'A goal without a plan is just a wish'
— **Antoine de Saint-Exupery**

egardless of moments of crisis and drastic change, studies and research at HSE University carry on, as do projects that not only aim at education excellence but also enhance the impact the University has on what happens inside and outside its walls. Furthermore, the "Big Projects" initiative, launched by HSE Academic Supervisor Yaroslav Kuzminov in 2021, has both an academic and social focus.

Dr. Anastasia Stepanova, the head of the HSE Center for Development and Integration of Project Activities, currently oversees the HSE 'Big Projects' programme and talked with The HSE Look about the programme's goals and what it plans achieve, as well as the following ongoing projects: 'Discourse practices of Russian society: professional and sociocultural perspectives', coordinated by Dr. Mira Bergelson; 'Applied Ethics', which features two tracks - 'Ethics in Business' headed by Dr. Maxim Storchevoy and 'Ethics and the Law', curated by Dr. Alexander Larichev; and 'Literature and society: the experience of socio-cultural description', which is headed by Dr. Evgeny Kazartsev. Each project leader also discuss their efforts in detail.

Yulia Grinkevich,
Director for Internationalisation

A Response To The Most Pressing Social Issues

Anastasia Stepanova, Deputy Vice Rector and Associate Professor at the School of Finance, as well as Research fellow at the Corporate Finance Center, heads the HSE Center for Development and Integration of Project Activities and is responsible for managing the HSE 'Big Projects' programme. Dr. Stepanova talked to The HSE Look about the programme's goals and what it aims to achieve, as well as the various ongoing Big Projects.

What is HSE University's 'Big Projects' programme?

In 2021, three major humanitarian projects were launched at HSE University. These projects have a lot in common. First, the projects are multidisciplinary; they involve researchers from different fields. Second, they attract undergraduate, graduate and PhD students studying in a wide variety of programmes. Hence, every Big Project holds discussion seminars, which involve every single HSE subdivision that can be helpful for its implementation. Moreover, this is a great opportunity for networking in specific areas of research. Therefore, the projects are quite extensive. That's not just a name. Finally, all of these projects focus on solving complex interdisciplinary problems that are important for our institute. We expect them to have a high academic or social impact.

What are the goals of the programme?

HSE University is a large institute. Different university teams can work on the same problems, studying them from different angles. Creating a collaborative platform for a multidisciplinary team who can pool efforts generates synergy when they are dealing with important academic

problems or social challenge. The programme also aims to develop synergy between science and education through diverse involvement of students in Big Projects – as part of their project work, internship or a part/full-time job. Many students are already involved in the projects - for example, Evgeny Kazartsev's project on 'Literature and Society' has attracted over 100 students per 90 scientists. Thus, the initiative certainly paves the way for the next generation of academic leaders.

In my opinion, HSE University's Big Projects can contribute to a response from the university to the most pressing social challenges. To do that, we should develop and transfer technologies, including social and humanitarian ones, from academic research to business and society. Therefore, the result of a Big Project is an independent product that is demanded by society or business. This product can make a serious social impact, spur the development of a new scientific school and / or attract demand from the corporate world. The products developed by three Big Projects will be accompanied by a digital implementation, that is, digital products. Among them there are large databases, original rankings and methodologies for ethical assessment of companies and legislation, and platforms providing easy access to them. All digital products will be located on HSE University's joint economic and social data archive and made accessible to other researchers on request.

Can you tell us about the ongoing projects?

Currently we have three working projects, one of which features two tracks – all projects are interesting and differ greatly from each other. They are only in their second year but quite a lot has been achieved already.

Mira Bergelson, Professor at the School of Philological Studies, leads the project on 'Discourse practices of Russian society: professional and sociocultural perspectives'. Our colleagues study various cases of communication difficulties, or miscommunication, and the ways of overcoming it. This could refer to the specifics of vocabulary used by air traffic controllers, or people from the areas of Moscow where a large number of migrants live, or new words that entered the language during the Covid-19 period and how poorly patients and doctors understood each other. This project also looks at the meanings of words/terms, depending on situations when one learned them from, as well as the meanings ascribed to words – those that sound similar in different languages – by their speakers. Each case under the project has its own product, which will eventually be included into a unified database, which will be kept at HSE University, of course.

