



THE SOCIETY
for SLOVENE STUDIES

LETTER

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Secretary's Message... **LITERATURE TAKES CENTER STAGE**

While the Slovene Studies bridges a range of disciplines— from history, to political science, to literature, and more—in many ways, 2023 and 2024 will be remembered as moments when the literary took center stage, at least across Europe more widely.

That's because this fall, Slovenia was the guest of honor at the international Frankfurt Book Fair, held in Germany in mid-October, and this upcoming spring, Slovenia will be the guest of honor at the Bologna Children's book Fair. These fairs serve as major cultural events across Europe, and beyond, and Slovenia's place of honor at both offer an opportunity for the wider world outside its borders to connect with the range of poetry, drama, fiction, essays, children's writing, illustrations, and more in its rich literary landscape.

While there were, and promise to be, more fascinating, stimulating, and celebratory panels at each fair than we could possibly enumerate here, I invite you to check out both the very brief synopses of the fairs in this newsletter—and to follow the links therein to learn more.

In addition to the usual news—election results; upcoming conference panels; calls for papers—we offer a hearty congratulations to member Joe Valencic for two major achievements: the premiere of a documentary about his life on RTV SLO, and his recent election as president of the Slovenian Union of America. You can read more about both accomplishments in the member spotlight section of the newsletter.

As the end of the year approaches, we invite anyone who will be attending the ASEEEES conference in Philadelphia at the end of November and beginning of December to connect with us at the annual business meeting, to be held on November 30 at 7 pm EST on-site. Any member who wishes to become involved in the meeting or any other facet of the organization is welcome to email me any time at kristina.reardon@gmail.com. ■

Kristina Reardon, Secretary
Society for Slovene Studies | Summer–Fall 2023

SSS ELECTION RESULTS

In spring 2023, the Society held elections for two roles within the organization: president for a term of three years (to end February 2026) and a seat on the Executive Council, also for a term of three years (to end February 2026).

Current president Michael Biggins stood for another term as president, and current Executive Council Member Mary-Allen Johnson also stood for another term on the Council. Both candidates were nominated during the February 10, 2023 business meeting, held over Zoom. No other candidates ran for these positions.

Biggins was re-elected president by a simple majority, and Johnson was re-elected to the Executive Council. A short biography of each is presented below:

Michael Biggins received his PhD in Slavic languages and literatures from the U. of Kansas in 1985 and an MLS from the U. of Illinois in 1988. Since 1994 he has served as Slavic, Baltic and East European studies librarian at the U. of Washington, Seattle, where he also teaches Russian and Slovenian language, literature, and translation as an affiliate professor. He has translated into English and published some 20 book-length works of 20th-century Slovene literature and contributed articles to *Slovene Studies*. In 2015 he received the Janko Lavrin Diploma for lifetime contributions to Slovene literature abroad, and in 2018 was appointed Honorary Consul of the Republic of Slovenia for Washington State. At present he is researching a book-length biography of Slovene novelist Vladimir Bartol, the author of *Alamut*.

Mary-Allen "Pasha" Johnson, an Associate Professor in the University Libraries of The Ohio State University, is the Curator of the Hilandar Research Library (HRL) and the Director of the Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies. Early in her graduate career she took a course on Reading Knowledge in Slovene and joined the Society for Slovene Studies. Returning to Ohio State with a master's in library science in 2012, Mary-Allen processed the Society's archives that were accessioned by the HRL and began attending the Society's annual meeting more regularly. With the establishment of the Slovene Research Initiative (SRI) at Ohio State in 2013, she was able to conduct research in Ljubljana on Jernej Kopitar for one month in both 2015 and 2016 (see her "'Kopitar's Collection of Slavic Codices': Its Creation and Disposition," *Slovene Studies* 38.1-2 [2016]: 21-39). In turn, she has assisted SRI Faculty Scholars during their research visits to Columbus and promotes Slovene studies to faculty and students at Ohio State and beyond.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

