and b) that there are no intervening variables which might interfere with the comparison. It is surprising that a study which focuses on identity politics and even stresses the case that in post-socialist countries national and ethnic factors play a particularly crucial role neither mentions nor takes into account the linguistic (and "national") variables and its consequences for school education, curriculum and not least for textbooks in the Ukraine.

It is not less surprising that each of the three primers selected for the analysis represents a very specific linguistic and educational context. Whereas the first two primers are primers in Russian language (the first one edited in Moscow, the second in Kiev), the third book is a Ukrainian primer for grade 1 of elementary schools with Russian as the language of instruction, designed for reading instruction in the "second" (Ukrainian) language. *Filippova* does not even mention the tradition of Ukrainian primers for schools with Ukrainian as the language of instruction which is of utmost importance for the history of schooling in Soviet and Independent Ukraine. Both the fact that primers from different textbook and curricular traditions have been considered and that an important part of the educational and textbook reality in the Ukraine is omitted lead to oversimplified conclusions, and these conclusions do not do justice to the complexity of textbook history – and of identity politics through primers – in this country. This is all the more regrettable as the basic analytical framework applied by *Filippova* is appropriate to shed light on a fascinating area of textbook history.



Another step towards Ukrainization: Detail from H.F. Skripchenko, M.S. Vashulenko: *Bukvar* (Ukrainian primer), Kiev: Radjanska Shkola, 3rd edition 1991, p. 3

□ Country Notes

□ China

Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen – the oldest printed reading primer with illustrations in existence?

(ws) Western perception of the early history of primers in the context of textbooks research usually has a national or, at best, a European scope. Yet a truly international historiography has to give credit not least to Asian and especially Chinese traditions. This relates to the history of both printing and primers. It was indeed the Chinese who invented not only paper, but also woodblock and movable type printing, with first testimonies of Chinese woodblock printing extant from the 7th century A.D.

As *Limin Bai* states in her book "Shaping the Ideal Child – Children and their Primers in Late Imperial China", in both pre-Han and Han times (the latter dynasty lasted from 206 B.C. to 24 A.D.) "the study of Chinese characters (named *xiaoxue*, or lesser learning) was the focus of the elementary education curriculum. Wordbooks, which emerged to teach basic literacy skills, were therefore the earliest form of traditional Chinese literacy primers" (Bai 2005, p. 21). It is worth mentioning that the non-alphabetic Chinese writing system provides a specific challenge for teachers and learners vis-à-vis the standards of functional literacy. According to contemporary assumptions knowledge of 3,000 to 4,000 characters is required to be "fully literate" in the Chinese language, regardless of the fact that far more Chinese characters – more than 47,000 – exist.

A Chinese wordbook primer which deserves special attention is the *Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen* (Newly compiled illustrated four-word glossary) from 1436 A.D. *Xinbian duixiang siyan*, as it is also transliterated nowadays, is a booklet of eight leaves, with 306 drawings to illustrate 388 characters. It offers a basic vocabulary of everyday terms represented in Chinese script by one or two characters. What makes *Hsin pien tui-*

hsiang szu-yen special is that it may well be the oldest printed illustrated primer in existence. Copies of this primer are held, amongst others, by the US Library of Congress and the Columbia University Library. While the Library of Congress copy is an early 16th century reprint, the Columbia University copy is thought to be an original edition of 1436. In the 1960s, *Luther Carrington Goodrich*, a leading American expert in Chinese language and history, prepared a facsimile reproduction of the Columbia University copy, with a section of notes explaining the terms of the primer. The facsimile was first published by Hong Kong University Press in 1967, bound in the classical Chinese style of visible thread-stitching. Reprints of this reproduction were published in 1975 and 1990, and parts are now available in electronic format on the internet as a Google book.

As *Goodrich* states in the introduction, "the value of the book to us is that it reflects in simple form the material culture of the time, together with certain terms no longer in use". Yet already *Limin Bai's* main reference to *Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen* is not limited to "material" culture. In the context of a discussion on public morality and the general condemnation of games of chance



Unadorned character to represent a distinguished social role: shih = scholar, official with ceremonial hat and garb, holding tablet; detail from Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen



Sophisticated character, but not really a children's game according to Confucian educational theory: shaizi = dice; detail from Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen

by Confucian scholars she mentions the fact that dice (*shaizi*) is represented in the *Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen*, and she concludes: "Children were possibly given dice to play with, although theoretically they were not encouraged to participate in gambling" (Bai 2005, p. 161). In fact the primer covers even terms related to the "spiritual culture", as indicated by characters and illustrations of representatives of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Lastly, in the perspective of the arrangements of text and illustrations in primers, *Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen* reflects a strictly systematic approach of using illustrations in tools for reading instruction – quite different from what we know as early examples of illustrations in primers in the Western world.