Another project is 'Applied Ethics", which developed from the position that the Russian state and society, just like any other rapidly developing system, need a social, production, cultural and business environment where the individual can live and work comfortably, while passing on their experience to new generations. And ethics lays the foundation for stable coexistence of individuals in society and, thereby, for the progressive evolvement of civilization as a whole. The first track of the project is on 'Ethics and Law' led by Dr. Alexander Larichev, Deputy Dean for Research and Professor at the Faculty of Law. One of the most important results of the project will be the development of universal indicators of the ethics of law, which will be possible to use for optimization of public relations regulation at different levels - from legislative to local. The second track of the project – 'Ethics of Business' – is supervised by Maxim Storchevoy, an Associate Professor from HSE University's campus in St. Petersburg. The project has an intercampus team – colleagues from both St. Petersburg and Perm campuses work on creating a Business Ethics Index for local companies and other tools. Moreover, the project collaborates with various industrial associations and Russian Business Ethics Network.

Evgeny Kazartsev, Professor at the School of Philological Studies in Moscow and Department of Philology in St. Petersburg, leads the 'Literature and Society' project. The idea of the project came from the fact that philologists face difficulties in assessing the effect Russian-language literature has on society partially because there is not one single corpus with all Russian-language texts. Therefore, the idea was to create a digital platform that would give all philologists who study Russian literature a unified access to different types of text – corpora of Russian fiction, literature textbooks covering the Soviet period, interviews, etc. – which can be analyzed by all modern methods and answer a large number of questions. Within that digital platform, colleagues also develop a linguistic search apparatus that could be used for the analysis of literary texts (what ideas and messages they convey) that had the most noticeable impact on our society during different periods of literature development.

It seems like the "Big Projects" initiative is for research in the fields of humanities or social sciences.

As of today, yes, the launched projects are based at the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Law, and at the St. Petersburg School of Economics and Management. However, we already see interest from other faculties, e.g. the Faculty of Computer Sciences, who have in mind a project in the field of genetics and bioinformatics.

Are there any plans for further development of the programme?

Yes, of course, we have development plans. First of all, they are related to the unlocking of HSE potential as a multidisciplinary research university and uniting the academic community around scientific breakthroughs and social challenges.

The Use of Language in Practical Terms

Mira Bergelson, Professor at the School of Philological Studies and Leading Research Fellow at the Laboratory for Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Projects, coordinates the project "Discourse practices of Russian society: professional and sociocultural perspectives".

How did the idea for this project emerge and what are the professional and sociocultural perspectives in relation to discourse practices?

As a linguist, my whole life I wanted to study language as a tool for everything we do, especially within a complex society where so many interactions happen between people and so much depends on effective communication. Therefore, the 'Big Project' I proposed was about discourse practices, or how the language is used in practical terms.

It was important for me that the project represents an 'umbrella', which would gather many vital practices where subtle differences in what and how we communicate may have significant impact on various social activities. In addition, since one person cannot cover everything, the project brings together a group of people who study the different aspects of language in its sociocultural and professional context. Thus, our project consists of various cases, which consider the kinds of speech activities that form practice. When we talk about discourse practices, we refer to the use of language in situations set by the actions of people involved in this practice, whereby certain parameters of communication characterize repetitive verbal activities, which, in turn, can perform a particular function in society - either professional or ethno-cultural.

What do we mean by sociocultural context? Because one's linguistic identity largely consists of various socio-cultural aspects. In Russia, and especially here in Moscow, we live in a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual society, and the fact that an individual belongs to a certain ethnic or even a linguistic group – something that determines what languages people know, what languages they learn or forget - all this has a great influence on how speech practices evolve. It also concerns usually conflicting situations around minority languages status/preservation in the republics of our country, especially when it comes to education policy - how to teach in different languages (what subjects, to what extent, as well as how to develop and preserve languages). Our profession, on the other hand, determines what we do on a daily basis as individuals, as well as within society (here I refer to job related activities that are carried out primarily through communication).

