

This document is a revised version of the article with the same title published in *Books, Bibliographies, and Pugs: A Festschrift to Honor Murlin Croucher* Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2006 1-5 (*Indiana Slavic Studies*, 16), pp. 87-112.
NOTE: Cites to this article should be made to the version published by Slavica.

Where Library Meets Vendor: A Comparison of Six Vendors of Russian Books

Jon Giullian

This work compares the online catalogs, monographic holdings, and book prices of six major vendors of academic Russian books. The purpose is twofold: (1) to determine which catalogs are the most robust and, thus, most useful to bibliographers in the book selection process; and (2) to discover which of the six vendors can provide the widest range of coverage at the lowest prices. The work also alludes to the challenges Slavic librarians face in the acquisition of Russian books. The study begins with a discussion of the challenges encountered during the process of searching vendors' online catalogs, followed by a description of the methodology used to compile the checklist of titles. Vendors' holdings are then compared across several categories. Data include raw scores and percentages. The final component compares the duplication and cost of monographs among the six vendors.

The six vendors used for comparison include: ATC Books International (ATC), East View Information Services (EV), Esterum Russian Books Worldwide (Est), MIPP International (MIPP), Natasha Kozmenko Booksellers (NK), and Russian Press Service (RPS). They were selected because of their large inventories of academic Russian books and because their inventories are readily available online. The criteria for comparison consist of monographic works, including a few monographic series, on the life and works of Leo Tolstoy. Monographic titles on the life and works of Leo Tolstoy were extracted from vendors' online catalogs. Titles were then compiled into a cumulative checklist. The process of compiling this checklist

Gregory C. Ference and Bradley L. Schaffner, eds. *Books, Bibliographies and Pugs: A Festschrift to Honor Murlin Croucher*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2006, 1-5. (*Indiana Slavic Studies*, 16.)

uncovered differences and nuances in the search functions, display options, and the level of bibliographic detail available in vendors' online catalogs. A discussion of these differences and nuances immediately follows.

Transliteration, Truncation, Case Sensitivity, and Web Browsers

The four categories for comparison include: transliteration, truncation, case sensitivity, and web browser compatibility. Four vendors (ATC, EV, MIPP, RPS) use the Library of Congress (LC) system for transliterating Cyrillic characters into Roman or Latin script. At the time the queries were conducted, NK employed a slightly modified version of the LC system, in which the Roman letter [y], rather than [i] used in the LC system, represents the Cyrillic character [й]. While this difference had no effect on the search results, NK has since updated its online catalog, eliminating this variation. Esterum follows the German transliteration system, which differs from the LC system with respect to several characters (Table 1). Although Slavic librarians should be

Table 1
Comparison of transliteration systems

Cyrillic	й	ц	я	ю	э
LC	i	ts	ia	iu	e
German	j	c	ja	ju	eh

aware of these differences, a simple way to avoid mistakes in transliteration is to search Esterum's online catalog using Cyrillic characters. Four of the six vendors (EV, Est, MIPP, NK) support searches in Cyrillic characters. Besides the transliteration system, Esterum's search engine does not support word truncation. The use of truncated search terms (i.e., *tolst*) retrieve zero results. Search engines for the five other vendors support word truncation. RPS's search engine is case sensitive, requiring *Tolst* rather than *tolst*.

The search process also uncovered minor glitches in compatibility between vendors' search engines and web browsers. Initially, MIPP's

search function did not work in Mozilla Firefox 1.0.6; hence all queries on MIPP's online catalog were performed using Internet Explorer. When checked later (in April 2006), MIPP's search function worked fine in Mozilla Firefox. NK's search engine experiences minor problems with Mozilla Firefox 1.0.6 and Netscape 8.1. The initial query for any given search session returns results, which flash on the screen for a brief moment, only to be replaced by vertical lines in the display frame. A second click on the search button reproduces the results. NK functions without glitches on Internet Explorer. (See Appendix 1 for a summary of comparative functionality among vendors' online catalogs; see Appendix 2 for a ranking of online catalogs based on the data in Appendix 1.)

Availability and Accuracy

One of the major issues regarding vendors' online catalogs concerns a vendor's ability to supply all the titles listed in its catalog. Only EV and MIPP provide definite information on current availability. Individual records in MIPP's database show the status of the book, whether "in stock" or "available to be ordered." For EV, one can assume that monographs with listed prices are available; otherwise a "see note" appears in the price field, explaining that the monograph is currently out of print but that EV will attempt to find a copy for a non-refundable search fee which is deducted from the price of the book.¹

The accuracy of search queries and results varies from vendor to vendor. This study tested all six online catalogs. Queries for *tolst* were conducted in five online catalogs (ATC, EV, MIPP, NK, and RPS) on separate dates several months apart, with the last query being completed on 10 February 2006. In all five cases, the second investigation retrieved the exact same titles plus a relatively small number of new ones. Since none of the previous titles disappeared from the results, it can be inferred that vendors added several monographs to their databases during the interval between the inquiries. For this reason, the online catalogs of ATC, EV, MIPP, NK

¹ This fee depends upon the specific title. Fees of \$10.00 or \$50.00 were encountered during the process of conducting this inquiry. See East View Information Services at www.eastview.com/russian/books/index.asp.

and RPS appear to be cumulative lists of titles.² Only MIPP and EV show definite availability. One must either presume that ATC, NK, and RPS can supply the monographs listed or inquire for each individual title.³ Practical experience shows that not all books listed can be supplied.