Reference:

Limin Bai: Shaping the Ideal Child – Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press 2005



1: nung = farmer with straw hat and rain cape, holding hoe

2: kung = workman, carpenter at bench, holding hammer

3: shang = tradesman, itinerant vendor carrying two boxes

4: ju = Confucian

5: shih = Buddhist monk

6: tao = Taoist priest

7: jên = man looking like an aristocrat

A list of professions, including representatives of three world religions; detail from Hsin-pien tui-hsiang szu-yen

□ Congo (Democratic Republic)/ Belgium

Full texts of 26 African colonial primers and elementary readers published in French translation

(*Honoré Vinck*) Issue 2 of the RPI Newsletter, p. 10-11, had a first report on the African Colonial Schoolbook Project, hosted on the internet sites of the *Centre Æquatoria* (www.aequatoria.be/) and African Book bank online (www.abbol.com/). Now we are pleased to inform that in its latest issue (30, 2009, pp. 5-618), *Annales Æquatoria*, a printed annual, offers, in French translation, 26 educational textbooks originally written in Congolese languages and dating back to the Belgian colonial period. Most of them are primers and elementary readers. The criteria that guided the selection of texts were defined primarily by practical considerations such as availability of texts and translators.

By publishing these full text translations from African languages, we expect to contribute to the historiography of colonial school education and more specifically to the study of African colonial schoolbooks. The texts we offer are already partly present on the web, but publishing them on paper will ensure a more lasting accessibility: we combine the free availability on the web with the guarantee of the stability of the printed copy.

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BENKANDA.
Nga wokota bonkande el'aninga mpa wafya nda
jiko wete nd'ebumbwa, *ngonc:*

Ele Petrus Bonanu
nda
Ikenge

ele saserdo wete *ngonc:*

Ele Fafa Ememyama Paulus
nda
Ingende

ele mon frere wete *ngonc:*

Ele Botomolo Bomsmyama Pius
nda
Inzole

Bonkanda wa mbaanda, [Reader], a primer in Lomongo compiled by RR PP Trappists. Bama-nya Congo Belge. Westmalle. Imprimerie des PP Trappistes 1908, 35 pages, p. 25

Most of the translations were made between 1995 and 1997, at the *Centre Æquatoria* in Bamanya, by persons related to institutes of higher education in Mbandaka, most of whom were native speakers of the languages involved. They worked on originals found in the Æquatoria archives. In some cases, the translators had themselves used the textbook to be translated during their own schooling. The translations were checked on several levels.

Each schoolbook is preceded by a heading file based on the descriptive systems commonly used for in inventories of schoolbooks. An extensive bibliography supplements the corpus of the texts. The publication on the web of the original texts in African languages is planned for a later period.

Research on African Colonial Schoolbooks started at the 'Centre Æquatoria' with studies on terminology and on the history of the language problem in colonial education. Since 1994, more attention has been devoted to a preliminary inventory of African schoolbooks available in international libraries and archives. In the same period, methodological and ideological explorations made it clear that much has to be done in order to acquire a reliable understanding of the matter.

The study of the African colonial schoolbooks is of importance in the following fields: *Linguistics*: The very first reductions to writing of Central African languages and literature can be found in these simple texts. *History*: The colonial ideology and the way in which the history of the colonial conquest was represented to the African pupils are among the most fascinating topics. *Politics*: Most of the political leaders of the first and second generation of independent Africa have been educated with these schoolbooks and their views of authority and power are rooted in the missionary teaching as expressed in the textbooks. *Anthropology*: The anthropological dimensions of the pedagogical concept are a very rich and extended domain of inquiry. The presentation and moral qualification of traditional social and political institutions, in confrontation with the image of the Western (Christian) worldview, can be discovered by in-depth analysis of the texts. *Educational theory and practice*: Many schoolbooks display the evolution of Western pedagogical concepts and their experimental adaptation to the African context. Important but untouched is the problem of the dependency of the colonial schoolbooks on the metropolitan ones. *Ideology*: Highly interesting research can be conducted on concepts of religion, civilization, race origins, of the right to colonize "primitive" peoples, and of superiority of Western cultures and languages, as they are openly professed and taught in the textbooks.