Can you tell more about the cases included under your project?

For our current study of minority languages, medical cases were a particular priority. Our colleagues, experts in the Chuvash and Tatar languages, for example, explored the use of minority languages in situational crises - to what extent the use of Tatar or Chuvash languages during the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to better or worse communication between doctors and patients and what this tells us about the problems of using the Tatar language in medical communication. In other words, to what extent did failing to use the Tatar language affect successful communication between doctors and patients, as well what was the speed of information perception? This case study is being led by Vlada Baranova from HSE St. Petersburg, and we have obtained very interesting results. For example, we discovered that communication in a native language can be more convenient, but people are afraid to do so because it is unusual to speak their native language in medical institutions, even in situations when both the doctor and the patient know the language. With this in mind, we prepared practical recommendations and have already reached out to the HSE Department of Health Care Administration and Economics.

One of the case studies concerned communication between air traffic controllers and pilots. This project aims to propose practical solutions and is led by Denis Zubalov. This case is 'motivated' by the largest disaster in the history of aviation, which occurred primarily due to a communication error, when the word 'OK' was misinterpreted by the pilot. Our colleagues already came up with practical recommendations on what to focus on when teaching Aviation English to Russian pilots. This is a very important issue because, of course, there are problems in communication in a language that can be foreign to all participants. This non-native English is different for different parties and, as such, there should be skills to overcome possible misunderstandings. As part of the project, we plan to cooperate with the Aeroflot Association, which trains Russian pilots to pass the aviation English exam.

We also have a number of other cases that look at totally varying discourse practices. There is a case on how the use of anglicisms has affected digital discourse over the last 15 years - how certain interactive practice arises between people and what are the consequences of it being used in professional activities and beyond. Another case concerns conflict communication and aggression on the Internet - how and by what means it can be measured, anticipated and experienced. It is headed up by Valery Shulginov, who wants to identify the various markers of aggressive behaviour. As for me, I head up a case about language adaptation - the attitudes of speakers of minority languages to loss or preservation of their native tongues in metropolitan cities. We have

a case that explores the archetypes of the pandemic mentality and the values that emerged in this period within certain age groups. It is led by Stanislav Beletsky. Another interesting case led by Irina Fufaeva and Anton Somin looks at words designating gender and ethnicity (ethnonyms) and their use in communication according to one's social position, professional and sociocultural affiliation (which can be quite conflicting).

It's quite apparent that cases are different. However, they may be described through the same system of parameters (participants, context, goals, tools, etc.). We are also looking at the intersection of those practices and analyzing what factors lead to successful communication and the reasons for communicative failures (e.g., ineffective communication that did not achieve its goal).

How do you collect and process your research data?

To obtain research data, we needed people to speak and talk about something in a natural manner (so that the discourse is ecologically valid) - because people communicate not only with words, but also without them. To register non-verbal components properly, we conduct and record semi-structured interviews on given topics, trying to reveal the meanings that a person would not consciously emphasize in a 'natural' conversation. We later transcribe, or better say – digitalize – these interviews identifying not only what people say, but how they do it through certain vocabulary, discourse markers, expressions, constructions, how they structure their thought. In addition to interviews, we collect posts from the Internet and social networks, and conduct surveys. The gathered data is then tagged - we mark pieces of text or discourse, so that they can be extracted when certain parameters are set.

This actually leads to two main goals that our project pursues: the formation of text corpora related to certain discourse practices, thereby allowing us to see the data when it has been registered and how it has changed over time, as well as various tools that can help to identify problems of ineffective communication in specific discourse practices together with potential recommendations to improve it.

Will this project generate an applicable product?

There will be different products for different cases.