Esterum's online catalog seems to differ slightly from the other five. Two titles that appeared on the results of initial queries disappeared after a repeat of the investigation at a later date, implying that Esterum purges, or suppresses, from its catalog those titles no longer available. These findings indicate that Est, EV and MIPP provide the most accurate data on current availability. For ATC, NK and RPS, one must contact the vendor directly in order to be certain that the books listed in their online catalog are currently available for purchase.

Vendor Holdings

This section provides a comparison of vendors' holdings of Russian monographs on Tolstoy. The process of comparison involves several steps. First, search terms that would account for all monographs, or as many monographs as possible, were selected. The study analyzed the results for relevance, and eliminated false hits—monographs not relevant to Leo Tolstoy. The determination of relevance proved a difficult task, since one cannot always judge a book by its title, bibliographic data, or even an annotation. Pertinent monographs were compiled into a master list and sorted. The investigation then compared and analyzed the level of duplication of titles among vendors to ascertain the "monograph share" of each vendor.

² Since the respective booklist or catalog numbers appear on each electronic record (for RPS and NK), it would appear that their respective online catalogs are an electronic compilation of their booklists. Such "cumulative" online catalogs provide a history of vendor holdings. For the purpose of comparing prices, it does not really matter whether the items are still available. The data show how the prices compare when the monographs were available, although in a few cases, the original prices may have dropped in order to sell-off overstocked books.

³ One advantage of RPS's print catalogs is the fact that RPS shows other volumes of multi-volume sets or series that are available. In practice, the print catalogs from RPS and ATC are much more helpful than their online catalogs because of the English annotations.

The goal in searching vendors' online catalogs was to retrieve the maximum number of monographs on or about Leo Tolstoy. In order to account for grammatical variations in the Tolstoy surname (*tolstaia, tolstogo, tolstoi, tolstom, tolstomu, tolstoy, tolstykh, tolstym*), the inquiry used a truncated form of Tolstoy's name: the Romanized form (*tolst*) and the Cyrillic form (ТОЛСТ). On 10 February 2006, a search for *tolst* and ТОЛСТ yielded the results shown in Table 2:

Table 2
Comparitive results for Romanized and Cyrillic queries

Vendor	Total hits for Roman (<i>tolst</i>)	Total hits for Cyrillic (ТОЛСТ)	Monographs (hits) related to Leo Tolstoy	Non-relevant / false hits
ATC	134	n/a	66	68
EV	498	497 ⁴	127	371
Esterum	0 ⁵	0 ⁵	—	—
MIPP	172	100	99	73
NK	247	247	121	126
RPS ⁶	69	n/a	55 (60) ⁷	14

Results for both the Romanized (*tolst*) and the Cyrillic (ТОЛСТ) forms are virtually identical, except for MIPP, which showed a discrepancy of 72 hits. The Cyrillic query (ТОЛСТ) in MIPP's online catalog missed 72 titles which potentially relate to Tolstoy. This is due to the fact that MIPP's catalog includes annotations only in English. The query for *tolst* in Esterum's online catalog yielded zero results because its search engine does not support word truncation, matching only the exact spelling of search terms. This necessitated querying Esterum's online catalog using exact grammatical variations of Tolstoy's surname either in German transliteration or in Cyrillic. Although one finds slight

⁴ The author was unable to determine the reason for the discrepancy in this search result.

⁵ See discussion of this result in the paragraph following Table 2.

⁶ Because RPS' online catalog is case sensitive, the query for *tolst* in RPS also brought back zero results until the query was modified to *Tolst*.

⁷ Individual volumes of multi-volume sets and monographic series are counted separately, thereby bringing total number of monographs to 60.

variations in the number of Total Hits for both Romanized and Cyrillic search terms, the results for Relevant Hits for both Romanized and Cyrillic queries prove identical. The case is the same for Unique Titles. Owing to duplication among titles retrieved by each

Table 3a

Romanized Query	Total Hits	Relevant Hits	False Hits	Unique Titles
<i>tolstaia</i>	29	1	28	0
<i>tolstogo</i>	72	29	4	21
<i>tolstoj</i>	103	29	75	29
<i>tolstom</i>	9	9	0	6
<i>tolstomu</i>	1	1	0	1
<i>tolstoy</i>	1	0	1	0
<i>tolstym</i>	11	7	4	5
<i>tolstymi</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>tolstykh</i>	12	0	12	0
Total	238	76	162	62*

Table 3b

Cyrillic Query	Total Hits	Relevant Hits	False Hits	Unique Titles
толстая	29	1	28	0
толстого	75	29	43	21
толстой	104	29	74	29
толстом	10	9	0	6
толстому	1	1	0	1
n/a	--	0	1	0
толстым	11	7	4	5
толстыми	0	0	0	0
толстых	12	0	12	0
	243	76	162	62* ⁱ

* Individual volumes of multi-volume sets and monographic series are counted separately, bringing the total number of monographs to 63.

