

Tolstoy Museums Unite, Tolstoy Goes Online

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Leo Tolstoy, the world-famous author and doyen of Russia's golden age of literature, is not a gentleman about whom one expects to hear breaking news. However, in a surprise announcement last Thursday, Russia's two most prominent Tolstoy museums announced that they would be merging and appointing a new director, as well as announcing the creation of a new online portal for accessing and discussing Tolstoy's works.

Last Thursday, the State Tolstoy Museum and the Yasnaya Polyana Memorial Estate held a joint press conference with corporate sponsor ABBYY to discuss the project "All of Tolstoy in One Click," dedicated to gathering about 46,000 pages of work by Tolstoy and putting them in electronic formats to be disseminated through a single website. The program started June 18 with the creation of the website readingtolstoy.ru and with participants in 46 countries who have helped to gather and transcribe Tolstoy's writings.

"We, of course, were hopeful that in our country we could find a couple hundred people

willing to help us. But no one expected that in the first 10 days of the project we would find thousands of volunteers who would proofread the texts and complete the first stage," said Fyokla Tolstaya, the director of the project and great-great-granddaughter of Leo Tolstoy, the tolstoy.ru website reported.

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The creation of the new website was announced shortly before the 185th anniversary of Leo Tolstoy's birth. In the future, specialists will read over the texts a second time, and the works will be converted into e-book formats.

In a surprise announcement at the same press conference, it was said the State Tolstoy Museum would merge with the Yasnaya Polyana Memorial Estate. The State Tolstoy Museum, located in Moscow, holds more than half a million items associated with the life and work of the author, while the Yasnaya Polyana Memorial Estate in Tula consists of Tolstoy's preserved family estate and grounds.

The new museum will be headed by Yekaterina Tolstaya, currently the head of the Yasnaya Polyana estate. Tolstaya is the wife of Vladimir Tolstoy, a great-great-grandson of the writer and former director of the estate, who is currently serving as a cultural adviser to the president.

Apart from changes in bureaucratic structure, it is unclear how this merger will change the function of the two museums, though the choice of Tolstaya as the new director may suggest a tendency to consolidate the museums' holdings at Yasnaya Polyana.

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