

# Development of positive motivation for reading in university students

## Desarrollo de motivación positiva hacia la lectura en estudiantes universitarios

Svetlana ZALUTSKAYA [1](#); Nadezhda NIKONOVA [2](#); Svetlana PANINA [3](#)

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#### ABSTRACT:

The article defines pertinent technologies aimed at establishing a creative reading environment. The research uses qualitative analysis of statistical data, the method of participatory lesson observation, a questionnaire survey, a review of well proven community-focused practical projects of students, studying of educational experience and best practices. The findings of the research determine effective technologies to create a reader environment in a higher educational institution in order to engage students in leisure reading and to unlock their creative potential.

**Keywords:** reading, reading environment, university, reading motivation

#### RESUMEN:

El artículo define las tecnologías pertinentes destinadas a establecer un entorno creativo de lectura. La investigación utiliza el análisis cualitativo de datos estadísticos, el método de observación participativa de la lección, una encuesta de cuestionario, una revisión de proyectos prácticos bien probados centrados en la comunidad de los estudiantes, el estudio de la experiencia educativa y las mejores prácticas. Los hallazgos de la investigación determinan tecnologías efectivas para crear un entorno de lectura en una institución de educación superior con el fin de involucrar a los estudiantes en la lectura de ocio y para desbloquear su potencial creativo.

**Palabras clave:** lectura, lectura, ambiente, universidad, lectura, motivación

## 1. Introduction

The centuries-old history of humanity clearly demonstrates that reading has always been one of the most important and effective ways of forming man's inner world and creative potential, mastering social experience, moral and cultural values, national customs and traditions, "obtaining meaningful information, professional knowledge, maintenance and acquisition of the native language and of intercultural communications languages" (the Concept of Reading Support and Development in Educational Institutions of the Republic of

Sakha (Yakutia), 2012). However, at the turn of the 21st century the civilized world faced the global problem of a decline in young people's interest in thoughtful, conscious, analytical leisure reading, the problem of a new reader digital generation's inclination to matter-of-fact, skimming, superficial, scanning, fragmented reading that is more appropriate to clip thinking of today's schoolchildren and students. Avid and systematic fiction reading has become boring and difficult, while it is next to almost impossible to resist the factors that relegate young people's need for books further to the background: heavy flows of most diverse information, visualization of all possible information, complicated narratives, the latest technologies for creating, processing and retrieving information, a departure from textocentric culture, etc. This leads to a loss of cultural "bonds" that unite the Russian society, reduces the reader culture and culture in general, negates the effectiveness of verbal and written communications, and causes a shift in value-based orientations and problems in the educational process organization.

Therefore, the educational community is faced with the need to find technologies to motivate young people to read with pleasure, joy, and interest that would be compliant with higher education requirements of federal state educational standards and professional standards, as well as with conditions for social adaptation and personal advancement of students. To achieve the goal, it is possible to refer to best practices of student reading organization in educational institutions of different levels, including secondary general education, orienting their graduates to further education, self-education and self-development. This approach to solving the problem of childhood, youth and adult reading is conditioned by the logic of educating a creative reader in the system of continuous education where school and university are the most important links in "life-long reading".

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## 2. Literature review

Thus, scientific analysis of all sorts of strategies and technologies for learner reading effectively implemented in the educational process in school and university is found in the works of such domestic researchers as E.O. Galitskikh, M.Ya. Mishlimovich, N.I. Nikonova, G.V. Prantsova, E.S. Romanicheva, N.N. Smetannikova, I.V. Sosnovskaya, E.R. Yadrovskaya (Galitskikh, 2016, Mishlimovich, 2018, Nikonov, 2013; Romanicheva, Prantsova, 2017; Smetannikova, 2017; Sosnovskaya, 2013; Yadrovskaya, 2016) and others. Their works define the ways that, in accordance with the modern educational requirements, would engage students "in reading that is integral to formation of cultural, spiritual and intellectual potential of society. A variety of ways to expand the scope of reader orientations of adolescents [and students], to develop their personal reader activity are proposed. Effective technologies and strategies for introducing books that differ in their orientation, content, presentation and familiarization methods to young readers, as well as various speech situations, creative tasks and exercises designed to help young readers learn different types of verbal creativity are described" (Romanicheva, Prantsova, 2017). However, the issue of developing a "reading at school – reading in higher school – life-long reading" system remains open for pedagogical science requiring further research in various aspects, including the creative one.

