

Slavic News: Winter 2025

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, GORDANA CRNKOVIĆ

Dear Friends of the Slavic Department,



Our beautiful UW campus is bustling after the Winter break and the Slavic department is again busily engaged with research and teaching. Alongside instruction in BCMS, Polish, and Russian languages, we are very pleased to be able to

continue offering Ukrainian language classes. Our Fulbright visitor this year is Nastya Laskava who is doing great job engaging the students and providing superb education in Ukrainian language and culture.

Aside from languages, our classes in the Autumn and Winter quarters have included those on Slavic lands and people, Soviet cinema, Chekhov, and the celebrated film directors from socialist-era Eastern Europe who emigrated to the West. Associate Chair Barbara Henry is again attracting large student enrollments with her popular “Introduction to Russian Culture and Civilization” and “Underworlds” classes. Our new major in Global Literary Studies (GLITS) has offered close to thirty classes in the last two quarters, taught by Slavic professors and our colleagues from across the Humanities division. And our Slavic faculty and graduate students continue their active research and publishing; check out the news about their work in this Newsletter.

CONTENTS

>2	Student News
>2	Faculty News
>3	Staff News
>3	Fulbright News
>4	Polish News
>5	Slovene News
>9	News from You
>10	In Memoriam
>11	Gifts
>12	Support Us

Maria Kott Endowed Assistant Professor of Polish Studies Agnieszka Jeżyk, our newest colleague, has hit the ground running and is already contributing greatly to the department’s mission and visibility. Aside from teaching the Polish language and a course on the masterpieces of Polish literature and film, Agnieszka has already created two new popular classes with an emphasis on Polish culture, one on Slavic horror and another on science fiction in East Europe. She gave a well-attended Maria Kott Professorship of Polish Studies Inaugural Lecture in October and has made us proud by winning distinguished awards including, most recently, the Society of Scholars award from the Simpson Center for the Humanities.

Given the national trend of declining numbers of students majoring in the humanities, our department is putting increased emphasis on student-centered events that strengthen student communities and foster a sense of belonging. Scheduled for January 30th is one such event—the “Printmaking Social” co-organized with Textual Studies. Spearheaded and organized by our

department Program Coordinator Isabelle and our student assistant Caprielle, these successful events are met with increasing student attendance and appreciation.

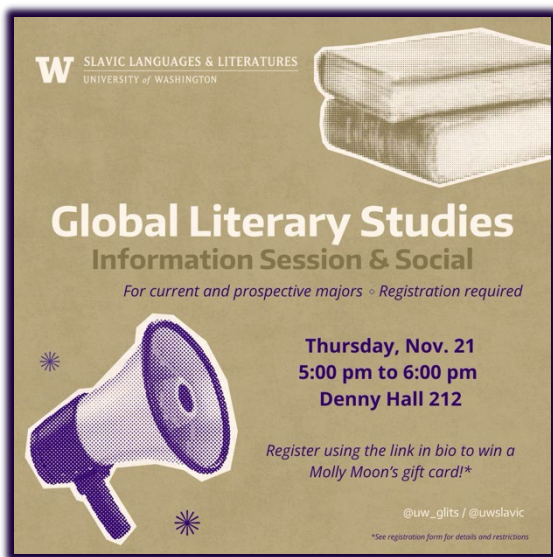
Please let us know about your news and keep in touch!

With best wishes to all for the New Year,

Gordana

STUDENT NEWS

In late November, the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department hosted an Information Session and Social to foster connections between current and prospective GLITS students. With food and activities for all to enjoy, the event was a fantastic way to welcome and introduce the literary community across campus. As a rising major, the success of GLITS is driven by the support of the department and enthusiasm from students, allowing it to thrive in our Husky home.



W SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Global Literary Studies
Information Session & Social

For current and prospective majors - Registration required

Thursday, Nov. 21
5:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Denny Hall 212

Register using the link in bio to win a Molly Moon's gift card!*

@uw_glits / @uwslavic

*See registration form for details and restrictions

FACULTY NEWS



Piotr Florczyk spent part of his Autumn 2024 research leave as a fellow of the Wisława Szymborska Foundation, an honor that came with the use of the Nobel Laureate's former apartment. During his two weeks in Europe, Prof. Florczyk gave invited talks and readings in Kraków, Łódź, Brussels, and Antwerp.