Our major product will be the database with the best part of the raw data of the collected corpora that can be used for dozens of other studies (as it would allow checking how and what people talked about in certain years).

Some colleagues solve the methodological problem - they formulate instructions and methods of analysis - for example, determine the level of complexity for the language of law. And this is a huge problem - the language of the law is so cumbersome that it is nearly impossible to understand it. Thus, the product the team produces is algorithms for checking whether a law is comprehensible from the linguistic point of view. The HSE School of Finance already uses the methods we have developed in order to identify certain triggers/markers in the texts of top-managers, while also assessing their levels of risk tolerance and over-confidentiality (which are very important audit parameters).

Furthermore, of course, we publish articles. For instance, the team researching online aggression works on an academic paper that would illustrate what provokes different levels of aggression when communicating online (what designations serve as the triggers of aggression). And there are and will be other publications as well.

The Law and Ethics

Alexander Larichev, Deputy Dean for Research and Professor at the Faculty of Law, leads a track on Ethics and the Law as part of the Applied Ethics Big project.

Can you please tell us about the project that you oversee?

The central issue of the project is how the law relates to other social regulators, such as morality. Interrelations between individuals in various spheres of interaction have long been subject to the influence of moral (ethical) norms. Quite often, it so happens that morals are more powerful in their impact than the "core" regulator, that is, the law, which is controlled by the state.

Our project aims at resolving issues relating to the mutual influence of the two major social regulators – the law and ethics. This includes a study of the history of ethical concepts in society, as reflected in the law, the philosophical aspects in interrelations between the law and ethics, as well as an analysis of the applied aspects relating to the interplay between the two social regulators within various spheres of societal relations. One of the strengths of HSE University has always been its interdisciplinary approach, thus allowing us to consider a research topic from various angles and converge achievements from different disciplines. The project brings together legal researchers, philosophers, sociologists, mathematicians and computer scientists who jointly accumulate academic data on a given topic. For our research focus, as well as in terms of meeting set tasks, this is a unique approach both in Russia and globally.

What digital products do you plan to create through this project?

Within the context of this project, the development of two digital projects are now underway. This includes a chronological map of the historic evolution of the impact of ethics on the conception and development of legal norms (the so-called "feed of time"), and our "guiding star", that is, the Index of the Ethicality of the Law (IEL). The feed of time aims at a wide audience and reflects the consistent evolution of ethical norms (so-called "moral foundations"), their development in various sources of the law over time. It will cover core periods of Russian history, from the ancient times until today. The launch of the feed on a special website will not only allow us to organize a big array of data about interrelations between ethics and the law at differing stages of Russian history, but also popularize research results among a vast readership. Furthermore, the feed may serve as an excellent tool for studying the history of the state and law at school or academic institutions, as well as a database for further inquiry in regards to related issues.

The IEL will synthesize the results of theoretical/philosophical analyses and sociological research with the application of the latest AI and programming achievements. We plan to create a functioning computer algorithm, which can assess individual legal norms, their blocks and normative legal acts (NLA) overall in terms of its compliance with today's ideas about ethicality in Russian society. This mainly concerns the norms containing so-called "moral foundations" and ethical content focused on values, rather than technical norms. All activities with legal texts will be carried out through the information analytical system, for which a prototype was developed in 2021. This system will visualize, via the user's interface, connections between inputted NLAs, while also assigning to NLAs numeric values, which will be interpreted as indices of ethicality of a given NLA, on the basis of machine-learning methods.

The Index of Ethicality is largely instrumental for legislators, as well as the executive authorities engaged in the implementation of the legal regulation of societal relations. Our colleagues from the State Duma of the Russian Federation have already confirmed their interest. For instance, last year, the Parliament held a roundtable, where the tests of the algorithm were discussed, along with the feasibility of its application for assessing the ethicality of draft laws. As a result, it shall serve as a key instrument to render adopted legal norms more effective, so that they meet the expectations of a society. Among those interested in IEL, there are representatives of IT giants, who are members of the Alliance for the AI Sector, as the IEL will be an important applied instrument, which can demonstrate the new options provided by neural networks in finding solutions to social concerns. The IEL will also be available in the public domain, which can help Russian society and the state better comprehend the motivations behind human behaviour and the necessity for regulating it.