Problems of motivation and strategies of schoolchildren, students and adults; the impact of reading on educational progress; new forms and techniques in developing reader's interest; the difficulties of reading have been also considered in the studies of foreign colleagues, such as S. Skaalvik, O. Klein, I. Kogan, C.A. Wolters, C.F. Denton, M.J. York, D.J. Francis, J.W. Chapman, W. E. Tunmer, J.E. Prochnow (Skaalvik S., 2004; Klein O. & Kogan I., 2013; Wolters C.A., Denton C.F., M.J. York & Francis D.J., 2014; Chapman J.W., Tunmer, W. E. & Prochnow, J.E., 2000). Analysis of their scientific effort makes it possible to single out several aspects of the reading problem that have been European trends of the past decade: stimulating family reading; early education of a reading child; the need to improve the quality of reading in students and adults; solving the problem through mainstreaming family and improving the qualifications of teachers; the primary goal in promoting reading is "development of reading motivation and encouragement of reading for own gratification" (Chudinova, 2017). The progress made in these issues reflects in international comparative studies, such as, for example, PISA and PIRLS. A regulatory framework (national strategies,

concepts and reading programs), as well as associations, professional educational and parent communities, expert groups, online platforms have been created to manage the work done to support reading, to accumulate and to convey successful practices and technologies.

The European scientific community realizes that the quality of reader competency in an individual influences the effectiveness of their socialization and professional activity, as well as the level of human adaptation in the present-day conditions of life.

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## **3. Materials and methods**

### **3.1. Research methods**

Content analysis of scientific literature and academic documentation was used during the research of the reading problem in federal university students alongside with studying the experience and best practices of the educational institution, interviewing, a questionnaire survey, self-evaluation of students, mathematical statistics methods with subsequent qualitative assay of the results. Analysis of statistical data of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (hereinafter referred to as VTsIOM) has been performed; it occasionally canvasses public opinion of Russians aged over 18 on their attitude to reading. Thus, on November 20-21, 2017, another survey was conducted among 1200 respondents in the format of a phone interview. A stratified double-base random sample of landline and mobile numbers was used.

In order to study the reading motivation of students, a questionnaire survey was conducted on April 20-25, 2018, with the following number of respondents: 40 first-year students out of the total number of 47 first-year students of the Philological Department at the North-Eastern Federal University (hereinafter referred to as NEFU) in Yakutsk. The sample of respondents was conditioned by the curriculum: first-year students have not studied the full-time course of literary disciplines yet; therefore, they should be more prone to leisure reading. The respondents were aged from 17 to 19. The gender composition was: 34% young men, 66% young women. 87% of the students had been trained in rural school; 11% – in urban school; 2% – in school of an urban-type settlement.

The first-year student survey aimed to identify the objective and subjective factors that determined reader preferences of learners, to obtain data on the motives, focus, and systematicity of their reading. The questionnaire included nine questions and assignments:

- 1) What do you prefer doing in your leisure time?
- 2) What literature do you prefer the most?
- 3) What fiction genre do you prefer?
- 4) What are your favorite literary works?
- 5) What motivates you to read these works?
- 6) Who do you discuss with the books you read?
- 7) How often do you read fiction outside the curriculum?
- 8) How many books have you read over the past month?
- 9) Come up with arguments for your peers about the need for reading beyond educational materials.

### **3.2. Experimental research base**

The research base is the North-Eastern Federal University located in Yakutsk, the capital of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Yakutia is one of the largest regions in the Russian Federation, a region with harsh climatic conditions of the cryolithozone. The Republic is characterized by specific socio-demographic features: significant distances between settlements; low population density; underdeveloped transport infrastructure; insufficient access to information, cultural and educational resources; restrained communications; polyethnic population.

NEFU is the landmark interregional educational and cultural center of the North-East of Russia. It provides training in 119 secondary and higher education programs. Today it is training over 17 thousand students from 52 subjects of Russia and 38 countries across the world. One of the university's strategic objectives is "to build a system of educating a cultured person" (Mikhailova, 2017).

