Unit 12: Resources--Russian Federation

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- Necessity of obtaining accurate sources for culture/religion issues of the Russian Federation
- Top 12 resources for Russian Federation religions/cultures
- Importance of history, biography, autobiography, and novels as sources of cultural understanding
- Helpful Internet sources of information

Identify

- U.S. Department of State WWW site
- LingNet
- Unofficial Civil Affairs WWW Homepage

Realize

- Discernment of sources--choosing the right ones--is most helpful in obtaining Russian Federation religion/culture information
- Importance of the WWW State Department site for timely, accurate information
- Helpfulness of The Multifaith Calendar
- Extent of Department of the Army Pam 550 Country Studies Series
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I. Necessity of Discernment

One difficulty in studying Russian Federation religions and their impact on a culture is the sheer amount of information available. Titles abound. Card catalogs and on-line directories overwhelm with their listings.

Questions arise. What is the accuracy of material presented? What is the author's slant and purpose? How can the text assist my purposes? How accessible is the information presented? What are the accurate sources?

This section delineates an annotated bibliography. It first lists the top 12 resources. Next, it specifies books (history, autobiography, novel) which assist in capturing a feel for Russian culture--its geography, world view, historical themes, life of its peoples. Then, this section presents assets available at local libraries and learning resource centers. A small list of helpful tools available outside the Peninsula is then inventoried. Finally, there is a limited treatment of helpful Internet locations.

II. The Top Twelve Resources

1. The World Wide Web State Department site should be the first location serious students tap for information on culture/religion.

Site: U.S. Department of State
URL: http://www.state.gov...

By far, this site is the best up-to-date resource for country studies. Go first to this location to find background studies on countries in transition.
Reports given by the State Department are exhaustive yet well-organized, made for easy skimming. Plus, for military linguists, the information presented is accurate, reflecting current U.S. Government perspectives and assessments.

Of special interest are the following headings:

- 1997 Patterns of Global Terrorism  Offerings include area as well as specific country listings
- Country Studies
- Travel Advisories  Up-to-the-minute presentations of critical information for the prospective traveler
- Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1996  Just released (30 Jan 97), these reports analyze the current state of human rights
- Recent speeches, topics, trends and historical searches


   Every linguist needs this helpful, accurate, and informative calendar.

   Artistically done, the calendar not only lists significant events on days when they occur, but also explains their importance as a monthly aside. Individual copies of the calendar, at $11.00 each, can be ordered from Multifaith Resources, P.O. Box 128, Wofford Heights, Calif. 93285.

3. Country Studies, (various authors and editors), Headquarters, Department of the Army, DA Pam 550 series.

   Exhaustive studies of various countries around the world. Sometimes the information is a bit dated, depending on the edition. Also, quality of assessment varies from study to study.
The authors give a thorough history and some insight on practice of religion in the country studied. Available at Aiso Library and the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) office, building 274. The FAO office also has an excellent catalog of most recent "reports from the field," the back briefings of FAO visits. Over 70 Country Studies are now available on the WWW at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>


An extensive, readable text written by a former Department of State diplomat whose experience in the region goes back to over thirty years of day-to-day contact with Russians and East Europeans. The author's intent in From Nyet to Da is to promote improved understanding between Russians and Americans as...

"There are no shortcuts to understanding the Russians. It helps to know their language, history, and literature, and to have worked with them over the years. But that takes time, and Americans are an impatient people, seeking quick fixes for complex issues," (p. viii).


Scholarly yet extremely readable, this text treats not only history, but major cultural/religious themes in a clear, interesting, straightforward way.

A succinct, readable guide for all peoples of all backgrounds, to understand beliefs and ceremonies of faith and denomination groups. The chapters on Orthodox and Buddhist faiths are especially applicable to the Russian Federation. Volume I, (edited by Arthur Magida, 1995), has helpful chapters on Islam, Jewish and Roman Catholic faiths.


For detailed analysis of over three thousand world cultures, this can be your primary resource. Recently printed, the work incorporates the information found in the old, more cumbersome, Human Relations Area Files gathered by Yale University. Thirteen editors, 800 contributors, and 20 translators worked over 10 years to put this massive work together.

Each culture has an extensive religion and expressive culture section. Beliefs, practitioners, ceremonies, arts, medicine and death/afterlife sections comprise the heading under religion. Treatments of over 15 major and 50 other ethnic groups within the Russian Federation region are helpful and informative.

Cost is high ($800.00 for ten volumes), but nothing more detailed exists in the mass publishing market. Also Library has all volumes. The Naval Postgraduate School (Bosun) has the set on order.