SSS Member Joe Valencic



'A Slovenian with Two Homelands' premieres

TV Slovenija has premiered a documentary on Joe Valencic, a well-known figure on the Slovenian-American scene. "Joe Valencic: A Slovenian with Two Homelands" can be accessed on the TV Slovenija website at: <https://www.rtvlo.si/rtv365/arhiv/174993472?s=tv>

Joe was filmed in Cleveland, Chicago and Slovenia by producer Marjan Šrmpf and cinematographer Robert Kranvogel. The 50-minute documentary shows how Joe inspires Slovenian-American communities to boost interest and participation through Slovenian-themed activities. He sees the commonalities and synergies between Slovenians here and in the homeland and enables both groups to develop exchanges and celebrate their cultural identity.

Joe serves as President of the Slovenian Union of America and the Cleveland Federation of Lodges of the Slovene National Benefit Society (SNPJ). He is a founder and director of the National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame, the country's Slovenian-American music museum. Joe's weekly radio and internet broadcast features news and music from Slovenia, which he delivers in both English and Slovenian. He is a member of the Society for Slovene Studies.

The Slovenian title of the program is "Slovenec z dvema domovinama." The documentary is presented in Slovenian with several interviews in English. Personalities include Nashville's Joey Miskulin, Slovenian entertainer Vlado Kreslin, Slovenian Consul General Alenka Jerak, Dr. Luka Zibelnik from Cleveland State University, and Dr. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik from the Institute for Slovenian Migration.

Journal *Slovene Studies*

Thanks to society members for their patience as journal publishing catches up. Volume 44, number 2 (2022) is being mailed in November; Volume 45 will appear soon thereafter. Members are reminded that past issues of the journal, through 2018, are available online. Use the journal link on the society's website (slovenestudies.com) to access past issues.

Valencic Elected President of SUA

Valencic, a member of the Society for Slovene Studies, was welcomed as National President of The Slovenian Union of America (SUA) at its recent convention in Pueblo, Colorado.

In his acceptance as President, Joe Valencic spoke of the SUA's role in connecting Slovenian-American communities across the county. "The Slovenian Union of America board members apply their strengths, skills and contacts to engage members with exciting, innovative events and projects," he said. "We help folks celebrate the Slovenian spirit in America."

The Slovenian Union of America promotes interest in and awareness of Slovenia and Slovenian culture, language and history, as well as Slovenian-American activities. SUA sponsors Slovenian-themed programming, grants and scholarships, a quarterly magazine, and a museum in Joliet, Illinois. Plans are underway for the SUA centennial in 2026.

Past president **Mary Lou Voelk** expressed her thanks to all with whom she worked during her two terms. "You sincerely believe in the mission of our beloved Slovenian heritage," she said. "I wish you all good times and good decisions." She writes a weekly e-mail feature and articles for *Zarja – The Dawn*, the SUA's official publication.

He is based in Cleveland, Ohio, and serves as President of the Cleveland Federation of Lodges of the Slovene National Benefit Society (SNPJ). He is a founder



Joe Valencic is the new National President of the Slovenian Union of America, headquartered in Joliet, Illinois.

and past president of the National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame and directs the museum and archives. His Saturday radio broadcast features music and news from Slovenia. Joe documents the Slovenian-American experience with films, exhibitions and presentations in the U. S. and Europe. He is a co-founder of the SUA's Literary Award. Valencic represented Slovenians in the U. S. on the international advisory board of Slovenia's Office for Slovenians Abroad.

The Slovenian Union of America is headquartered in Joliet, Illinois. Branches are located in nine states and Washington DC. The organization was founded in 1926 by Marie Prislant as the Slovenian Women's Union of America. Membership is open to anyone with an affinity for Slovenia and all things Slovenian. For more information, check SlovenianUnion.org.



