During the 1920s and 30s, The New York Public Library was one of the principal institutional “consumers” of book and manuscript materials nationalized by the Soviet government and sold abroad. We may never know the full quantitative extent of such book exports to America — the Soviets often sold books by overall weight. However, we know from documented institutional purchases and gifts received during this period that many thousands of such volumes migrated abroad before the spigot was abruptly shut off in the mid-1930s.

The authors of the present essay have looked at aspects of this question for over two decades, beginning with an examination of Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich (1847-1909), a small portion of whose personal library of 65,000 volumes was acquired by NYPL in 1931, through the well-received 1997 exhibition “The Romanovs: Their Empire, Their Books” and related publication, and most extensively in the introduction to A Dark Mirror: Romanov and Imperial Palace Library Materials in the Holdings of The New York Public Library (Fig. 1). Much of our more recent work has been to press the chronological boundaries of the original Dark Mirror introduction, by examining the long “afterlife” of the relatively brief period of interwar Soviet sales.

In recent years, additional bits and pieces of the story of the sales have come to light, from various and diverse sources. Colleagues at other institutions have picked up the narrative thread from their own institution’s perspective. Harold M. Leich of the Library of Congress has picked up where the late David Kraus left off in documenting Library of Congress’s purchases. Irina Tarsis of Harvard University and Patricia K. Grimsted have examined aspects of the Harvard sales. Significantly, colleagues from Russia — Mikhail D. Af
nas'ev of the Russian Historical Library in Moscow, Valerii Durov, and, most extensively, Ol'ga V. Andreeva – are looking at the sales from the seller’s perspective, as well as extending the scope of research to contiguous institutions.

The present essay focuses just on the New York sales dimension, with a few observations as to recent and potentially valuable research tools in the quest for more information on the issue of Soviet sales during the 1920s and 30s, and the post-war “aftermarket” in the United States.

**The trade in nationalized book and manuscript collections, 1921-1935**

Of the many Slavophone book dealers active in late nineteenth-early twentieth-century New York City – one source lists more than fifty on the eve of World War I – few were involved in the sale of imperial association and elite volumes. Really, only one individual stands out for the interwar period: Israel Perlstein (1897-1975).

Since the appearance of necrologies in the book trade and Slavistic press at the time of his death in 1975, several papers (some published) have been devoted to Perlstein and his relationship to suppliers and both private and institutional clients. At the time of the great Mezhknika (Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga) sales of the 1920s and 1930s, American libraries dealt with Perlstein almost exclusively. After immigrating to the United States from the Soviet Union in 1922, between 1925 and 1935 he made annual book-buying trips to Russia. His biggest years for acquisitions were 1931 and 1932, when, by his own account, he “handled a tremendous number of books,” including materials from the libraries of the Winter Palace, Tsarskoe Selo, and from the residence of Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich.

The Hammer Galleries were New York’s other principal interwar seller of nationalized elite and Romanov books and manuscripts. Viktor (1902-1985) and Armand Hammer (1898-1990) actively marketed their wares, organizing displays in shops, galleries, and major New York department stores such as Gimbel’s and Lord & Taylor, as well as at comparable establishments in Chicago, Boston, and Detroit. The NYPL purchased a number of imperial asso-

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4. Durov is the author of *Kniga v sem’e Romanovykh* (Moscow: Nash dom-L’Age d’Homme, 2000). He was commissioned to undertake this research, based on the holdings of the Russian State Library, after the appearance of the 1997 New York Public Library exhibition of Romanov materials.

5. The title of Andreeva’s dissertation was *Kniga v Rossii 1917-1941 gg: Istochniki istoriko-knigovedcheskogo izucheniia* (Avtoreferat, Moscow, 2005). She has previously published on the specific topic of sales in, for example, “Eksport antikvarnoi knigi iz SSSR v gody pervykh pliatiletok,” *Bukinisticheskaiia targovlia i istoriia knigi*, 7 (Moscow: Mir knigi, 1998), 69-99.