inquiry, the column of Unique Titles represents the number of items (from all queries in Esterum's online catalog performed on 10 February 2006) that were included in the master checklist. The study anticipated that each search engine would retrieve false hits; the broader the search term, the greater the number of false hits as shown in Tables 2 and 3. The most common errors included the early twentieth century poet and novelist A. K. Tolstoi, the modern prose writer Tatiana Tolstaia, other people with the Tolstoy surname but with no direct connection to Leo Tolstoy, the publishing house "Lev Tolstoi" in Tula, and *tolstaia kishka* (large intestine).⁸

The investigation analyzed results from all vendors on a title by title basis in order to identify monographs for inclusion in the checklist. As mentioned previously, the criteria for comparison consist of monographic works, including a few monographic series, on the life and works of Leo Tolstoy. The study thus provides a snapshot of scholarly monographs on the life and works of Leo Tolstoy that are currently (or were recently) available for purchase.⁹ In order to be included in the checklist, monographs had to meet one of the following conditions:

1. Title indicates that the monograph discusses Leo Tolstoy.
2. Discrete section within the monograph discusses Leo Tolstoy (i.e., entry in the table of contents or large section of pages as noted in the index).
3. Annotation of the monograph identifies considerable content related to Leo Tolstoy.

In certain cases, when the title, bibliographic data, or annotation did not offer a clear indication of how much "Tolstoy content" could be found in the monograph, the author erred on the side of inclusion. For example, the checklist excluded the following monograph which appeared in the search result from Esterum's online catalog:

⁸ The most common form which appeared was *tolstoi kishki*, the genitive singular of *tolstaia kishka*.

⁹ Monographs published in Russia have a tendency to go out of print rather quickly. For more information on the publishing environment in Russia see: Pennell, Daniel M. "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: The Vicissitudes of Vendor/Library Relations in the Slavic and East European Book Trade" in *SEEIR*; 5 (1/2) (2003): 59-68.

Piat' vekov Raevskikh (Raevskii Sergei). Moskva: Vagrius, 2005 [592p. ISBN 5-9697-0083-5, \$16] (Semeynye khroniki)—Memuary S.P. Raevskogo—odnogo iz potomkov geroia voyny 1812 goda generala N.N. Raevskogo—rasskazyvaiut o piati pokoleniakh slavnogo rossiyskogo roda, tesno sviazannogo s drugimi zamechatel'nyimi rossiyskimi dinastiiami—Tolstymi, Mikhalkovymi, Golitsynymi, Obolenskimi.¹⁰

The annotation closely associates Raevskii with the Tolstoy dynasty, but nowhere does it indicate that the work specifically discusses Leo Tolstoy. In contrast, the next annotation demonstrates noteworthy content on Gorky's personal interaction with Leo Tolstoy (see italicized text):

Gor'kij. (Pavel Basinskii) Molodaja gvardija, 2005 [451 p., ISBN: 5-235-02850-3, \$29, Series: Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh ljudej, v. 963. Na osnovanii ranee neizvestnykh materialov i dokumentov avtor ne tol'ko vospolnjaet opushchennye zven'ja posovetski mifologizirovannoj biografii pisatelja, no takzhe predstavljaet Gor'kogo kak provozvestnika i sozdatelja novoj, revoljucionnoj, religii—religii Cheloveka, pokazyvaet ego vo vzaimootnoshenijakh s samymi "znakovymi" ljud'mi svoego vremeni—L'vom Tolstym, Ioannom Kronshtadtskim, Vladimirom Leniny, Iosifom Stalinym, drugimi.]¹¹

Basinskii's biography of Gorky qualifies for inclusion in the checklist because the annotation identifies considerable content on Leo Tolstoy. These examples base relevancy entirely on the content in the bibliographic records.

Bibliographic content in vendors' catalogs is a key point of divergence. Four vendors (EV, Est, MIPP, and NK) include annotations ranging in length from one sentence to several paragraphs.

¹⁰ <http://www.nkbooks.ru/books/Books.nsf/catalog/7B5085D559CD913BC32570D50060A617?OpenDocument>

¹¹ <http://www.esterum.com/product.aspx?section=Books&product=151902&id=dcffafd06ce4c47aad51ea07bfd3f00>

This explains in part why the results for EV, MIPP, and NK are much higher than for ATC and RPS. Inquiries in ATC and RPS do not account for monographs which have only a small component on Leo Tolstoy because results in ATC and RPS depend entirely on the title information. This may also account for the fact that Esterum offers twice as many “unique monographic titles” as ATC and RPS (Table 5c). For seminal works on Tolstoy, the annotations have little effect on the search results. This difference appears most pronounced for monographs that have a small Tolstoy component. For these monographs, EV, Est, MIPP, and NK have an advantage over ATC and RPS.¹² Yet, how many more titles would appear in the results for ATC and RPS if their records included annotations?

In order to test the effectiveness of Russian online catalogs, the study checked the entire list of Russian vendor titles (the master checklist) against each vendor’s online catalog. Table 4 compares the number of titles retrieved from queries compared to the number of titles found when all unique monographs (compiled in the master checklist) were checked against each vendor’s online catalog. According to the data in Table 4, the query for *tolst* captured all 99 monographs on Leo Tolstoy listed in MIPP’s online catalog, making MIPP’s search engine the most accurate with a 100 percent accuracy rating. Esterum’s search engine followed MIPP with 92 percent, missing only six titles that contain content on Leo Tolstoy; NK’s search engine came in third with nearly 80 percent. Surprisingly, East View’s search engine ranked fourth for accuracy, retrieving 61 percent, or 127 of the 176 monographs found in its online catalog. EV, nevertheless, ranks first in the number of titles retrieved from queries (127) as well as in total volumes listed (176). As expected, the search engines for ATC and RPS proved the least effective given the absence of annotations in their catalog records.