The price of *Annales Æquatoria* is 25 € per copy plus postage. It can be ordered from Æquatoria, Te Boelaerlei 11, B-2140 Borgerhout, Belgium, e-mail: vinck.aequatoria@skynet.be

□ Latvia

New coin dedicated to the Latvian primer

(*Juris Cibuls*) The Bank of Latvia has recently issued a coin dedicated to the Latvian primer (*Latvijas ābece*). The coin with a face value of 1 *lats* has been developed by *Arvīds Priedīte* (graphic design) and *Ligita Franckeviča* (plaster model). It has been struck by *Rahapaja Oy* (Finland) in silver and in copper-nickel editions.

A scene of peasant children attending initial reading instruction and learning to read the word *egle* (spruce) is depicted on the obverse. The reverse of the coin has in its centre the reproduction of the rooster from the oldest known



Latvian primer, printed around 1683 in the so-called royal (= Swedish) printing shop managed by *Johann Georg Wilken*. The original of this primer in the form of several uncut sheets was found in 1941 in the library of the University of Tartu (Estonia). All Latvian primers published till the end of the 18th century are so-called catechism ABC-books and they use Gothic letters.

As stated in the report sheet to the coin, the reading primer has for centuries enjoyed a special status in Latvia, and the Bank of Latvia has issued the coin "to pay its respects to the history of Latvian learning".

<http://www.bank.lv/eng/main/all/lvnaud/jubmon/nmp/abc/>

□ Russia

The Museum of the Tatar Primer (*Muzej "Alifba"*) in Arsk, Tatarstan

(*Catriona Kelly, Wendelin Sroka*) In 1999 the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tatarstan decided to establish a museum devoted to a very specific kind of educational text: the primer. This museum, which to our knowledge is unique in its kind, is located in the town of Arsk, 65 km from Kazan, the republic's capital. It is housed on the premises of Arsk Teacher Training College, where in post-WWII times *Ramzija Giljazovna Valitova* and *Salej Gatatovich Vagyzov* worked as teacher educators. In the 1960s they developed an "Alifba", a Tatar primer which received an All-Union prize for its quality as a school textbook. The book has seen many re-editions in Soviet and post-Soviet times and is still used today for initial reading instruction in the Tatar language in primary schools.



Oversize copy of the "Alifba", with photos of S.G. Vagyzov and R.G. Valitova. Detail of the permanent exhibition, Museum of the Tatar Primer, Arsk



Sanija Sibgatullova, director of the museum, and *Sofija Hakimovna*, deputy head of the department of foreign languages of the Teacher Training College, and student teachers who are working on the programme for trainee tour guides showed the visitors round the exhibition.

The history of the Tatar primer is indeed fascinating from a great number of perspectives, ranging from social, cultural, religious and educational history

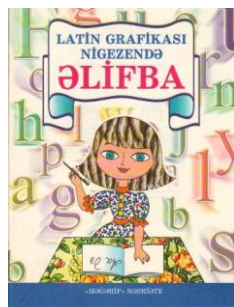
Thanks to the efforts of RP-SIG member *Alla Salnikova*, professor of history at the Faculty of History, Kazan State University, participants of the international roundtable "Childhood in scientific, educational and artistic texts: efforts of comprehension and interpretation" (November 11-12, 2010 in Kazan) had a chance to visit this museum the day before the roundtable started. The group which made use of this opportunity included *Ol'ga Evgen'evna Kosheleva*, senior researcher at the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, *Diljara Magzumovna Galiullina*, Kazan State University, *Catriona Kelly*, professor of Russian at New College, University of Oxford, and RPI editors *Vitaly Bezrogov* and *Wendelin Sroka*. The delegation received a warm welcome by

and the history of childhood to issues of language and script policies. The permanent exhibition of the museum tells the story of pre-revolutionary, Soviet and post-Soviet reading instruction in the Tatar language (beginning with the religious schools which taught Koranic Arabic). It demonstrates the repeated changes made to the writing system of the Tatar language: from Arabic script prior to 1927 through Latin



Cushion-based instruction, but not in a cozy corner: Reconstruction of a late nineteenth-early twentieth century Tatar school, Museum of the Tatar Primer, Arsk

(*Yanalif*, 1927-1939) to Cyrillic in the 20th century and the so far unsuccessful attempt to re-introduce Latin script beginning in 2000, it provides detailed information about authors of Tatar textbooks, and it considers pupil's changing learning environments at school. In addition, the holdings of the museum include a collection of primers in a variety of languages used for reading instruction in Russia, and also primers from foreign countries. Some of them are displayed, as are most other items, in showcases.