Agnieszka Jeżyk presented her inaugural lecture on October 24. She was honored with an award for the best syllabus for the Polish Studies Association. It was announced in November at the ASEES conference in Boston.



Sasha Senderovich attended the annual conference of the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) in Milwaukee in October 2024. He participated in the roundtable on "Grammar in the Trenches: How Words Become Weapons in Times of Conflict" where he discussed his collaborative translation project of literary prose by Soviet Jewish authors written after and about the Holocaust.

Gordana P. Crnković's article, "Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*: Utopia, Modern Adaptations, and the Magic of Poetry," was recently published in the *Journal of Croatian Studies*, volumes LIV-LV, 2023. In November 2024, she gave a talk titled "In Search of the Lost Futures" for the panel "What Is Yugoslav Literature Today?" at the ASEES Convention in Boston.



STAFF NEWS

Meet our new student office assistant, Caprielle!



“Raised in a family where education meant freedom, empowerment and creativity, curiosity in various subjects throughout my academic career have been widespread. From philosophy to journalism to oceanography, schooling has seldom been seen as anything other than an opportunity for me to be zealous by the ever-growing world around us. Thanks to the multiple areas of study I have been exposed to, I found the most intellectually stimulating and fervent fields to be within the intersection of literature and culture.

After participating in Washington State’s dual enrollment program and acquiring an Associate’s Degree in Arts and Sciences, I entered the University of Washington with a drive to expand my knowledge and impact on the written and social world. Currently on track to graduate a year early with a B.A. in English (Creative Writing) and in Global Literary Studies (GLITS), the pursuit of literature through critical, historical, and theoretical frameworks is to aid my path of becoming a writer in the publishing industry. There are many labels, roles, and identities within the writing world, and these are only some titles I have and will continue to adopt: journalist, poet, author, and scholar.

Through the exploration of culture in literary works, I connect to innumerable inspirational figures who have transformed thought and study in a multitude of fields. It is in those stories that I find reverence for creators and profundity in their works—and I, too, hope that a future student will be impassioned by my opuses.

Working for the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department has been incredibly rewarding. I have had the pleasure of building relationships with

individuals of diverse backgrounds, exploring Slavic customs and traditions in exciting and surprising ways. Based on the work we are doing in the office, I am thrilled for what is to come of the department and the new GLITS major for the UW student body and its literature enthusiasts.”

FULBRIGHT NEWS



The winter quarter has already begun at the University of Washington, and Ukrainian language classes are starting!

During the classes, our students have the opportunity to learn not only the Ukrainian language, but also the culture in a broader sense. In particular, in one of the classes the students read the poetry of the famous Ukrainian poet, the father of the Ukrainian nation Taras Shevchenko, listened to the musical performance of the winner of the Eurovision Song Contest 2004, Ukrainian singer Ruslana Lyzhychko, with her hit, which is still considered one of the best and brought Ukraine its first victory in the European song contest, listened to operettas performed by the pearl of the Ukrainian opera stage Solomiya Krushelnytska, recalled the victories of the famous Ukrainian soccer player Andriy Shevchenko, and then our students shared their own experiences and thoughts about what they heard.

Sign up for Ukrainian language courses, join the community and join conversation clubs with us! See you soon!

--- *Nastya Laskava,*
Fulbright Ukrainian

language teaching assistant 2024-2025 at the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department at the University of Washington (Seattle, USA)



POLISH NEWS

News from UW PSEC



Prof. Agnieszka Jeżyk

On October 24, 2024, we celebrated the official inauguration of the Maria Kott Endowed Professorship in Polish Studies at the University of Washington. Guests included Ryszard Kott's and his late wife's families; Prof. Agnieszka Jeżyk, the Professorship's recipient; Paulina Kapuścińska, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in LA; Teresa Indelak Davis, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Seattle; Dianne Harris, Dean of College of Arts and Sciences; Brian Reed, Divisional Dean of Humanities; Stephanie Kornfeld, Senior Director of Development for Arts & Humanities; UW PSEC members and donors, and Slavic Department faculty.