Table 4
Comparative accuracy of vendors search engines

¹² This advantage plays out in the “number of monographs from queries (Table 4) for EV, MIPP, and NK; for Esterum, the advantage plays out in the “number of monographs from queries listed by one vendor” (Table 5c).

Vendor	No. of monographs from queries	Total no. of monographs listed in online catalog	Difference (No. of monographs not retrieved by queries)	% change	Accuracy rating	Accuracy rank
MIPP	99	99	0	0%	100%	1
Est.	63	69	5	8%	92%	2
NK	121	147	25	21%	79%	3
EV	127	176	49	39%	61%	4
ATC	66	96	27	45%	55%	5
RPS	59	92	33	56%	44%	6

The master checklist consists of all monographic titles retrieved from queries in all six vendors' online catalogs (with duplicates eliminated) – 300 titles.

The results in Table 4 confirm the hypothesis that searches for *tolst* did not account for all the works on Leo Tolstoy found in vendors' online catalogs. ATC and RPS offer many more titles than were retrieved by the inquiry, *tolst*, because ATC and RPS do not provide annotations in their online catalogs.¹³ EV and NK also offer many more titles than were retrieved from queries (although the percentage is smaller). In fact, EV actually shows the highest number of titles (49) that were not retrieved from queries. This is probably due to the fact that annotations are not given for all titles in EV's online catalog. Whatever the reason, the evidence for this experiment shows that the effectiveness of a vendor's online catalog hinges on the level of detail in the bibliographic record and whether annotations, when present, capture the content on Leo Tolstoy.

The data in Table 5a show the holdings of the six vendors as a percentage of the the total number of titles on the master checklist. Both the number of monographs retrieved by queries and the total number of monographs listed in each vendor's catalog are presented. EV occupies the top position, with 127 titles (42% of 300) retrieved from queries, followed closely by NK with 121 (40%); MIPP is the lone vendor in the second tier, offering nearly one-third (99) of all

Table 5a

**Comparison of vendors' holdings on Leo Tolstoy:
Monographs retrieved from queries vs. Total holdings**

¹³ RPS's online catalog has only basic bibliographic data (author, title, publication information, price, ISBN, etc.), but their print monthly print catalogs include English annotations which are a valuable resource for bibliographers.

Vendor	No. of monographs retrieved from queries	% of monographs (from queries) on master checklist (300 titles)	Rank	Total no. of monographs listed in online catalog	% of monographs (from listed holdings) on master checklist (300 titles)	Rank
MIPP	127	42.3%	1	176	59%	1
Est.	121	40.3%	2	147	49%	2
NK	99	33.0%	3	99	33%	3
EV	66	22.0%	4	96	32%	3
ATC	63	21.0%	5	69	23%	4
RPS	59	20.0%	6	92	31%	3

The master checklist consists of all monographic titles retrieved from queries in all six vendors' online catalogs (with duplicates eliminated) – 300 titles.

monographs advertised. The search engines for ATC (22%), Esterum (21%), and RPS (20%) each retrieved one-fifth of the overall volume of titles found online. One must bear in mind that these statistics and percentages represent only the number of titles retrieved through vendors' search engines.

All six vendors fall well short of complete coverage for Tolstoy regardless of which set of data are used. The implication? Bibliographers who use only one vendor to collect Russian vernacular materials will be at a disadvantage. For example, if a bibliographer were to rely solely on approval plans from East View or Natasha Kozmenko (selected for their large holdings), then the collection at that institution would lack a significant number of monographs only offered by the other vendors.¹⁴ It would certainly be advantageous to

¹⁴ Interlibrary loan and document delivery programs help to alleviate the problem, but they cannot completely compensate for gaps in collections. As of 10 February 2006, the list below is a short selection of titles that were not available in either EV's or NK's online catalogs. (1) *Filosofii neprotivleniia L. N. Tolstogo: sistematicheskoe uchenie i dukhovnyi opyt.* (Meleshko, Elena Dmitrievna). Tula: Tuskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 1999. (2) *Iasnaia Poliana: puteshestvie s L'vom Tolstym* (Nikitina N.). Tula, 2004. (3) *L. N. Tolstoi: dialog vo vremeni.* (Remizov, Vitalii Borisovich). Tula: Tuskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 1998. (4) *N. P. Giliarov-Platonov i K. I. Leont'ev: spory o Tolstom* (Panaetov, O. G.). Krasnodar: Kubanskii sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii institut, 2002. (5) *O L. N. Tolstom i ego potomkakh* (Murygin, G. I.) Novosibirsk, s.n., 1995. (6) *Ob effekte zhiznepodobiiia Anny Kareninoi* (Slivitskaia, O. V.) SPb, 2004. (7) *Puti personazhei i avtorov: Tolstoi, Dostoevskii i drugie* (Syrkin, A. IA.) Ierusalim: Filobiblon, 2001. (8) *Sokrovennyi Tolstoi: religioznye videniia i prozreniia khudozhestvennogo tvorchestva L'va* (Nikolaevicha Berman, B. I.) M: Gendal'f,

use several vendors in building a collection that supports the research of Tolstoy scholars and their students.