Historical maps, pictures and accompanying text gives an excellent overview of Russian history and culture. Inviting format is patterned, in part, after National Geographic presentations.

This site connects users to online U.S. and foreign newspapers/agencies (including ITAR-TASS Russian News Agency [in English]), plus major organizations like the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Senate, United Nations, White House, National Security Agency, United States Information Agency, Department of Defense and others.

Another excellent site for links to religious organizations and issues is the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School Indigenous Religions Homepage <http://usachca-www.army.mil/RELIGION/IndigReligionMain.htm>


This CD-ROM gives twenty country profiles of Europe, including the Russian Federation. The strength of these studies is their incorporation of recent Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile materials, points of contact for further information. Profiles include sections on customs and courtesies, U.S. relations, government, politics and economy.

12. Reference tools:


Up-to-date and packed with information, this resource tool is compact and reasonable. The statistics and country history sections are invaluable. Purchase this book at almost any news/bookstore for under $10.00. Don't settle for other publishers. The World Almanac gives data on country communications (phones, radios, newspapers per person) as well as health and economic indicators.

"Vital information about key political and physical features around the globe." This dictionary gives up-to-date places, names, locations, maps, pronunciation guides and brief histories of selected sites. An outstanding resource. Pack this text in your deployment "smart chest."


"Your Guide to the World's History Makers!" Another excellent reference tool on current and historical figures who shape our world.

### III. Resources Promoting Cultural Appreciation


  Great resource for building one's cultural literacy. The book sorts out what are the most important cultural contributions within civilizations of the world. Authors treat significant achievements, figures and events. The only lack is the absence of an index by subject/region. (Aiso Library)


  Controversial, thought provoking, influential analysis of the current and future condition of geopolitics. The author, a professor at Harvard, argues for seeing some eight civilizations as currently in conflict. Suggestions for dealing with this condition of "civilizations in conflict" are also given. (Aiso Library)

Now out in paperback, this text analyzes the underlying religious motives behind most major present-day conflicts. Excellent for bringing one up-to-date on the religious fundamentalist movements (which the author describes as religious nationalism) around the world. ISBN 0-520-08651-1.


The author, one of the negotiators during the Iranian hostage crisis, treats subjects which foster positive Christian-Muslim relations.


Good pictures and graphs from a variety of sources. For students interested in a Christian approach to world religions, the section on Christianity provides helpful insight.


This scholarly yet usable book gives representative prayers from most of the living religious traditions of the world. A paperback edition is available.

For those drawn to maps and visual presentations, this resource is a "must." Reasonably priced, it gives fundamentals of each major religious faith, shows distributions throughout the world, and treats a variety of important issues (money, the state, conflicts, status of women, environmental issues, projections for the future).

• Muck, Terry, Those Other Religions in Your Neighborhood, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).

Succinct guide to world religious expressions present in the United States. Chapter conclusions on "common misperceptions" are exceptionally helpful.


Though designed for chaplains and chaplain assistants, this thesis is helpful to all. It treats Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Aspects of Chinese Religions, Primal Religions--African, Santeria and Voodoo, Orthodox Eastern and Liberation Theology. Available on the WWW through the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, Homepage--World Religions Resources.


Part 1 (Key Concepts: Underlying Structures of Culture) and part 4 (The Americans) offer excellent insight for Americans who are beginning to explore other cultures.

This work, written by a prize winning journalist of the New York Times, describes Russian life at the turn of this decade. Author draws heavily on interactions with people on a “street level.”


A good pocket sized guide (78 pages) giving a brief overview of manners, customs and history of the Russian Federation.


From the preface we read, “if we hope to understand anything of this extraordinary country’s present and possible future, it is of great importance to delve, as far as we may, into her past.” This wide-sweeping novel surveys the history of Russia. Rather than a recitation of bare facts, readers receive an emotional, aesthetic understanding of the peoples and movements within Russia’s long history.

Other works of Russian literature which may assist students, in addition to volumes listed in the bibliographies following each chapter, include the following:

• Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I. One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich, Cancer Ward, First Circle.
• Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhaylovich. Crime and Punishment, Notes from the Underground, The Brothers Karamazov.
• Tolstoy, Leo. Anna Karenina, War and Peace.
• Pasternak, Boris. Doctor Zhivago.
• Sajer, Guy. The Forgotten Soldier.
IV. Locally Available Resources

- **The New York Times.**


  These volumes give the background, people, customs and courtesies, lifestyle, and society traits of 150 countries. Four pages are given to each country. These background studies are succinct and have a reputation for reliability and accuracy. Non-profit groups can purchase both volumes for $35.00 each. ISBN 0-912048-86-7 (for set).