## 4. Results

The Russian Public Opinion Research Center has been studying the attitude of Russians towards reading since 2009. The data gathered by the Center serve to identify leisure reading tendencies that are common for the entire Russian population aged over 18. Thus, the survey findings among respondents from different regions on November 20-21, 2017, demonstrated an increase in the number of reading population from 48% in 2014 to 60% in 2017; an increase by half in the number of books read in a period of time in comparison with the data of 2011. According to the survey findings, "representatives of the youngest age group (aged 18–24) ... read more than the others (an average of 6.65 books); for reference, respondents aged 60 and over read 5.85 books ..." (VTsIOM, 2017). A slight increase of 5% in the popularity of libraries has been revealed.

VTsIOM experts associate the positive emerging trend in Russians' reading in 2017 with a surge in the interest of respondents to the country's history and the need for self-education in order to improve academically. It is also important to consider thematic years of family, youth, teachers, Russian history, culture, literature and reading, Russian cinema held in the Russian Federation as a significant factor in influencing the emerging children, adolescent and adult reading trends. Not only they have "attracted the attention of society to a certain sphere" (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 2014), but have also mainstreamed particular activities of all the Russian society segments to improve the population's standard of culture and education, which is impossible without increasing the reader literacy rate of the population.

Based on the survey findings, the authors summarize that the Russian youth is motivated to read and has an interest therein; books adequately compete with computers and the Internet. Hence, the primary objective of the modern professional educational community is to make efforts to maintain and improve these indicators in the short term taking into account a "competitive leisure environment" (sports, travel, computer games, social media, cinema, etc.) that has an increasing impact on new generations of potential readers.

In comparison with the VTsIOM data, the authors are going to analyze the results obtained in the reading motivation survey among the first-year students of the Philology Department of the North-Eastern Federal University. Thus, according to the respondents' answers to the first survey question about their favorite leisure activities, it was found that first-year students preferred interacting with friends (67.5%), which is absolutely natural for this age period, watching videos (30%) and reading books (25%). At the same time, they did not attend any training courses (0% of the respondents).

**Table 1**  
Results of answering the question "What do you prefer doing in your leisure time?" (%)

No.	Response options	Number, as %
1.	Reading books	25%
2.	Reading newspapers and magazines	2.5%
3.	Watching TV	15%
4.	Watching videos	30%
5.	"Interacting" with computer	10%

6.	Listening to music	2.5%
7.	Doing sport	17.5%
8.	Going to theatres, museums, taking exhibitions or guided tours	2.5%
9.	Going to concerts or entertainment venues	20%
10.	Attending training courses	0%
11.	Travelling and tourism	2.5%
12.	Interacting with friends	67.5%
13.	Interacting with relatives and family members	17.5%
14.	Doing housework	10%
	Other:	
	sleeping	7.5%
	taking part in different events	2.5%
	drawing	2.5%

When answering the second question about reading preferences, 45% of the students chose modern Western literature whose popularity is determined by several reasons: it is a current youth trend; an increase in the number of screen adaptations; students find solutions to the issues of concern therein. The interest in Russian classical literature (27.5%) is accounted for its being comprehensively studied in the school literature syllabus. 15% chose Western classical literature, while 7.5% of the respondents preferred modern Russian literature.

Genre diversity in literary preferences of the respondents is noteworthy: lyric verses, fantastic fiction, fantasy, detective stories, mystical fiction, adventure, historical fiction, biography, philosophical novel, tragedy, psychological novel, parodic novels, and romance novels. Because of the age peculiarities, most students are traditionally keen on adventures (32.5%), psychological (32.5%) and romance novels (32.4%). It is obvious that young people like the classical narrative with a traditional worldbuilding: the characters of psychological and adventure novels act in a typical environment, among conventional collisions. Romance novels allow modern female readers (75% of those who have indicated this genre) to plunge into a cloudland, day-dreaming of great love that has not yet happened in real life. The second popular genres are fantastic fiction (30%) and fantasy – “a peculiar combination of fairy tale, fantastic fiction and adventure chivalric romance” (Belokurova, 2006) – (30%). Unreal historical subjects, fictitious beings, and two-worldness have always attracted young people. Memoirs (5%), tragedy (10%), and satirics (2.5%) proved to be less interesting.