Duplicate coverage data shown in Table 5b sharpen the picture of vendors' coverage of Tolstoy scholarship. Only three titles could be found in the online catalogs of all six vendors using the various queries. They include:

- L. N. Tolstoi i SShA: Perepiska* (Sost., vstup.st., komment. N.Velikanovoy, R.Vittakera). Moskva: IMLI RAN, 2004 [974 pp., ISBN 59208011891].
- Lev Tolstoi i puti russkoi istorii* (Gulin, Aleksandr Vadimovich). Moskva: IMLI RAN, 2004 [253 pp., ISBN 5920801913].
- Lev Tolstoi na vershinakh zhizni* (Mardov, I. B.). Moskva: Progress-Traditsiia, 2003 [432 pp., ISBN 5898561826].

This represents only one percent of the 300 monographic titles on the checklist. Subsequent levels of duplication are also considerably low. The number of monographs held by five of the vendors (13 titles, or 4.3%) is nearly the same as the number of monographs held by four vendors (14 titles, or 4.7%). The percentage of titles found on the lists of three vendors jumps to 32 items or 10 percent. Even though this percentage nearly doubles for monographs held by only two vendors (61 titles, or 20.3%), the overall level of duplication among vendors remains quite low. Of the 300 monographs on the master checklist, only 123 titles (41%) are held by two or more vendors. This leaves 177 monographs (59%) that can be obtained from only one of the six vendors.¹⁵

Table 5b

1992. (9) *Za gran'iu nevidimogo: V tvorcheskoi laboratorii L.N. Tolstogo: ot izobrazitel'nogo istochnika - k istoricheskomu povestvovaniuu* (Manaev N.S.) Kaluga, 2002. (10) *Prorok v svoem otechestve: Pushkin, Gogol', Tolstoi: O nevestrebovannykh idealakh i idealakh russkikh geniev* (Sushkov V.F.). Tula, 2003. (11) *Moia zhizn' doma i v Iasnoi Poliane*. (T.A. Kuzminskaia). Iantarnyi skaz, 2003.

¹⁵ One must keep in mind that ATC and RPS list many more titles than the data show because their online catalogs are not robust enough to retrieve all works on Leo Tolstoy listed in their respective catalogs. As a result, the number of duplicates among vendors should be slightly higher.

Quantity of duplication among vendors

No. of vendors	No. of monographs duplicated (from queries)	% of Total		
6 vendors	3	1.0%		
5 vendors	13	4.3%		
4 vendors	14	4.7%		
3 vendors	32	10.7%		
2 vendors	61	20.3%		
1 vendor	177	59.0%		
Total	300	100%	Total no. of duplicates	% of total duplication
			123	41%

Table 5c shows the percentage of the 177 “unique titles” offered by each vendor and not duplicated by another vendor. As might be expected, the top three vendors in overall holdings also offer the largest number of unique monographs: EV shows 50 titles (over 28%), MIPP presents 40 (nearly 23%), and NK shows 37 (just shy of 21%).

Table 5c**Comparison of monographs unique to each vendor**

Vendor	No. of monographs (from queries) listed by 1 vendor	% of monographs (from queries) listed by 1 vendor
EV	50	28.2%
NK	37	20.9%
MIPP	40	22.6%
Esterum	26	14.7%
ATC	12	6.8%
RPS	12	6.8%
Total	177	100.0%

Among the remaining vendors, Esterum stands out with 26 titles (nearly 15 percent), while ATC and RPS each offer only 12 unique items (just under 7% each).¹⁶

The data in Tables 5b and 5c confirm the notion widely held among Slavic bibliographers that bibliographers who serve as steward over major Slavic research collections should utilize several vendors of Russian materials in order to provide broad coverage of subject areas.¹⁷ This notion exists among area studies librarians in general, who face the challenges of collecting materials from a wide variety of sources, whether from local book agents, established vendors, or exchange programs with Russian academic institutions.¹⁸ As one vendor cannot supply all or even a majority of the Russian scholarship on Leo Tolstoy, this scenario certainly extends far beyond Tolstoy studies. The strategy of using multiple vendors for collecting scholarly monographs from Russia is essential for Slavic bibliographers who manage major Slavic research collections.

Slavic bibliographers should also be wary of relying exclusively on approval plans, even from several vendors. Experience shows that multiple approval plans result in a large number of duplicate titles, which cannot be added to the collection due to space issues. At a time when shelving space is at a premium, many libraries have adopted “no duplicate” policies. Approval plans, when used judiciously, become an effective component of a more diverse collection strategy. There is no substitute for well-trained, experienced bibliographers who, through close contact with faculty and students, customize their selection strategy to meet researchers’ specific the needs. Systematic and regular comparison of vendor holdings can help Slavic librarians determine which vendors best fit their respective library’s research profile.

¹⁶ As an interesting side note, a comparison of “unique titles” as a percentage of each vendor’s own holdings indicates that 41 percent of Esterum’s monographs are unique to Esterum (not shown in table) -- the highest percentge among all six vendors.