The ceremony took place in Kane Hall's Walker - Ames Room



Prof. Katarzyna Dziwirek



Dean Dianne Harris

The celebration started with socializing and dinner. The official part included opening remarks by Prof. Katarzyna Dziwirek, followed by congratulations from Dean Dianne Harris and Consul Paulina Kapuścińska. Ryszard Kott spoke about his wife's beautiful life and her dream of establishing a Chair of Polish Studies at the UW. Next, professor Jeżyk gave an engaging talk about her research and vision for the Polish Studies at the UW.



Mr. Ryszard Kott

Once again, we thank Ryszard Kott for his generous donation and to all the donors who, over the years, contributed and supported the UW PSEC's mission.



From left: Prof. K. Dziwirek, M. Grabowska, W. Cieślak-Pawluśkiewicz, Dean B. Reed, Prof. A. Jeżyk; K. Untersteiner, Z. Konofalski, Dean D. Harris, E. Poraj- Kuczewski, Consul General P. Kapuścińska, I. Gabrielson, K. Burdzy, R. Kott, A. Burdzy, and S. Charles

SLOVENE NEWS

The December issue of the UW Library's blog, *Libraries in the Classroom*, featured UW's Early Fall Start program in Slovenia this year:

The University of Washington has a long, productive history of collaboration with the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia's flagship research institution, going all the way back to the 1960s (see [side bar](#))! In 2019, UW Study Abroad decided to formalize a student exchange with Ljubljana, in part to provide UW students with a more personalized, high-quality alternative to other typical European study abroad programs based out of "mega-cities" like London, Paris and Rome. While the launch of the new program was interrupted by the pandemic, it is now back, and drawing student participants. This past September's UW Early Fall Start (EFS) program in Kamnik, Slovenia, provided an opportunity to showcase Slovenia for prospective participants in the academic year exchange.

In September, UW Libraries' Michael Biggins (Affiliate Professor; Slavic, Baltic, and East European Studies Librarian) designed and led 14 UW students on a 3-week, 5-credit intensive study abroad program titled *Slovenia: Language, Culture and Society at a Crossroads*. The home base for the program was a former Ursuline convent built in 1682 on the outskirts of Kamnik, a picturesque town set against the bucolic backdrop of snow-capped mountains and lush landscapes.



*Kamnik Residential
Cultural Center*



*UW students on a
walking tour of Ljubljana
(the country's capital)*

Each day, students divided their time between classroom learning and field trips. Every field trip was preceded by a classroom module that had something to do with the selected destination, providing students with some background and cultural context ahead of each new experience. Through this multi-modal approach, students explored the geology, geography, archaeology, history, art history, and current affairs of the country, as well as Slovene literature (in English translation) and introductory Slovene language skills.

After a recent presentation to UW and Libraries colleagues on the new program, we caught up with Prof. Biggins to ask him about this inaugural study abroad experience in Slovenia.

How often do you teach/lead these types of trips?

"I've been on study or research trips to Slovenia some 15 times, and I've led student groups to Russia, but 2024 was the first time UW offered this particular program. We've planned it again for August-September 2025, and are excited by the initial response."



*the medieval hill town of
Štanjel*



*a guided tour of the town of
Škofja Loka and its environs*

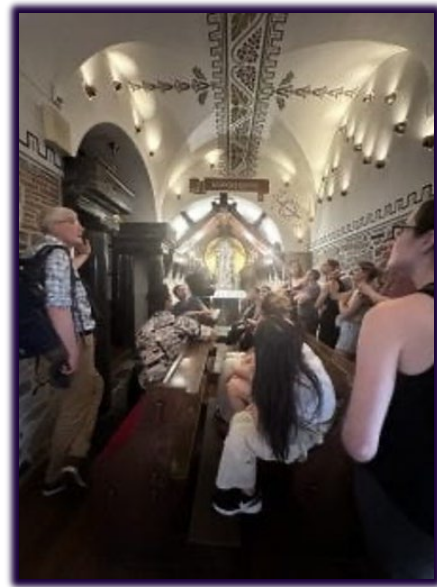


a 14th-century walled church with original frescoes preserved at Hrastovlje

What inspired you to create this unique study abroad program?