Continuities and changes (from left to right): Alifba for Tatar mother tongue reading instruction in Tatarstan, 1978, 2000 (experimental edition, in Latin script) and 2010; Alifba for schools with Russian as the language of instruction in Tatarstan, 2003

The museum has a remarkably rich inventory, and it is very welcome that the history of the Tatar primer is presented in the context of documents of reading instruction belonging to other linguistic communities both inside and outside of Russia. At the same time a museum of this kind is faced with a number of challenges: it has to present an item which is produced for a specific purpose and is meant to be viewed page by page, and not as a static museum



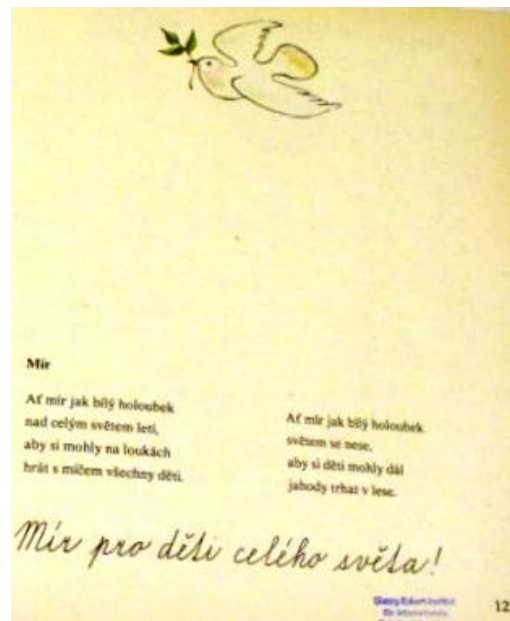
Hosts and visitors of the Museum of the Tatar primer, November 20, 2010

exhibit; the exhibition needs to be based on a solid theoretical concept if the artefacts are not to appear accidentally accumulated; and the museum has to be made attractive for visitors who have got used to displays staged with modern media.

□ Finds

What is wrong with the Children's Day?

(*Joanna Wojdon*) When I looked at the last page of the Czech primer of 1992 for the first time, it looked a bit strange (see below, picture to the left). Why is there so much empty space? Everything became clear when I took the earlier editions, published in communist Czechoslovakia (see picture to the right) After the collapse of the communist regime only minor changes were introduced in the Czech reading primers. They included removing the readings about the 1st of May (the holiday of the working class) and about the Red Army liberating Prague in 1945 - which is understandable for ideological reasons. But what is wrong about the Children's Day?



Irena Fabianova, Jarmila Hřebejková, Eva Veberová: *Slabikář*. Praha, vyd. 15 [15th ed.] 1992 (left) and vyd. 1 [1st ed.] 1976 (right)

Three outstanding musicians

(*Wolfgang Fickert*) In quite a number of reading primers we find prominent representatives of arts and science being acclaimed. Yet it is surprising – and rather rare – when the appraised persons are foreigners. Here we have an example which may top most others of this kind.

Three European musicians are presented and praised to the sky in a primer published in Columbia from the late 1940s to the 1970s. The translation of the text reads: "Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an outstanding musician who played the piano with perfection already as a boy. Ludwig van Beethoven, the outermost genius of music, played at an age of eight years compositions he had invented himself. Ricardo Wagner was called a famous musician who was born forty-two years after Beethoven." No mentioning is made, that these three men were not born in Latin America, which on the other hand may be suggested by the portraits.