¹⁷ The Slavic collection with the widest coverage for Tolstoy (Columbia University) holds less than 60 percent of all monographs offered by the six vendors surveyed in this study. These data come from research on Slavic collection holdings that serve as a companion to this piece and will be available in a forthcoming article.

¹⁸ Some obscure materials can only be obtained through book exchanges with Russian libraries or educational institutions.

Vendor Prices

This study derives vendor rankings, based upon prices for monographs on Tolstoy, from the average of three comparative models. The first model assigns a rank (Average Price Rank) based upon the Average Price Per Monograph for all monographs listed by each vendor. The second model assigns vendor-rankings for each duplicate title, then calculates the Cumulative Rank Score for each vendor, and finally gives a standing based upon the average of the Cumulative Rank Score. The third model allots vendor rankings for each category of duplicates, averages them, and then assigns a new rank, or Average Category Rank, based upon those averages. The standings from all three models are then equalized to generate a combined overall ranking for the six vendors.

The first model arranges vendors by Average Price Per Monograph (Table 6), calculated in the following manner. The prices of all monographs available from a particular vendor were added together to create a total or Sum Cost. This figure was then divided by the number of monographs available from that vendor. For example, the

Table 6

**Price comparison of vendor holdings:
Model 1 – Average Price Rank**

	NK	RPS	ATC	MIPP	EV	Est.
Sum Cost (\$) of monographs (from queries) w/ listed prices	\$ 1,255	\$ 973	\$ 1,103	\$ 1,980	\$ 759	\$1,623
Number of monographs (from queries) w/ listed prices	115	60	64	99	43	64
Average Price (\$) Per Monograph	\$ 11	\$ 16	\$ 17	\$ 20	\$ 18	\$ 25
Average Price Rank	1	2	3	5	4	6

Sum Cost of all monographs on Tolstoy available through EV, rounded to the nearest whole dollar, is \$759 (Table 6). The Sum Cost (\$759) was then divided by the number of monographs for which East View lists a price (43), yielding an average cost per monograph of \$18. Rankings were then assigned based on the Average Price Per Monograph. In this model EV ranks fourth, whereas in Model 2 (Table 7) and Model 3 (Table 8b) EV ranks fourth and sixth respectively .

The second model derives its data from prices for duplicate titles only. Here, vendors receive a rank for each individual title according to price, in which the vendor with the lowest price received the score of one (1). The rank scores for all duplicate monographs were then tallied to produce a Cumulative Score (Table 7). For instance, rank scores for all duplicate monographs listed by MIPP were tallied into the Cumulative Score (117). The Cumulative Score of 117 was then divided by the number of duplicate monographs from MIPP (51), yielding a Cumulative Average of 2.29. Places were assigned based upon the Cumulative Average. In this model, MIPP stands second, tied with RPS, whereas in Model 1 (Table 6) and Model 3 (Table 8b), MIPP stands fifth and fourth respectively.

Table 7

**Price comparison of vendor holdings:
Model 2 – Cumulative Duplicate Rank**

Cumulative Duplicates	NK	RPS	ATC	MIPP	EV	Est.
Cumulative Score	79	92	118	117	88	104
No. of duplicate monographs	76	40	48	51	32	37
Cumulative Average	1.04	2.30	2.46	2.29	2.75	2.81
Cumulative Duplicate Rank	1	2	3	2	4	5

The third comparative model, like Model 2, derives its data from prices for duplicate titles only; vendors also received a rank score for each separate title. In contrast to the second model, Model 3 arranges duplicate titles into discrete categories based on the number of vendors that carry each monograph. For example, as shown previously (p.11) , all six vendors offer the three monographs listed in Table 8a.

Rank scores for all three titles were then totaled to produce a “Category Score.” For instance, Table 8a shows that ATC earned rank scores of 5, 5, and 2 for a total of 12 (the Six Duplicate Score). This score (12) was then divided by the number of monographs in this category (3) for an average of 4.00.¹⁹ The study then assigned ATC the rank of 4 in the category for “monographs listed by six vendors.”²⁰ The process was

Table 8a
Ranking model for monographs listed by six vendors

	NK	RPS	MIPP	ATC	Est.	EV
<i>L. N. Tolstoi i SShA: Perepiska</i>	1	2	3	5	4	6
<i>Lev Tolstoi i puti russkoi istorii</i>	1	2	3	5	4	5
<i>Lev Tolstoi na vershinakh zhizni</i>	1	4	3	2	5	6
Six Duplicate Score	3	8	9	12	13	17
No. of monographs listed	3	3	3	3	3	3
Six Duplicate Average	1.00	2.7	3.00	4.0	4.33	5.7
Six Duplicate Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6

¹⁹ Since all vendors offer these three titles, the number of monographs listed is the same for all vendors in this category. The number of monographs differs among vendor for the remaining four categories.

²⁰ A ranking of vendors based on the average price per monograph of three titles shows that vendors fall into the same order as in Model 3 (Table 8b). The only dissimilarity is the amount of difference. Because the difference between RPS (\$25.33) and MIPP (\$26.00) is small, they both received the rank of 2 in this scheme. The same applies for ATC (\$29.00) and EV (\$29.23), both of which were assigned the rank of 3.

