

Dear VGBIL colleagues,

I write to congratulate you all on the occasion of the Library's 100th anniversary. What a great accomplishment, to survive and thrive through a century that includes so many challenging events and changes. I am so proud to be associated with you.

I spent more than 25 years working with VGBIL, starting in 1990, and every one of those years was exciting and satisfying. Yekaterina Yurevna—permit me to call her Katya--became not only a wonderful colleague, but also a dear friend, and like you, I miss her sorely. Together we planned and carried out many projects in both our countries. We mounted exhibitions in Russia and in the U.S., and traveled the world together, organizing conferences and giving lectures on our shared passions: libraries as neutral, tolerant spaces where librarians can help people improve their lives.

At about the same time that I began my involvement with you, I became the founding director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois. Katya and I quickly found ways to connect our two institutions in a very successful training relationship. More than a hundred librarians from all over Russia came to our center, where they joined librarians from all over the world, studying together and sharing experiences.

The years I spent working with you, and learning from you, are among the richest in my professional and personal life. I send my very best wishes as VGBIL enters its second century.

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