Youth Literature Festival

On October 4-6, the College of Education hosted its fourth Youth Literature Festival. This annual event celebrates literature in the lives of youth by bringing together local and national authors, illustrators, poets, and storytellers to share their stories, craft, and enthusiasm with children, teens, and adults. Organized in collaboration with the University Library, author visits to area schools and libraries, as well as a writing contest for children in kindergarten through fifth grade, are also central to festival activities.

REEEC participated in the Community Day Celebration on the last day of the festival. Thanks to the Center’s display put together by our graduate assistant, Ryan Eavenson, children could immerse themselves in the beautifully illustrated translations of fairy tales from Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

REEEC also informed parents and K-12 teachers of its resources and outreach activities, such as the Slavic Story and Craft Curricula, and the bi-monthly Slavic Story Time at the Urbana Free Library. Last but not least, both young and old were invited to make a Firebird mask and learn, thereby, about one of the most persistent symbols of Russian folklore and national culture. As David Galloway explained, “The Firebird as an icon is revered by the Russian peasants while at the same time alarming them. A symbol of power and wealth, it is always depicted as being large, strong, and shining like gold. The Firebird has inspired many stories and plays, including a famous ballet by Igor Stravinsky simply called The Firebird.” The Annotated Afanasev Library, Courtesy of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, University of Pittsburgh.

The Youth Literature Festival was a great chance to meet with a diverse section of the community in Illinois, and disseminate the opportunities that REEEC has to offer. Thanks to the help of the organizers from the College of Education and the Center’s staff, REEEC was able to reach over four hundred children and adults, who expressed their enthusiasm by flaunting their firebird masks throughout the day. Next year, it shall be no different.