Joe Valencic, the new President of the Slovenian Union of America, is congratulated by the organization's three past presidents, Kathy Ferrante, Bonnie Pohar Prokup and Mary Lou Voelk.

THE SLOVENIAN UNION OF AMERICA

— PRESENTS —

The Sixth Annual Slovenian Literary Award

For nearly a century, the Slovenian Union of America has been dedicated to preserving the legacy of our Slovenian heritage.

Writing has played an essential role in sustaining our culture and our communities.

The SUA Slovenian Literary Award honors those who continue this vital tradition.

Accepting Submissions from November 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024 at 5 pm EST

Open to first time writers as well as published authors.

Applicants are welcome to register, provide a 100-word biography, and submit their work here:

2024 Slovenian Literary Award by SUA

Open to all genres of creative writing.

Short Stories, Novels, Poetry, Memoir, Creative Nonfiction, Personal Essays, Narrative Nonfiction, and Screenplays are welcome.

Musical compositions will not be considered.

Works in Slovene are acceptable, although we may request a translation.

Up to 3 submissions per writer (but only one may be book-length.)

Applicants may live anywhere but must have a connection to Slovenian culture or heritage.

Individual writers only, 18 years and up. SUA membership is not required.

Works are judged blind by a committee that includes writers.

Winner to be announced in June 2024. Details to follow.

For more information please contact:
slovenianliteraryaward@gmail.com

Slovenia guest of honor at 2023 FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

The Frankfurt Book Fair—styled as a “Honeycomb of Words”—took place in mid-October this year with Slovenia as its guest of honor. The event marks a major milestone for Slovenian publishers, authors, and illustrators. The Frankfurt Book Fair describes the guest of honor program as a “magnet for audiences and a significant hook for the media in its coverage” of the annual event.

Calling Slovenia a “country with a rich book culture,” promotional materials for the fair noted that due to “the political tunnel vision of Austria/Austro-Hungary and Yugoslavia... throughout a major part of Slovenian history the most talented and insightful Slovenian intellectuals preferred literature and culture to politics.” Yet the materials also note that Slovenian literature has not historically been available widely in translation; indeed, they cite the statistic that a drastic uptick in 600 translations of Slovenian works of literature were released between 2019 and 2022, in large part in preparation for Slovenia’s appearance on the Frankfurt Book Fair stage. Being featured as guest of honor at the fair goes a long way in promoting the rich literary legacy of the country. As Miha Kovač, curator for the Slovenian program, writes, it is hoped that the Guest of Honor program will “further accelerate interest in book words that are created in many smaller, but living and dynamic book cultures.”

The appearance also coincides with the release of the white paper **“Why higher-level reading is important,”** being billed as the “Ljubljana Reading Manifesto” after its official presentation in the city on October 10, 2023. It was authored by four international scholars: Andre Schüller-Zwierlein (University of Regensburg); Anne Mangen (University of Stavanger); Miha Kovač (University of Ljubljana); and Adriaan van der Weel (Leiden University). It argues that digital environments are negatively impacting reading practices, and as a result, reading instruction should prioritize higher-level reading tasks including, but not limited to slow reading and long-form reading. An English language text of the document is available online: <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/12770/11081>



Among the dozens of panels featured daily across the five day Frankfurt Book Fair were:

- **Ljubljana Reading Manifesto: Why Book Reading Matters?** – featuring Karine Pansa, Ernest Osterkamp, Claudia Roth, Burhan Sönmez, Asta Vrečko, André Schüller-Zwierlein, and Miha Kovač.
- **Translations in Times of War: Slavic Literary Connections During Times of Military Conflicts and Politics Disputes** – featuring Aleksandar Gatalica, Georgi Gospodinov, Drago Jančar, Oksana Zabuzhko, and Mladen Veskovič.
- **LGBTIQA+ Literature from Slovenia** featuring Brane Mozetič, Suzana Tratnik, and Florian Valerius.
- **How Much Yugoslavia is Still Present in Present-Day Slovenia?** – featuring Andrej Blatnik, Goran Vojnovič, and Doris Akrap.
- **The History of Slovenian Literary Translation** – featuring Erwin Köstler, Nika Kocijančič Pokorn, and Iztok Ilc.
- **Foreigners in the House of Natives**– featuring Erica Johnson Debeljak, Carlos Pascual, and Karina Goldberg.