  Readable, well-organized, and thorough (1,152 pages), this book is a "must have." Especially helpful is the user-friendly pronunciation guide. ISBN 0-06-067515-2.
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  This is a new revision of a standard reference tool first published in 1982. For detailed facts and figures on all religions within various countries, this is the place to look. ISBN 0-19-507963-9. The Monterey Public Library has the older edition.


  Newly revised, this is the standard reference work on world religions. Practically every aspect of religion in the world is dealt with by a knowledgeable scholar. Monterey Public Library has the older edition.

- Foreign Area Reports, Foreign Area Officer Program, Building 274, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Presidio of Monterey.

  This library compiles "on the ground" reports and assessments by recent Foreign Area Officer visitors to regions of the world. The products are fresh, accurate and often more complete, less "sanitized" treatment of areas treated.


  Outstanding text on cross-cultural communication from a business person's perspective. The authors give practical guidance for various regions of the world. (Aiso Library)


  The aesthetic beauty of this book pleases the senses. With most of the same text as Huston Smith's classic, The World's Religions, the art work and photos of worshippers around the world make this an especially appealing work. Price for the
hardcover is $30.00. If you can't afford it, get Smith's *The World's Religions* for $12.00. This is the most readable of all the general texts I've read. (Also has *The World's Religions*)


  This reasonably priced paperback gives great information and contains an excellent bibliography. The first half describes gestures—the most popular ones around the world. Then, in the second half, the text gives a by-country listing of tips helpful for intercultural communication. ISBN 0-471-53672-5. Price is under $15.00.


  Great text designed for business and government workers working in cross-cultural settings. Gives the theoretical background of leadership practices and differences around the world. Very helpful for units working with other Allied armies on military to military or peace operations.


  This concise text details the impact of religion on politics in a country-by-country rundown throughout the world. For its purpose, there is nothing better. Unfortunately, its price ($75.00) makes it prohibitive for personal libraries.


  Excellent resource for charts, graphs, and sketches which will add visual appeal and stimulation to classes and briefings. Some libraries purchase a reproduction certificate with the text, enabling users to run off multiple copies of documents given. The $155.00 price makes it prohibitive for small libraries.

The only thing bad about this research guide is its price--$80.00. It is filled with data on religious and cultural festivals around the world. A day-by-day listing of events around the world is given. Each entry is detailed enough to be thorough and interesting. Author lists sources of information after each entry. ISBN 0-8103-7577-X. (Also Library)


Quarterly and yearly updates, in succinct, quickly read style, which dispatch current information on the country listed. Though dealing with economics and politics, religious parties are sometimes treated as a part of the analysis. Outside of the daily newspaper, this resource is the most up-to-date, in print product available. Due to its excessive price, no library on the Peninsula subscribes to this collection. Stanford may have it.


Succinct analysis of the people, history, government, education, economy, communications available, foreign relations, U.S. relations and policy, military and helpful addresses. Titles are available for most countries.
• Post Reports, United States Department of State, Department of State Publication, Office of Information Services, Publishing Services Division.

In some ways, more extensive treatments of areas listed in the Background Notes. The intent of Post Reports is to orient new state department officials and families to living in a given country. Logistical matters (schools, housing, transportation, shopping) receive detailed treatment.


Though dated, this text offers insight into the various religious groups of the Russian Federation. Statements and interviews with current religious leaders are especially helpful. A brief historical, statistical and problems/issues overview accompanies each group treated.


Massive (1145 pages) text which presents the State Department’s strategic goals, country and regional programs, and budget requests for FY 1999.

"Keep exercising."
V. WWW Sites

- Site: U.S. Department of State
  Universal Resource Locator (URL): <http://www.state.gov>

  (See earlier listing under Top Twelve Resources).

- Site: LingNet – The Linguist’s Network
  URL: http://lingnet.army.mil/

  Provided as a public service by our own Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, this site is dedicated to support the military linguist. LingNet’s Language Resources page (URL: http://lingnet.army.mil/general.htm) links to an overwhelming amount of information and materials.

  Included in the Resources page is an Area Background listing which includes:

  - City.Net: a comprehensive guide to cities and countries around the world
  - The Electronic Embassy: Links to Embassies in Washington, DC

  - Unofficial Civil Affairs page. (This site is a gold mine of information, provided you can connect.)
• UCLA’s Language Materials Project: country and language information; sensitive map (click on a location, receive information about languages in that area).
• US State Department Travel Advisories

• Site: Area Handbook Program Country Studies
  URL: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

  Currently, over 71 countries are treated. Much of the material is printed word for word from the Department of the Army’s hardbound Country Studies series.