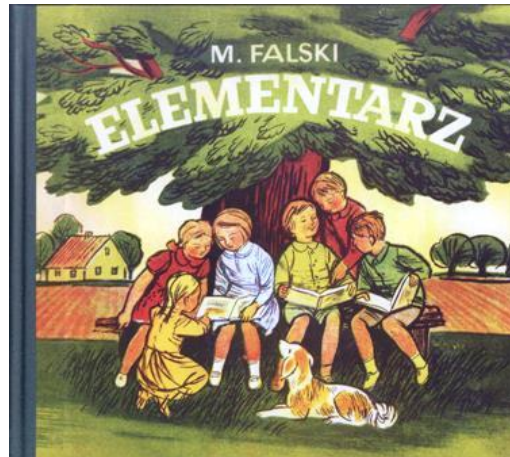


Justo V. Charry, Cecilia Charry Lara: *Nueva Cartilla Charry. Enseñanza de Lectura y Escritura [New Charry-Primer. Instruction in Reading and Writing]*. Bogotá: Editorial Voluntad, 20th edition 1973

□ In profile

Marian Falski, author of Polish primers

by Joanna Wojdon



Front cover of Falski's "Elementarz", 15th edition 1971, illustrated by Jerzy Karolak

Polish from their own first school textbook. Many fragments of *Falski's* "Elementarz" became part of the national heritage. Only recently the film "The Girl from the Reading Primer (*Ala z Elementarza*)" was produced. It is a portrait of *Alina Margolis-Edelman* who as a young girl served *Falski* as "prototype" for *Ala*, one of the main characters in the book.

www.kalejdoskop.art.pl/en/production-of-a-project-ala-from-the-reading-primer.html

Born in 1881 in today's Belarus, *Falski* started his education in Minsk and later moved to Warsaw, then a part of the Russian empire. As an active participant of the Polish clandestine education, he took part in the strikes during the Russian revolution of 1905 and was subsequently arrested in 1906. Thanks to help from his friends *Falski* was released and immigrated to Cracow, at that time a city of the Austro-Hungarian empire, with significant autonomous Polish institutions, including the Jagiellonian university. In Kraków *Marian* earned his living as a private teacher and studied psychology at the university – both of which were helpful in his future career of a primer's author.

After careful studying Polish and foreign textbooks available at the beginning of the 20th century *Falski* developed the main concepts of his first primer: (1) reading comprehension: a child should learn to read on the meaningful material, not just repeat syllables which did not make any sense to him or her; (2) a word, not a letter or a syllable, should be the basic reading unit; (3) reading and writing skills should be taught simultaneously. The first edition, published by Wierzbowski Publishing House in Kraków, was entitled "*Nauka czytania i pisanie dla dzieci*" (Learning to read and write for children). A new edition of *Falski's* primer was printed in 1921, when Po-



Ala and the dog. Detail from page 6 of *Falski's Elementarz dla 1 klasy szkół powszechnych wiejskich (Primer for grade 1 of rural primary schools)*, Lwów/Warszawa 1937, illustrated by Jan Miklaszewski

land already regained its independence after WWI. It was one of some 40 school textbooks approved for initial reading instruction in primary schools in Poland. *Falski* constantly made improvements to his book. They included not only pedagogical or technical matters, but also responded to the changing political situation of Poland. In the 1935 edition one could find texts about Pre-

sident *Mościcki* whom the children met on their vacation and about Marshall *Piłsudski* whom they visited for his birthday.

There were even more texts of such character in the post-WWII editions when *Falski* became the only author of primers in Poland. Stalinist president of Poland *Bolesław Bierut* and Marshall *Rokossowski* (a Soviet of Polish ancestry) were the heroes of the readings in the 1950s. Other texts promoted the collective farms, Nowa Huta – a top communist investment of the so-called “Six Year Plan” (1950-1955) and friendship of the children of the communist bloc. In the 1960s some texts were removed though the one about Nowa Huta remained even in the most recent reprints, published already in the 21st century.



Ala and the dog. Detail from page 14 of Falski's Elementarz, 15th edition 1971, illustrated by Jerzy Karolak

Archival holdings of the Ministry of Education prove that the communist authorities tried to impose much more propaganda elements into *Falski's* primers and even accused him of sabotage against the regime when he presented new readings about craftsmen or an anonymous black boy in Africa instead of e.g. the world peace or the team work in the cooperatives. Apparently, *Falski* managed to resist, though he had to make some concessions in order to have his book published. The communist authorities must have recognized his expertise, however, as his “*Elementarz*” was published even after he signed a famous “Letter of 34”, criticizing the cultural policy of the communist government in 1964.

Besides writing reading primers *Falski* had a job in the Ministry of Education where he worked on the school system since pre-WWII times. He continued this path of his career until his retirement though he became more and more bitter when most of his projects ended up in the file folders.

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□ About RPI

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