How do you collect data for the IEL?

The content of the feed of time will be based on the results of our researchers of theory and history of law, who are analyzing in-depth legal acts from various historic periods. Experts in law, sociology and philosophy also join in the efforts to collect data for generating the IEL. Finally, academics from such fields as mathematics and computer science are working on the development of information systems for the two products.

With respect to the IEL as such, we have spent hours mulling over the methodology for building the index at interdisciplinary colloquiums. This particular task was at the top of our list. Thanks to these joint efforts, we developed an algorithm for building an index as follows. First, in order to understand what ideas underlie the concept of the ethicality of law, we plan to conduct all-Russian sociological research (scheduled for this autumn). This analysis will be based on a questionnaire, which is devised based on MFT (Moral Foundation Theory) principles. The survey will allow to identify average conceptions about the ethical/the unethical in Russian society, based on several indicators, as well as assess the level of the moral relativism of respondents, which matters for shaping an accurate portrayal of the ethicality in a society.

On the back of MFT-based sociological survey, the methodology will be developed, along with carrying out the tagging of norms in Russian legislative acts. For the purposes of tagging, ethically loaded norms will be selected in legal acts of the sectors aligned with respective MFT indicators: constitutional, criminal, civil, tax, family law.

Following the tagging, each norm will carry a whole-numbered label, assigned through a developed method. Later on, machine-learning methods (e.g., neural networks) will be applied to such tagged texts and, thanks to the learning on 10,000 to 100,000 of tagged norms, the system shall be able to independently discern non-tagged new normative constructs and tag an uploaded text with a number value which can be interpreted as an index of its ethicality.

Do students take part in the project? What is their role?

As with any other major project at HSE University, our project heavily relies on undergrads and doctoral students. They get involved as research assistants, who, jointly with team members from among academics, collect materials for both theoretical analysis and applied results, as well as take part in the development

of digital products. Now, for instance, a group of our young team members is helping us to carry out a semantic analysis of academic articles covering the relationship between ethics and the law. During the project's subsequent stages, undergrads and doctoral students will assist in tagging legal norms in line with a developed ethicality scale.

Can you please share some of the achievements that the project has generated?

We carried out an in-depth analysis of the philosophical approaches to the interplay between ethics and the law; this has resulted in the generation of both academic and applied knowledge. We were able to adjust the MFT-driven tools, so that we can build

the feed of time and the IEL. Furthermore, we have developed a prototype of the information/analytical system for the IEL. By December 2022, the feed of time will be rolled out as a ready-made product.

Our theoretical developments, in terms of determining a foundational model of the interrelationship of the two normative systems – ethics and the law, as well as special models for their interrelation and mutual influence in specific domains of life, have been further considered in several papers published in notable academic journals as well as several monographs.

I wish to thank our interdisciplinary team, all participating subdivisions, and HSE University's administration for their support for our ideas, which, through their implementation, uphold the long-standing academic and intellectual reputation of the University.

Ethics In Business

Maxim Storchevoy, Associate Professor at the Department of Management of St. Petersburg School of Economics and Management, leads a track on Ethics in Business as part of the Applied Ethics Big project.

What is ethics in business and why is it important?

Business ethics is an area of practical management and academic research that was gradually institutionalized in the second half of the 20th century. It considers what companies and managers may and may not do in their business activities. In the 1950s, as a reaction to increasing power of large corporations, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was developed in public discussions; it required that large corporations take care of their employees, consumers, and the environment. Later, the UN became the main actor who produced various concepts and mechanisms to develop business ethics at the global level. At first, they suggested the Global Compact between business and society – a short written agreement to comply with ethical norms, respect human rights, refrain from polluting the environment, etc. – which every company may voluntarily sign. Later, they developed the Sustainable Development, Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) concept frameworks for investors, etc. These frameworks were accepted by businesses who are keen to shape their operations according to them and publish regular reports on their progress in this area.