“One of my goals was to engage UW students from a wide range of disciplines with a broad cross-section of the humanities as manifested in a context completely new to them, enriching their perception and understanding of the world. I was especially interested in raising awareness of and respect for the many small, distinctive cultures around the world that have survived the vicissitudes of history and the pressures of globalization and continue to thrive. I wanted to offer an opportunity for students to step away from the continuous feedback loop of American mass culture and to see, from close-up, how very differently and distinctively another society can function. And, amidst that difference, to keep an eye out for what may well be widespread — if not universal— patterns and dynamics common to most or all societies, in hopes of using those insights to become wiser about our own.”

FUN FACT: The UW Libraries has one of the three most outstanding research collections for Slovene studies in North America numbering around 8,000 volumes, which Prof. Biggins drew on heavily to prepare course material for the program. Many new additions to these collections are purchased with funds from UW’s Boniecka Slovene Studies Endowment.



a visit to Kamnik’s Franciscan monastery, with its impressive library showcasing Slovene incunabula, including the 1584 Dalmatin Bible, the first complete translation into Slovene, and a chapel designed by architect Jože Plečnik

How are study abroad experiences like this beneficial for students and the faculty who lead them?

“Purposeful foreign travel and study abroad can be transformative for students. The mere fact of living in a non-English environment where the operative language is not one of the better-known world languages, but a small, obscure, unique, yet absolutely thriving, dynamic and creative medium of communication for a community of just two

million, supported by an omnipresent linguistic ecosystem (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, film, theater, a massive (for the country's size) vernacular book industry, and of course signage everywhere) is somehow mind-blowing for



Americans, or at least it should be. We've come to take English for granted as the world's lingua franca and expect everyone to speak it. Many do, but it's not the language of their heart and soul – the domains that are by far the most interesting, that we can truly connect to only by trying to inhabit their language with them.

What's more, in a compact society like Slovenia's, you as a visitor are at barely more than one degree of separation from the country's leading experts in virtually any discipline that matters to you.

Over the decades that I've been engaged with Slovenia, I've made the acquaintance of creatives with ease — artists, writers, scholars and scientists who produce world-class work, in part because the scale of the place means that you inevitably know someone who knows those people. That scale works to the advantage of our students, too, since it's so much easier to facilitate mentorships for them with leading experts in the fields that interest them."

What were some of the highlights of the trip from your perspective?

- **Student presentations:** "As part of the course, each student was tasked with keeping a journal in which they recorded their observations on some aspect of their academic major or a non-academic pursuit of considerable interest to them – as it's manifested in Slovenia. Students had the opportunity to connect with Slovenian experts in these fields, including at the

Did you know?

UW has longstanding cooperative relationships with the University of Ljubljana, which began around 1963 when UW specialists in nuclear physics and engineering began a series of reciprocal research visits. Our ongoing UW-University of Ljubljana Scholars Exchange, which grew out of that first encounter in the 1960s, sends 2 to 3 UW faculty and PhD candidate researchers from all over campus to the University of Ljubljana and we host 2 to 3 of their faculty members here.

As a result, UW has a wide and constantly expanding network of U of Ljubljana faculty with longstanding ties to UW – in fields ranging from biomedical informatics, aeronautics, astronomy, human centered design, and law to music, English, classics and, of course, Slavic languages.

Ask any past UW participant in that exchange what they thought of it and they will tell you at a minimum two things – that their Slovene colleagues were outstanding, and that they fell in love with Slovenia. In many cases, the collaborations have continued for years.

University of Ljubljana. At the end of the program, each student gave an oral presentation to the class on their exploratory topic (as we called it). The presentations were quite good, and I enjoyed seeing each student's individual discoveries through the lens of topics that were of paramount interest to them, personally."



a day-long tour of Trieste, Italy, and its Slovene communities

- **Trieste Commemoration:** “Along with a few thousand local Slovenes and Italians, we attended the commemoration ceremony on the Bazovica village commons in observance of September 6, where, in 1930, Italy’s Fascist authorities executed four young local Slovenes who were members of an underground Slovene organization that resisted Fascist Italy’s policy of ethnocide of its large Slovene population. Those four became icons of Slovene resistance and remain so to this day. While some minor Italian-Slovene interethnic tensions remain in greater Trieste, the legal framework for European Union member states now guarantees that autochthonous ethnic minorities— like the Slovenes of Italy—have full human and civil rights, which is a monumental achievement.”



a trip by cable car to mile-high Velika Planina (a vast late-summer upland pasturage for sheep and cattle); students enjoying local hospitality on the plateau

- **Access to natural environment:** “I think the students were impressed with the proximity of extensive natural environments even in the largest cities, where you can walk to the end of your street and enter a forest or begin ascending a mountainside. A corollary to this is the apparent attention given by public policy in Slovenia to preventing urban sprawl and protecting the country’s spectacular natural environment.”