Price model for monos. listed by six vendors	NK	RPS	MIPP	ATC	Est.	EV
<i>L. N. Tolstoi i SShA: Perepiska</i>	20.00	32.00	35.00	44.00	39.90	47.95
<i>Lev Tolstoi i puti russkoi istorii</i>	9.00	16.00	18.00	20.00	18.90	19.95
<i>Lev Tolstoi na vershinakh zhizni</i>	15.00	28.00	25.00	23.00	28.90	39.95
Total cost	44.00	76.00	78.00	87.00	87.70	97.85
No. of monographs listed	3	3	3	3	3	3
Price per monograph	14.67	25.33	26.00	29.00	29.23	32.62
Six Duplicate Rank	1	2	2	3	3	4

repeated for each category of duplicates (Table 8b). Next, standings from all five categories were compiled and averaged to generate the Average Duplicate Rank. Referring to Table 8b, ATC earned 4, 2, 5, 3, and 3 across the five categories of duplicate titles for a combined total (All Duplicates Score) of 17. This total (17) was then divided by the number of duplicate categories (5) to produce an All Duplicates Average of 3.6. The study assigned rankings based upon the All Duplicates Average with ATC occupying the third position.

Table 8b

**Price comparison of vendor holdings:
Model 3 – Average Duplicate Rank**

Duplicate categories	NK	RPS	ATC	MIPP	EV	Est.
Six duplicate rank (Monographs listed by 6 vendors)	1	2	4	3	5	4
Five duplicate rank (Monographs. listed by 5 vendors)	1	3	2	5	6	4
Four duplicate rank (Monographs. listed by 4 vendors)	1	4	5	2	3	6
Three duplicate rank (Monographs. listed by 3 vendors)	1	2	3	4	4	5
Two duplicate rank (Monographs listed by 2 vendors)	1	2	3	4	3	5
All Duplicates Score	5	13	17	18	21	24
Number of duplicate categories	5	5	5	5	5	5
All Duplicates Average	1	2.6	3.4	3.6	4.2	4.8
Average Duplicate Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6

Of the three models the Average Price Rank model remains the least reliable because it combines unlike items (i.e., apples, oranges, pears, peaches, kiwi, etc.) rather than identical titles (i.e., apple to apples).²¹ In order to compensate for the problem of unlike items, (i.e. apples to oranges to pears, etc.) the investigation decided to rank vendors for each monographic title, since variations in price from one title to the next could skew the data. This type of positioning system is more equitable because it negates the effect of wide variance in price for different monographs. Consider the impact that one high-priced (or low priced) item can have on the results. For this analysis, the study selected several different titles so that vendors would show two monographs. In Table 9, ATC and NK list one very expensive monograph, while EV shows two very cheap items. In this comparison, EV ranks first, MIPP second, NK third, and ATC fourth.

Table 9
Price variance comparison of vendor holdings

Duplicates	NK	RPS	ATC	MIPP	EV	Est.
<i>Sochineniia F. I. Tiutcheva</i>	50		52			
<i>Filosofiiia kul'tury L.N.Tolstogo</i>	3				5	
<i>Khudozhestvennoe zaveshchanie L'va Tolstogo</i>				3	5	
<i>Za graniu nevidimogo</i>			19	23		
Total cost	53		71	26	10	
No. of monographs	2		2	2	2	
Average	26.5		35.5	13	5	
Rank	3		4	2	1	

²¹ A simple analogy demonstrates this problem. Consider the prices of fruit in six grocery carts (from six different grocery stores). Each cart contains many kinds of fruit. There is some duplication of fruits among all six carts, but each cart has a certain percentage of unique fruit not found in any of the other carts. The various fruits also range in price from very cheap to very expensive for the more exotic fruits. While person A might prefer to go to the grocery store that has the overall best prices and widest selection of all fruit combined, person B would rather go to several stores to get the best deals. Person B needs the comparison of like-fruits (i.e., apples to apples, and oranges to oranges) while person A does not.

However, when considering all the data, NK and ATC consistently rank first and third respectively; MIPP places second and fourth depending on the comparison table; and EV consistently stands at fifth. This example underscores the need for both a large corpus of data and for a means to adjust for price variance. This is precisely what the ranking system purports to do. The ranking model puts each vendor on a more level playing field, making it easier to compare unlike items (i.e., apples to oranges to pears, etc.).

A comparison of the three models (Table 10) shows definite patterns: NK ranks first consistently, followed by RPS in the second position, and ATC in third; Esterum stands at sixth. The only variation occurs between MIPP and EV. Even though EV earns a higher rank in the Average Price Rank model, MIPP maintains a clear advantage overall. Results for the Average Duplicate Rank model most closely resemble the findings for the Combined Rank, suggesting that the Average Duplicate Rank is the most reliable model. The Average Duplicate Rank model has the most equitable ranking system because it compares like monographs (i.e., apples to apples). It is also the most complicated ranking system.