There are a lot of books that are learnt at school, as well as cinematized foreign literature and books read back in childhood on the list of the respondents' favorite literary works. Only one student named the book of a Yakut writer. Traditionally favorite authors in the Russian classical literature are M.A. Bulgakov (20%), A.S. Pushkin (10%), L.N. Tolstoy (10%), F.M. Dostoyevsky (10%), Ye.I. Zamyatin (5%). The following Western literary works are equally popular: Fahrenheit 451 by R. Bradbury (22.5%), The Picture of Dorian Gray by O. Wilde (22.5%), The Great Gatsby by F. Fitzgerald (20%), The Old Man and the Sea by E. Hemingway (10%), Three Comrades by E.M. Remarque (5%), The Catcher in the Rye by J. Salinger (7.5%), One Hundred Years of Solitude by G.G. Márquez (5%), S. King's books (5%), The Metamorphosis by F. Kafka (5%). The works of such authors as A.N. Ostrovsky,

M.Yu. Lermontov, M.A. Sholokhov, A.C. Doyle, T. Dreiser, A. Camus, J. London, C. Palahniuk, O. McGuire, O. Moyes, R. Kiyosaki, M. Steadman, N. Sparks, D. Keyes, N. Yakutsky were mentioned on an individual basis.

The questionnaire has shown that the texts of Russian and foreign classical literature are included in the list of books most read by students. Western popular literary works are prevailing. A mixture of foundational works with popular literary texts gives evidence of an unstable reader taste in first-year students. Popular literature as a component of the cultural community is highly demanded by young readers, as indicated by the survey leader – the books about Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling preferred by 25% of the respondents.

The survey question about the students' reading motives became the most important in the framework of the research. The following motives were referred to as governing: emotions felt by the respondents while reading (42.5%); moral values addressed in the texts are of concern to 32.5% of the respondents; interest in literary characters is shown by 20% of the first-year students. While reading, students see themselves in literary characters; they feel their own emotional experiences, adopting the life experience of the characters. 7.5% of the respondents read when necessary.

**Table 2**  
Results of answering the question 'What motivates you to read these particular books?' (%)

<b>No.</b>	<b>Response options</b>	<b>Number, as %</b>
1.	I really like the characters in these books	20%
2.	These books resonate with me emotionally	42.5%
3.	The behavior of characters can serve as a role model to me	5%
4.	I recognize many of my own traits in the characters' behavior	2.5%
5.	These are very famous books, so I should be familiar with them	7.5%
6.	Herein, I learn a lot about human relations and people's behavior across different contexts	7.5%
7.	I care about the subject matter of the books	7.5%
8.	These books make you think about important moral issues	32.5%
9.	I believe these books have a prominent artistic merit	12.5%
10.	These books were recommended to me by my parents	2.5%
11.	These books are popular with my friends	7.5%
12.	These books are a part of the curriculum	7.5%
13.	I like all the books of these authors	0%
14.	I like all the books of this genre	0%
15.	I like the literary style (composition) of these books	0%

Answers to the question of students' communicative competence prove that it is not common to the first-year students to discuss the books read (45%); 7.5% are ready to share impressions with the parents, while 2.5% of the respondents would share with teachers. 45% of the respondents are willing to exchange their impressions with friends. Obviously, university teachers are not among those students are ready to converse with about leisure reading.

Answers to the 7th question about the need for reading are as follows: 2.5% of the total number of respondents feel a continuing need for reading. The majority of respondents read fiction when they have spare time (55%); 40% hardly ever read. Such indicators are unsatisfactory as for future philologists. This conclusion is confirmed by the data on the 8th survey question about the number of recently read books. Thus, 40% indicated that they had not read a single book over the last month. 37.5% have read one book, 17.5% have read two, 2.5% have read three. The results show lower quantitative indices of the NEFU students in comparison with similar indices in a VTsIOM survey conducted in various regions of Russia. These data indicate the need for pedagogical regulation of the NEFU students' reading.