A full listing of panels, workshops, film screenings, and discussions is available at <https://sloveniafrankfurt2023.com/en>.



Photos contributed by **Olivia Hellewell**

Slovenia to be guest of honor at **2024 BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR**

*The Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF)
will take place in April 2024, and this year,
Slovenia will be the guest of honor.
The fair bills itself as "the world's leading event
for international rights and licensing trading"
in the field of children's literature.*

*The Slovenian Book Agency (JAK) notes that
after the Frankfurt Book Fair, held annually in October,
the BCBF is "the international platform at which
the greatest number of Slovene publishers from the field
of children's and young adult literature
are presented, either independently or as part
of the Slovene national stand."*

The annual fair offers several publishing awards, as well as an illustrators' exhibition, a comics corner for graphic narrative, a rights center, a translation center, and a bookseller lounge, among other arenas and events. The 2024 book fair catalog promises that the event "will offer a unique and comprehensive approach to discover the creative and rich tradition of Slovenian children's publishing."

Slovenia was originally to have been honored in 2021, according to the Slovenian Book Agency (JAK), but was postponed until 2024 after the fair did not occur in 2020 and 2021. Slovenia joins past honorees from all over the world, such as Italy (2000), Argentina (2008), Korea (2009), Croatia (2015), China (2018), to name just a short selection of past guests of honor.

In a text written in 2019 in preparation for the anticipated 2021 event, JAK reports: "The organizers of the fair have long recognized Slovenia as a country where authors' expression in the fields of illustration and literature for children exist at the highest level." Among several goals for the

appearance, JAK hopes to "encourage more translations of Slovene books for children and adults into (major) foreign languages" and "present Slovene books, authors and illustrators to the wider Italian audience."

Slovenia boasts a rich tradition of children's literature which have seen some international success, chief among them *Maček Muri* (Muri the Cat), written by Kajetan Kovič and illustrated by Jelka Reichman in 1975. Last year, illustrators Ana Zavadlav and Huiqin Wang, as well as writers Miroslav Košuta and Andrej Rozman Roza, were nominated for prizes at the BCBF. This year's nominees have yet to be announced.

2024 will represent the sixty-first year the fair has been held, and it will take place from April 8-11 in the city of Bologna. Those interested in reading more about the fair and its history, as well as Slovenia's role in this year's events, are welcome to consult:

www.bolognachildrensbokfair.com.

The website is available in English and Italian.

COMPLETE PRINT SET OF JOURNALS AVAILABLE

As part of my 'döstdaning' [1] I shall be getting rid of **all four issues of Papers in Slovene Studies (1975, 1976, 1977, 1978)** and a **complete run of Slovene Studies. Journal of the Society for Slovene Studies** from its inception, **SS 1979/1**, through **SS 2021/22**.

There is one unfortunate gap: **SS 1991/2** is missing. The collection does however include clean bound copies of the two Festschriften, **SS 1987/1-2 A Festschrift to Honor Rado L. Lencek on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday** and **SS 1989/1-2 In Honor of the Memory of Toussaint S. Hočevar (1927-1987)**; and the Lencek volume has a printed note of appreciation, signed by Rado Lencek, inside the front cover.