“...Slovenia has been a major innovator in sustainable forestry practices for going on a century, something that several UW Forestry faculty members have investigated on site.”

Prof. Biggins plans to continue leading trips to Slovenia for the foreseeable future.

“I would like to make this course and trip an annual feature of UW Study Abroad’s Early Fall Start offerings,” says Biggins.

“My hope is to continue organizing, leading and teaching this program or variants of it for the rest of my UW career and well into retirement, and to encourage other UW faculty to participate.”

Prof. Biggins also is encouraged by the prospect that, over time, the program will serve a secondary function of generating student interest in UW Study Abroad’s new academic year student exchange with the University of Ljubljana.

NEWS FROM YOU

Robert Ewen, Ph.D. (Slavic Linguistics, 1979) writes: Last summer I traveled to Norway to explore my Norwegian roots. While in Norway I took a cruise up the Norwegian coast. The northern terminus of the voyage is the small town of Kirkenes, located less than 10 miles from the Russian border. While walking about the town I came across a Russian Consulate, not surprising for a town with a historical connection to Russia and so close to the border. What was somewhat surprising, and for me emotionally gratifying, is that directly across the street from the Consulate I found a clearly homemade, but quite elaborate, improvised memorial to Alexei Navalny.

While I stood by the memorial, an old woman came up and added a small bouquet of plastic flowers to the display. I asked her in Russian if she spoke Russian. Her answer was, “Of course, and we do not

lose hope." She never explained precisely what she referenced by that statement, but I like to think she meant that her hopes for a Russia free of tyranny remain.

Окончательно! After two years of planning, **Gray Carpenter Church, Ed.D. (BA 1977, Slavic Lang & Lit)**, her husband, Al Church, and their two Basenjjs, Gaelen and PawPaw, began their latest adventure: living in Spain for a while. To Al, "a while" means three to five years; to Gray, it means, "See ya' back in the States someday."

Since their arrival on October 17, they have been busy settling into their new home, learning new Spanish words and phrases, and indulging in the sights, culture, and cuisine around their new hometown of Cómpeeta. Cómpeeta is one of the famous Pueblos Blancos located in the autonomous region of Andalucía in southwestern Spain.

For their 22nd wedding anniversary, Gray and Al plan a short trip to Granada and its environs to savor the traditions of Christmas in Spain. Meanwhile, they are starting to plan other trips around Europe for 2025 and beyond. Says Gray, "This 'retirement' thing is surprisingly easy to get used to!"

Rebecca Manring (MA 1974), professor of Religious Studies and India Studies at Indiana University, recently returned from Phase 2 of her Fulbright Professional Excellence flex award in India. She is investigating the annual Dharma-gajan festival in rural West Bengal. She became curious about the festival as she's been translating Rupram Cakravarti's mid-17th century epic, the Dharma-mangala, about the establishment of the worship of the god Dharma on earth and started to wonder what that particular deity meant to people on the ground today. As it turns out, he means a great deal!

Here I am at a street festival in north Kolkata on one of the days of the ritual.

She also chairs the Language Committee of the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS). The AIIS runs programs in various languages all over India, for students in US institutions. As chair of the committee, she has academic oversight of the programs and works on selection of students every year, as well as making annual site visits.



Ronald D. LeBlanc (BA 1977, MA 1979, PhD 1984) writes:

My English translation of Vasily Narezhny's Russian novel, "The Divinity School Student" (Бурпак) is now just 3 pages away from completion. There is still quite a bit of editing and revising that needs to be done. So I'm aiming to complete my work on this project by the end of academic year 2024-2025.