Responses to the task to convince peers of the need for leisure reading can be distinguished into three groups: most first-year students adduced such pragmatic arguments as self-development and personal enrichment – 62.5%, vocabulary development – 42.5%, communication quality improvement – 15%. An interesting fact is that 11.7% of the students read books for new acquaintances, to widen the circle of friends, to "have something to talk about". The following answers are referred to the second group: imagination development – 25%, finding solutions to the issues of concern – 20%, raising the level of culture – 2.5%, finding a path to success – 1 (2.5%). The third group of answers refers to the emotional motives of fiction reading: relaxation (17.5%), the opportunity to retreat to unreality (15%), and a way to find your own world (5%) were named by the respondents.

The resulting data should be regarded as contradictory. On the one hand, the respondents prefer to read Russian or foreign classical literary works that emotionally resonate with the soul and give readers pause for reflection about overriding moral issues raised in the texts. It is important for students to read in order to broaden their outlooks, to enhance the educational and cultural level and the quality of communication, to progress and be successful. On the other hand, according to the first-year students, they hardly ever read; they do not compare notes of what they have read, whereby reading is inferior to social life and watching videos in their leisure time.

Therefore, the authors arrive at the conclusion that a university reader environment should not only support first-year humanists in their reading interest, but also develop approaches that would motivate them to read as a leisure activity that would raise their cultural and educational level and meet the spiritual and moral needs of youth.

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## **5. Discussion**

The solution to the problem under investigation requires an integrated approach aimed at creating a new reader environment that would meet the contemporary challenges, which takes on particular significance in educational institutions, whose most important function is the education of a reader, an enlightened, knowledgeable, creative personality rich in spirit. The reader environment of a higher educational institution is a set of impact factors, psychological, pedagogical and communication-oriented (Rubtcova, 1996) learning, educational and professional activity environment that would lay the groundwork for formation and development of potential, interests, inclinations, abilities, qualities of the creative reader. A quality university reading environment "should help an individual to comfortably adapt to any social realm by means of pedagogical patterns" (Zalutskaya, Oshchepkova, Nikonova, 2017) aimed at forming in a learner the readiness to self-education, self-development and self-fulfillment in the sociocultural and professional environment.

One of the reader environment functions is active influence on students' reading motives.

According to the authors, self-development and self-fulfillment of a student as a creative personality are the most effective motive. The formation of this reading motive presupposes, among other things, the engagement of students in independent creative activities on a establishing reader environment in university. A student reader should find a creative solution to the problem of raising interest in leisure reading, should sweep the student community along by books and promote reading using all kinds of technologies that are pertinent to the needs of young people.

The North-Eastern Federal University has all the things required to establish creative a reading environment:

- Creative potential (the federal state educational standard in all fields of education is focused on formation of creative abilities in students; each university unit has creative student associations, hobby groups, clubs, studios whose task is to enhance the creative activity of students);
- Facilities (libraries with printed and electronic publications, a Publishing House, a corporate website and corporate publications Our University and OPEN);
- Managerial resource (the university organization chart includes the Council for Creative Development of Students under the University's President established to include students in sociocultural practice, to unlock their creative potential, to support research and sociocultural student projects with a creative component).

The Council for Creative Development of Students as a student self-government body has been a co-executor of the long-term "Reading University" project over the past five years. The Philology Department was the project initiator in 2014. The project is implemented on a staged basis.

At the first stage, the university teachers with the involvement of students monitored the readers' interests and the level of readers' culture in the students; a project of Reading Support and Development Concept in educational institutions of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and a reader competence formation pattern for the NEFU students with a description of educational environment for creating a quality reader environment have been developed.

The second stage of the "Reading University" project began with the development of a list of "100 golden books" recommended for students to read taking into account the results of their reader activity monitoring. Beside such sections as "Russian Classical Literature", "Contemporary Literature", "World Literature", section "Literature of the Peoples of Russia" entered the list; it includes works of Yakut writers and authors representing the indigenous peoples of the North.