If anyone wishes to have the almost-complete set, please let me know by xxxx. After that date, if anyone wants one or more single copies, let me know by yyyy. As for potential competition: 'first come, first served.' Note however that I shall require mailing costs — from Edmonton AB, Canada. — Tom Priestly, tpriestl@telus.net

[1] look up 'The Art of Swedish Death Cleaning'

— FROM THE — **TREASURER**

Dues Notices were mailed with he journals this past March and November. Dues can be paid by check or on the society's website, slovenestudies.com. Thanks to members who have generously contributed to the society's funds!
— Timothy Pogačar

Printing Fund

Michael D. Cummins
Darko Kajfez
Jerry Lomshek
Mary Ann Miosek Murphy
Gojko Stare

Center Fund

Jamsek-Rolnick
Timothy Pogacar
Meta von Rabenau
Anthony S. Ravnik
Mark Ryavec

Endowment Fund

Meta von Rabenau
Anthony S. Ravnik
Jernej Watson

Lencek Graduate Student Prize

Darko Kajfez
Jerry Lomshek
Maya Margaronis
Meta von Rabenau

Velikonja Undergraduate Student Prize

Darko Kajfez
Josef Laposi
Jerry Lomshek
Meta von Rabenau

ASEEES Panels

The annual conference of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies will take place from November 30 - December 1 in Philadelphia, Penn. 2023 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the organization's conception, and the theme is "Decolonization." Those interested in attending can learn more at: <https://www.aseees.org/convention>.

Meanwhile, a number of panels related to Slovene studies will be hosted, listed below. We draw special attention to the 50th anniversary roundtable organized by the SSS and chaired by SSS treasurer Timothy Pogačar of Bowling Green State University, featuring participants James Gow of King's College London, Gregor Kranjc of Brock University, Mojca Nidorfer of the University of Ljubljana, and Alojzija Zupan Sosič of the University of Ljubljana. It will occur on Thursday, November 30 from 1-2:45 pm EST in Salon B on the fifth floor of the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown.

DATE	TIME	TITLE
11/30	1 pm	50 Years of the Society for Slovene Studies: Half a Century of Slovene History and Culture
11/30	7 pm	Society for Slovene Studies Business Meeting
12/1	8 am	Socialism ili Barbarism XIII: Yugoslav People's Art and Culture
12/1	3:30 pm	Introducing New Yugoslav Studies
12/2	12 pm	"The Young Men, They're All in Uniform": Youth and Military Culture in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, ca. 1900
12/2	2 pm	Book Discussion: Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement: Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Imaginaries, by ed. Paul Stubbs
12/2	4 pm	Socialism ili Barbarism XI: Reclaiming Socialist Childhood
12/3	10 am	Yugoslav Non-Aligned Encounters in the Global South III: Development Policies

Annual Midwest Slavic Conference

The annual Midwest Slavic Conference will be held on April 5-7, 2024 at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, hosted by the University's Center for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies. This year's theme is "Cold Wars Past and Present," though proposals may be submitted on any topic related to the Slavic region. Dr. Richard Hermann of OSU will deliver the keynote address.

The CFP elaborates on the theme: "The impact of Cold War-era tensions can still be felt in many parts of Eastern Europe and Eurasia and the effects continue to shape political and social landscapes. We welcome papers that will examine the ways in which the Cold War has influenced political ideologies, relationships with the West, and ongoing conflicts and pressures in the region. The conference theme will provide students and scholars with the opportunity to discuss these complex political and social dynamics."

To submit to the conference, presenters are asked to draft a one-paragraph abstract and to combine that with a C.V. in a PDF file. The conference welcomes submissions for individual or pre-formed panels. Submissions are due by 11:59 pm EST on January 26, 2024 to an online submission portal (linked here: <https://slaviccenter.osu.edu/about/conferences/midwest-slavic>), and acceptances will be announced on February 19. For those looking to attend but not present, a schedule of panels will be announced on February 23.

Registration fees range from \$25 for general attendees to \$50 for faculty; more details can be found on the conference website (linked above). Of note: students are able to request a waiver code by contacting cseees@osu.edu. Faculty and others who wish to sponsor a young scholar may email the same address to coordinate donating a conference registration fee.