• Site: 1998 Strategic Assessment
  URL: rummelm@carlisle-emh2.army.mil

  Strategic assessment from the Strategic Studies Institute, ed. E.H. Tilford, Jr., U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA.


• Site: United States Policies in Support of Religious Freedom: focus on Christians
  URL: <http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/970722_relig_rpt_christian.html>

• Site: Union of Councils for Soviet Jews
  URL: <http://www.shamash.org/ucsj/stories/asemlrus1.shtml>

• Site: U.S. Department of State--Background Notes, Russia 1998
  URL: <http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/russia_0898_bgn.html>

• Site: Foreign Military Studies Office Publications
  URL: <http://call.army.mil/call/fmso/fmsopubs>

  Excellent search for publications and reports from Ft. Leavenworth’s Foreign Military Studies Office.
The following is instructive for use of the World Wide Web.

"The Digital Middle East," an article in the Nov/Dec 1996 edition of Aramco World magazine gives photojournalist George Anzar's review of helpful Web sites currently available (Jan 97) on the Internet. I quote at length from this article. WWW sites referred to are ones I've personally found beneficial.

"For the cybernovice, the Internet has two main 'highways': The World Wide Web carries sound and graphics in addition to text; newsgroups on Usenet use text-only files, including electronic mail, or e-mail.

As a whole, the Internet--and particularly the Web--can seem like an enormous bazaar: The hawkers are many and the info-goods, at first glance, seem to address every imaginable need. However, as in any bazaar, let the browser beware.

While some sites are gems of useful information, smart design and clever insight, too many others offer virtual junk, information of doubtful value, sometimes presented with glitzy design and supplemented by meaningless, slow-loading graphics that can make your trip on the information superhighway more like creeping through a construction zone during rush hour.

The fact is that, behind the hype, the Internet still has some serious shortcomings. While it is relatively easy to access from home or work and its reach is indeed global, the information stream runs broad rather than deep. For in-depth learning, the Web and Usenet are still no matches for even an average library.

But hang onto your hats. Most sites have been around for only a year or less, and their numbers and the sophistication of their content are exploding. Given a bit of time, this could be quite a ride."
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Review Quiz: Resources

Multiple Choice  Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

1. _____ When gathering background information of the country of a target language it is always good to
   a. consider an author’s slant, purpose and credentials.
   b. go to the Internet, punch in a key word, and use whatever comes up.
   c. use only one or two sources as this limits confusion and too much information.

2. _____ One of the first sites to go to in order to obtain serious information on cultures/religion of a country is the
   a. search engine.
   b. WWW US State Deptartment site.
   c. CD-Rom encyclopedia on line.

3. _____ Over 90 DA Pam 550 __________ series are now on line via the Library of Congress website.
   a. Country Studies
   b. army regulations and manuals
   c. “take no slack”

4. _____ Nicholas Riasanovsky’s A History of Russia, available at the NPS Bosun Library and local bookstores is
   a. too detailed to be of value. It will put you to sleep.
   b. a scholarly yet readable book.
   c. written to bolster Communist sympathies. Avoid it.
5. _____ A good guide on understanding the beliefs and ceremonies of different faith groups is
   a. *How to Be a Perfect Stranger.*
   b. *The Multifaith Calendar.*
   c. *How to Win Friends and Influence People.*

6. _____ The World Almanac and Book of Facts is
   a. a helpful, up-to-date reference guide, reasonably priced, and of great assistance in country studies.
   b. a dense, compact, fine print work too detailed for most people.
   c. now surpassed by Internet offerings.

7. _____ A helpful aid to have in your deployment "smart chest" is
   a. duct tape to prevent foot blisters.
   c. a walkman FM/AM/shortwave radio.

8. _____ Novels, such as *Russia*, *Cancer Word*, *War and Peace*, *Dr. Zhivago* or *Crime and Punishment*, give
   a. the "feel" behind the facts of Russian culture.
   b. readers good bedtime offerings as they put you to sleep.
   c. a skewed perspective on Russia, based on their portrayal of class struggle and strong Communist leanings.

9. _____ One of the most informative, readable and "user friendly" texts on world religions is Huston Smith's
   c. *Religions on File.*

10. _____ One of the best historical introductions to Russia, in a National Geographic format, and available in the reference section of the NPS Bosun library, is
    b. *Deep in the Wilds of Siberia.*