Simultaneously, students of all the NEFU units, including non-humanitarian ones, were tasked with a creative promotion of a book into the minds of their peers. Future philologists and public communications bachelors began with sociocultural PR project "Free books" (Kondakova, 2013). It was held under the motto "Knowledge is Freedom" and aimed at increasing young people's reading motivation. In the framework of the project, its authors – first- and third-year students – held a bookcrossing campaign using a "Safe Bookcase" as a public space for books. The bookcase had been presented at the art exhibition "Libertarium", whereby an installation and a book lottery were the highlight of the event. The organizers provided information support for the events via regional television channels and social media. Contemporary art objects (computer monitors decorated as a bookcase in custom design) created by the students themselves, a novelty of the event activities in the context of conventional everyday school life, a keen desire of Yakut youth to illuminate the dull, foggy, sunless winter habitat, and a great need for creative self-expression led to an effect unrehearsed by the authors: the target audience instantly joined the bookcrossing, approved itself as reading and creative people, demanded the project to continue, offering their creative ideas on how to promote books.

The result is that the PR project has become a kind of trigger mechanism for creating an integral system of such student events as an effective tool for promoting leisure reading, influencing the target audience and enhancing the creative potential of students.



Subsequently, such events were: annual university public speaking competitions with an obligatory dramatic recital; university-wide academic competition in Russian classical literature "A bright beam of knowledge shining ..."; public lectures by professors and philology students given to non-humanists about literature, writers, and poets; recitation campaigns in public places at the university campus; creation of long-term sightseeing project "Literary Yakutsk"; opening of a permanent dramatic recital online platform for reading Russian and Yakut classics; flash mobs "Time to read!" and "Read does no harm! No reading does!"; sociocultural project "Let's go for a read"; development of literature-focused website projects; regular events at the Literary Lounge of the Philology Department (literary theme parties, balls, tournaments, contests, meetings with writers, etc.) and more.

Within the framework of the "Reading University" project, the most significant successful result of students' involvement in creative activities to motivate young people to read was their self-organization in the format of "Aliriss" reader club with a permanent on-line discussion platform (the NEFU site, 2018). Teachers have compassed the major purpose – to form readiness to self-development and self-organization of leisure time in students through reading. Thereby, the university reading environment has been enriched with a new structure established by the students proactively involved in creative events in the framework of the "Reading University" project.

Another indicator of positive impact of the students' creative activity to promote reading is an increase in the number of the NEFU students who are participants and winners of literary competitions at various levels, such as the NEFU "1000 Reciters" competition, the Republican contest of the Yakut folk epic Olonkho narrators, the Republican "My Oyunsky" essay contest (P. Oyunsky was the founder of the Sakha people's literature), the Republican writing competition, the all-Russian writing competition of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, all-Russian competitions for scholarships named after writers A.I. Solzhenitsyn, A.A. Voznesensky, E.P. Neymokhov, the all-Russian "Solzhenitsyn out loud" competition and others.

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## 6. Conclusions

The North-Eastern Federal University practice in establishing a reader environment through unlocking its students' creative potential conclusively proves that the most important result of this process is this environment ability to self-development and continuous enrichment with creative ideas on how to motivate young people to read as an exciting form of organizing leisure and activities useful for life-long education.

Creative methods of reading motivation involve not only students but also university lecturers in cognitive activity. Students' and teachers' collaboration in book promotion, as well as their joint reading leisure facilitate the formation of a reader student and expand the scope of their independent reading (Panina, 2016). Goal-oriented communication between the subjects of university educational environment bolsters the level of readers' culture in young people, allows them to see a source of self-education and self-improvement in a piece of fiction based on the moral experience of mankind.

Modern humanists do not fully comprehend the importance of imaginative literature in training and education of the younger generation. The reading activity of intended bachelors of philology is often pragmatically motivated, for example, by the need to study for theoretical and practical classes in literary disciplines. To educate a "life-long" creative reader one should study the reading motives of students in different years, that is, in different generations. Perhaps the reference point of readers' interest will change meaning that the technologies to motivate young people to read will also change.

Resources of the North-Eastern Federal University for developing a creative reading environment are ample. The current sociocultural projects created by students indicate their interest and need for leisure reading, the desire to diversify their reading practices and to broaden the reader horizons. The federal university experience demonstrates that reading unites people and makes their lives more interesting; a piece of fiction becomes a subject of group discussion, introduces one to the "select" circle, helps to make friends, to find like-minded people and congenial souls.

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1. M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Yakutsk, Russia

2. M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Yakutsk, Russia

3. M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Yakutsk, Russia. Contact e-mail: [svetlana-panina@autorambler.ru](mailto:svetlana-panina@autorambler.ru)

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