Azizillo Nishanov (left in bottom photo) and **Anton Seyduzov** prepare traditional Uzbek *plov* on site at last year's Navruz celebration of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association, this year taking place at Shoreline College on April 12, 2025 from 1-5 pm. Visit stsca.org for ticket information.



Photo credit: Helen Holter, STSCA Board Member

**IN MEMORIAM:
DAVID BONDERMAN**
Alumni Impact
(1942-2024)

Below is [a message from the Presidential Blog](#), dated December 11, 2024:

I join the many people across the University of Washington who were saddened to learn of the passing of David Bonderman, who earned his undergraduate degree in Russian here in 1963. We are proud to count him among our alumni and grateful for his generous support, which created immense opportunities for students to transform their lives and expand their horizons through travel and cultural exchange.

Over two decades ago, David established [the Bonderman Fellowship](#) at the UW, which each year provides a select group of undergraduate, graduate and professional students with the unparalleled opportunity to pursue independent exploration and travel abroad for eight months. I worked closely with David over the years, including when I was the director of the Honors Program. He believed deeply in the transformative power of travel, cultural exchange and learning through lived experience. His own life was changed by a similar travel fellowship as young man, and he was passionate about recreating that opportunity for future generations.

The “Bonderman,” as the fellowship is known, is among our University’s most prestigious and sought-after honors. For the 280 students who have received it so far, their months of “wander and wonder,” in David’s words, were life-changing and inspiring. Bonderman Fellows have traveled the world to pursue their passion for art, politics, public health, social justice and countless other callings. [Each of their journeys](#) is the embodiment of David’s belief that some of the most important education happens outside the classroom, in

unfamiliar settings, in going beyond our comfort zone and in embracing adventure.

David’s impact on the University of Washington, our students and the world will be a lasting and treasured legacy. As a business leader and entrepreneur, co-founder and co-owner of the Seattle Kraken, and advocate for wilderness preservation, he will be greatly missed, and our thoughts are with his family and loved ones as we grieve his loss.



GIFTS

The following is a list of gifts made to departmental funds since the Winter 2024 newsletter. Many thanks to all donors for their generous support of Slavic Studies at the University of Washington!

Aaron Shur & Tracy Koncilja	Frederick McDonald	Paul Siscel
Aldis Purs & Ann-Marie Petersons	Gordana Crnkovic & David Hahn	Piotr & Marija Horoszowski
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We are very grateful to our alumni and friends for your generous support. Please help us continue our efforts to further the study of Slavic languages and literatures by giving generously whenever possible. Donations may be made by credit card on the [Support Us](#) page of our website, or by sending a check made out to the *University of Washington Foundation* with one of the funds designated below on the memo line. Checks should be mailed to:

University of Washington Foundation
Box 359505
Seattle, WA 98195

- () CZECHS Czech Studies Endowment Fund – Support for students studying Czech
- () SLADIS Friends of Slavic Languages & Literatures – Gifts may be expended at the discretion of the Chair
- () SLAVIC Institutional Allowance – General support for the department, including undergraduate and graduate student awards
- () FOMSCH Oleg Fomin Scholarship Fund – Travel scholarship to promote exploration and study of the languages, cultures, and histories of post-Soviet states
- () MICKLE Micklesen Graduate Fund – General support for graduate program
- () POLDIS Polish Distinguished Speakers Fund – Showcase achievements of Poles by bringing speakers to campus
- () POLISS Friends of Polish Studies Fund – General support for Polish studies
- () POLEND Maria Kott Endowed Professorship of Polish Studies – Promote permanence and expansion of program to include more levels of Polish language, history and culture
- () ROMANI Romanian Studies Fund – Support Romanian Studies, including but not limited to support for a Romanian Fulbright
- () RBCEND Roma Boniecka-Anna Cienciala Endowment for Slovene Studies – Provide support for Slovene Studies
- () SWAYZE Swayze Fellowship Fund – Fellowship support for graduate students
- () UKRAND Friends of Ukrainian Studies Fund – General support for Ukrainian studies
- () UKRANI Ukrainian Endowment Fund – Provide Ukrainian language and culture instruction
- () PAHNSC Vadim Pahn Scholarship Fund – Russian language scholarship for undergraduates

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