Why is business ethics important? In short, it protects people against negative treatment on the part of their employers and providers of products and services. A society with strong business ethics is a safe comfortable environment where people and organizations can productively work with minimum risk of being hurt.

Are there any specificities about Russian business ethics?

In Russia, business ethics developed much later than in Western countries since, in the Soviet Union, we lived in the command economy and only turned to the market in 1990s. For example, the CSR concept was only recognized by Russian large business in the 2000s (and not in the 1950-70s as in the USA and Europe). However, our business ethics agenda is rather synchronized with the global one and is developing with minimum delay.

In my opinion, Russian companies demonstrate the same features in business ethics as any other developing country — a low ethical culture, high tolerance for corruption, etc. Corporate relationships are often authoritarian (the boss is always right!) or patriarchal (men should be in charge). Here, we might lag a little behind the developed countries but we still demonstrate some progress every year.

What is your project about and how will it help overcoming key challenges of Russian business ethics?

The Business Ethics track specifies several practical problems that we plan to solve on the basis of academic research and development of practical managerial

tools. For example, we are developing tools for assessing ethical performance of companies in the market. In order to manage something, you need to learn how to measure it. Thus, companies and regulators alike need some metrics that would allow them to properly gauge ethics. We are developing an ethics index based on the opinions of people who have some relationships at the corporate level (consumers, suppliers, employees) and the other based on AI analysis of existing texts that have been published on social networks or customer reviews websites (the work on the latter index was transferred to the HSE Centre of Artificial Intelligence recently). Both indexes allow us to rank companies within particular industries for further use by prospective employees, consumers, or regulators. We want to launch them this year.

When the companies realize that they need to improve their level of their corporate ethics, they also need a tool to do that. Here, we need ethics training to teach employees about ethics and why it is important - how to make decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas, etc. HSE University can develop high-quality training for business in Russia through academic research. Our first pilot project concerns ethics training for HSE University since academic institutions are also organizations that face certain problems with unethical behaviour on the part of both students and employees. We will first develop an ethical training programme for HSE students (both in English and Russian) that should be completed and launched by the end of this year. This will be an online training course with various modules each containing videos to be viewed,

followed by a series of questions. The videos will provide examples of unethical behaviour while also offering life hacks on how to deal with it. Currently, all students who start their studies at HSE University are presented with guidelines on plagiarism, cheating and academic ethics, which serves as a very brief introduction. Our training is much broader - it is about ethical behaviour in a classroom, communication with teachers and between students and, of course, we have a large module on plagiarism, data fabrication, and 'contract cheating'. We assume that all first-year students should go through online ethics training. Furthermore, we also realize that there is a need for ethics training for teaching staff. With this in mind, we are planning this project for the next year if everything works out with ethics training for students.

Another of this project's outcomes that will help to incorporate ethics in business is additional professional education for managers and ethics specialists - we plan to develop two online courses for managers, which will prepare them for passing professional examinations and obtaining Certified Ethics Professional qualifications.

In addition to creating tools that can establish business ethics in companies, our project team also studies mechanisms of self-regulation ethics in the market - both in financial and non-financial sectors. In general, this mechanism requires companies to voluntarily introduce ethical standards (codes of ethics) and monitor compliance thereof. We consider what important elements should be included into these mechanisms, how to determine their effectiveness, and so on.

The Relationship Between Literature and Society

Evgeny Kazartsev, the Head of the HSE Moscow School of Philological Studies, as well as Professor at the Department of Philology and Leading Research Fellow at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Basic Research at HSE St. Petersburg, talked to The HSE Look about overseeing the project 'Literature and society: the experience of socio-cultural description'.

What is the project about?

The aim of our research project, generally speaking, is to analyze how literature affects society and how society affects literature, given that Russia has a literature-centric culture (or at least that is the hypothesis) and literature in Russia carries a great philosophical and ideological potential and forms the principles of human behavior.