Table 10

**Price comparison of vendor holdings:
Combined Rank (based on prices)**

Combined Rank	NK	RPS	ATC	MIPP	EV	Est.
Average Price Rank	1	2	3	5	4	6
Cumulative Rank	1	2	3	2	5	6
Average Duplicate Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall Rank Score	3	6	9	11	14	18
Number of comparison models	3	3	3	3	3	3
Overall Average Score	1.00	2.00	3.00	3.67	4.67	6.00
COMBINED RANK	1	2	3	4	5	6

Although the functionality of vendor online catalogs, and their websites in general, continues to be an important part of the services that vendors provide, the chief question remains: Which vendor offers

the most and the best academic books at the lowest cost? Hence, this investigation bases Overall Rank upon holdings and price data only. NK tops the list, followed by EV and RPS, tied for second place; ATC and MIPP occupy the third position, while Esterum comes in fourth. What are the implications of these statistics and rankings? For the purchase of monographs, NK offers the most affordable prices. One glance at the raw price data (not included in this narrative) demonstrates that not only are NK's prices less than the other five vendors, but far less.²² On the other end of the spectrum is the German company, Esterum, which maintains the highest prices from all models, and holds a much smaller inventory than its competitors. Esterum, however is not without advantage. Its detailed annotations

Table 11**OVERALL RANK**

	NK	EV	RPS	ATC	MIPP	Est.
Holdings	2	1	4	4	3	6
Price	1	5	2	3	4	6
Overall score	3	6	6	7	7	12
Number of categories	2	2	2	2	2	2
Average	1.50	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.50	6.00
OVERALL RANK	1	2	2	3	3	4

make the German search engine more efficient than most of its Russian or American counterparts. Only MIPP has a more accurate search engine. One must bear in mind that this study addresses only one narrow research area. The depth of vendors' holdings vary according to subject area. For example, certain linguistic titles, especially those published in German, can often be found in Esterum's catalog alone. The consideration of multiple subject areas accentuates the need for bibliographers to use a variety of vendors in building a multi-disciplinary research collection.

East View's prices tend to be higher than its competitors, but the company's large database of title listings, versatile search engine (in

²² Raw data in Excel format are available from the author upon request.

spite of a lower relative accuracy rating), and detailed bibliographic data (especially the notes showing availability) stand out as invaluable tools for Slavic collection managers. Titles, current and old, that cannot be found anywhere else can often be found in East View's catalog. EV's finding service for out-of-print items can also help librarians fill collection gaps. Based on price comparison (and on the Overall Rank), ATC and MIPP have the most similar profile. According to Table 5a, they keep similar inventories (See "No. of monographs on master checklist"), and their standings in the Combined Rank (Table 10) also compare, showing only a 0.67 differential. Whereas the differential among other vendors is 1.00 or more, the Overall Average Rank for ATC and MIPP stands the same at 3.50.

Conclusion

As the number of monographs published in Russia continues to rise, it becomes increasingly more difficult to achieve the same level of coverage possible in the past, especially given the reality of shrinking budgets. Tools such as selection and price models help librarians make more efficient use of their funds and should be strongly considered. Yet, collection development requires more than just knowledge of vendor prices and holdings. Vendor reliability continues to be an important consideration. Vendor discounts, consortial agreements, book buying trips, local book agents, and exchange programs also influence the collection development process. It is hoped that the data in this study will serve as another means to help Slavic collection managers make informed decisions as to which vendors can best meet the needs of their respective Slavic collections with respect to the overall needs of the library and their constituent academic disciplines.

Appendix 1

Comparative functionality among vendor online catalogs

	Quick Search	Advanced Search	Display results	Sorting options	Translit. System	Cyrillic script	Annot.	(IE, Nsc, MF)
ATC	kwd	Versatile	10	No	LC	No	No	All
EV	kwd in ti, au, or all fields	Versatile	20, all	asc./desc. by au, ti, yr, pgs, publ, city, \$	LC	Cyrillic queries; bibl. data in LC translit.	Eng	All
Esterum	kwd	Limited; au, ti, publ, ser, ISBN, yr	10	-	Ger.	Cyrillic queries; bibl. data in Ger. translit.	Rom	All
MIPP	kwd	Versatile	10, 20, 30, 40, 50,	asc./desc. by au, ti, acqdt, yr, reg,	LC	Cyrillic queries; bibl. data in Rus., LC translit, Eng.	Eng	All
NK	kwd	-	10	-	LC, exc. [y] for [й]	-	Rom	All* (glitches w/ Nsc., MF)
RPS	none	Limited; au, ti, subj, yr, publ, city	all	-	LC	-	-	All

Abbreviations

\$ - price	Nsc - Netscape
acqdt - acquisition date	pgs - pages
Annot. - Annotations	ISBN - Int'l Standard Book No.
asc - ascending	LC - Library of Congress
au - author	publ - publisher
bibl - bibliographic	reg - region
city - city of publication	Rom - Romanized Cyrillic
desc - descending	Rus - Russian
Eng - English	ser - serial
Ger - German	subj - subject
IE - Internet Explorer	ti - title
kwd - keyword	translit. - transliteration
MF - Mozilla Firefox	yr - year published
NK - Natasha Kozmenko	

Appendix 2**Ranking of functionality among vendors' online catalogs**

Function	ATC	EV	Est.	MIPP	NK	RPS
Quick Search	2	1	2	2	2	3
Advanced Search	2	1	2	1	3	2
Display results	2	1	2	1	2	1
Sort	2	1	2	1	2	2
Translit	1	1	2	1	1	1
Cyrillic	2	1	1	1	2	2
Annotations	2	1	1	1	1	2
Browsers (IE,Nsc, MF)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	14	8	13	9	14	14
Categories	8	8	8	8	8	8
Average	1.75	1.00	1.63	1.13	1.75	1.75
Rank	4	1	3	2	4	4