

**Introduction to Articles from the
2014 Annual Conference of the Russian State University for the
Humanities American Studies Center:
Special Section on Humanities+**

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After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Professor Marina Kaul of the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU), together with Professor Irwin Weil of Northwestern University, co-founded the American Studies Center at RGGU, the two-fold goals of which were 1) to expose post-Soviet Russian scholars and students to a reasonably objective view and appreciation of American history, culture, and politics; and 2) to help American scholars and students to see themselves as others saw them. Thus far, the Center has held annual conferences, facilitated professional and student exchanges, and published numerous conference proceedings. It has enjoyed the active support of numerous organizations, including foremost a longtime partnership with the American Councils for International Education.

Associate Professor Tony Brown, German and Russian Department at Brigham Young University, and co-director of the American Studies Center at RGGU, organized the Center's annual conference in 2013, which convened on the campus of BYU in Provo, Utah—the first such conference to take place on American soil. John Rosenberg, Dean of the BYU College of Humanities, together with Matthew Wickman, Director of the BYU Humanities Center, hosted the conference, the theme of which was “Humanities Plus: Advancing Global Dialogue and Initiatives through Experiential Learning.” Humanities+ represents a college-wide initiative that provides students ideas and resources for bridging traditional humanities major to the professional work world.

Participants in the conference represented academia, government, industry, professional organizations, research centers, and non-profit organizations. The symposium underscored a growing need for

proficient foreign language skills and the competitive advantage that a humanities education, particularly with an emphasis in foreign languages, gives students applying to professional schools and any number of jobs in the private and public sectors.

The articles presented in this issue highlight the role of academic and government institutions in coupling classroom foreign language learning with real world experience. From the academy, Tony Brown in his article titled “Foreign Language Study Coupled with Internship Experience as an Entrée to Professional Opportunities” and John Grandin and Sigrid Berka in their article titled “The University of Rhode Island International Engineering Program: Merging Technology with the Humanities” contend that combining formal language instruction with pre-professional experience in the target language and culture facilitates significant foreign language uptake and gives students the requisite knowledge and skills to compete in the twenty-first century. From the government sphere, Sam Eisen in his article titled “The Language Flagship Model and the Humanities,” and James Bernhardt in his article titled “Thoughts on High Level Proficiency in Arabic, Russian and English with a Platitudinous Postlude” discuss the efforts of the Language Flagship Programs and Foreign Service Institute respectively in training students to carry out advanced-level target language functions that reflect an understanding of domain-specific terminology and, perhaps more subtly, nuanced modes of expression that demonstrate a sophisticated level of control in the target language.

Special thanks go to Bill Rivers, Editor of *Russian Language Journal* and longstanding supporter of the American Studies Center, for devoting part of this issue to research presented at the conference. Participants were invited to formalize their remarks into a journal-length article and submit them to *RLJ* for consideration. In keeping with standard editorial practices of the journal, all submissions underwent a double-blind peer review.

Special thanks also go to Dan Davidson, President of American Councils for International Education, for generously providing travel grants to conference participants.