We have around 13 sub-projects and 240 people studying the stated research question from various angles. Some are trying to understand what tasks our society sets for literature, what kind of order comes from it and forces literature to create relevant products. Although we believe that writers are free to write whatever they want, the phenomenon of a social order existed under social realism already and apparently exists today. What does it look like today and what did it look like 20-30 years ago, what formed readers' interest and what public institutions or channels of communication between society and literature could influence it - these are the questions we also try to unveil. Other subprojects consider how libraries have influenced the choice of certain literature by readers - what books were 'made' paramount/mainstream and, as such, what authors appeared unexpectedly in different years. Furthermore, certain sub-projects are dedicated to Russian literary canons from different eras. For now, we limit ourselves to Russian literature though, of course, Soviets also read foreign literature.

How do you plan to analyze this literature-society-literature interface?

Each subproject has its own methodology. One of the main methods is in-depth interviews at the intersection of sociology and literature with different generational cohorts, who were exploring Russian literature at different times (with the aim of finding out how their interest was formed and how the pieces they read shaped their consciousness). We also look at Russian novels and stories and markup the texts accordingly. To explore how Russian and foreign literature was reaching out to society through the theater, we study the posters and periodicals of Moscow theaters (i.e., what performances did the audience go to and in what interpretations, what was the reaction?). We also work with archives in order to study what underground literature crossed our borders and was read by Soviet people.

All the materials are then uploaded to the SocioLit computer system, which will be able to carry out a linguistic analysis of certain structures, concepts, images, and phrases in different types of texts. We also employ iFora methods, which were invented by Leonid Gokhberg's team for analyzing legal texts. At the moment, we use them for analyzing literary texts.

We want to see how certain ideas - introduced by literature or online users – continue to live and develop. For example, in what other literary works (and contexts) has the catchphrase from the Tolstoy's War and Peace - the 'cudgel of the people's war' - been used. Or, how different writers described intergenerational relationships. Or, whether a contemporary literary work has been inspired one's understanding of certain philosophical/moral/ethical issues discussed online. With this in mind, the system will also be able to crawl through texts that are available on the Internet, including reader reactions.

It seems like you are creating an 'eternal knowledge' database. What will be your product after the project's three-year timeframe?

Upon the project's completion, we plan to have a literary corpus (and maybe a corpus of political discourse and our interviews) and a reliable method/search apparatus for searching the database, as well as the collected corpora. So, when we search for a certain concept or a keyword, the SocioLit system can go through all corpora and provide a proper analysis.

In fact, the system has commercial potential and may be of interest to various specialists. For example, it will be able to forecast demand on the publishing market. In other words, what makes a best-selling book? Or, why

do certain books fail to sell? What themes in fiction do different generations want to read about today and would they like to read about tomorrow? Moreover, finally, what are readers' reactions to particular literary themes?

Are students involved in the project? What makes it interesting for them?

We have around 120 students working on this project - philologists, sociologists, and many others. These are Bachelor's, Master's and PhD students. In addition, they are very keen to participate in the creation of new tools, and with this knowledge and hands-on experience, they can work in the future as experts or specialists in similar or related fields. Participation in the project, of course, can help to cultivate their project skills and hopefully this type of activity can qualify as credit units or/and students' research activities.

Can you share some of the outcomes and/or unexpected findings?

We are already analyzing a large body of Russian fiction and considering various generational cohorts, while also applying algorithms for this linguistic analysis. We created a prototype for SocioLit system and have gradually started filling it up with literary data.

When talking about unexpected results, it was not our assumption that literature would be one of the central interests of young people. However, our sociological research shows that today's youth are indeed interested in literature. They read a lot and even try to copy the behavior of famous literary heroes and heroines. In fact, it seems that literature gives its readers an idea of what is good and what is bad. For instance, people see themselves in literary heroes, while others fall in love with fictional characters.