

Report of the LASA Business Meeting

XXVII International Congress | Montréal, Canada | September 7, 2007

President Charles Hale called the meeting to order at 8:00PM. He welcomed members warmly and reminded them that the first portion of the meeting would consist of the Awards Ceremony, followed by the Business Meeting with reports by LASA officers.

Presentation of LASA Awards

Hale began with recognition of the 2007 **Kalman Silvert Awardee**, Helen Safa. The Silvert Lecture had taken place earlier in the day with presentations by Dr. Safa and panelists Carmen Diana Deere, Lynn Bolles, Jorge Duany and Nathalie Lebon. Selection Committee members included Chair Sonia Álvarez, Marysa Navarro, Arturo Arias, Philip Oxhorn and previous Silvert Award recipient Miguel León-Portilla.

Hale then noted that Orlando Fals Borda would deliver the 2007 **LASA/Oxfam America Martin Diskin Memorial Lecture**. The acknowledgment officially would be made at the Diskin Lecture on Saturday at 2:00 PM. This year's Diskin Committee was chaired by Brinton Lykes; committee members included Ray Offenheiser, Les Field, Michelle Fine, and Virginia Vargas.

Michiel Baud, Chair of the **Bryce Wood Award** Committee, presented the award for the outstanding book in the social sciences or humanities published in English. Baud thanked committee members Patricia Birman, Misha Kokotovic, Raúl Madrid and Fiona Wilson. The committee selected *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938* by Myrna Santiago. Baud praised the book as a "great achievement, especially when one realizes that it started out as a Ph.D. dissertation...and eloquently and convincingly demonstrates how the discovery of the oil reserves in the Huasteca

region south of Veracruz dramatically transformed the region's history." Baud continued, "In short, the book represents a major contribution to our understanding of early 20th century Mexico and, it could be argued, Latin America. It presents a local and ethnographic vision on the history of Veracruz, but beautifully connects this perspective to global developments connected to U.S. imperialism and the emergence of a world-wide oil industry."

The Committee also awarded a **Bryce Wood Honorable Mention** to Steve J. Stern for *Battling for Hearts and Minds. Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988* (Vol 2). This second of a three-volume effort addresses the "complex issue of memory in Chile during and after the Pinochet dictatorship." (Stern's Volume I, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London, 1998* won an honorable mention in 2006.) In presenting the award Baud commented that the "author examines the ways in which the Pinochet dictatorship attempted to control collective memory of the coup and its aftermath by constructing its own official version. He also analyzes how a diverse variety of opponents of the dictatorship gradually knitted together loose, individual memories into a collective...memory that could be injected into public consciousness to effectively challenge official memory.... The book is truly a pleasure to read and the Committee looks forward to the third and last volume of this trilogy."

The **Premio Iberoamericano** is presented to the outstanding book in the social sciences or humanities published in Spanish or Portuguese. Committee member Rossana Reguillo presented the award on behalf of chair Alejandro Grimson, who could not be present. The 2007 award was presented to Anke Birkenmaier for *Alejo Carpentier y la cultura del surrealismo en América Latina*.

In an earlier correspondence Grimson described the book as "bellamente escrito, intelectualmente provocador, metodológicamente sofisticado, excelentemente concebido...un aporte fascinante a debates teóricos, históricos, y políticos en América Latina." Premio Committee members, in addition to Grimson and Reguillo, were Galio Gurdíán, José Mauricio Domínguez, and Rosana Barragán.

At each Congress the **Media Award** recognizes long-term journalistic contributions to analysis and public debate about Latin America in the United States and/or in Latin America, as well as to breakthrough journalism. The 2007 award was presented to Colombian journalist Hollman Morris of Morris Producciones y Comunicaciones. Members of this year's Media Award committee included Robin Kirk (chair), Louis Perez, and Sergio Berensztein.

In writing about the committee's selection, Kirk described Morris as "one of Colombia's premier investigative journalists...(who) has dedicated his career to documenting the little-known stories that lie behind the country's prolonged political conflict.... He has worked in every medium: radio, print journalism, television, books, and on the Internet. Currently, Morris hosts and directs *Contravía*, a national television program dedicated to the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights.... In 2000 Morris founded and became the editor of the Peace and Human Rights Section of *El Espectador*, one of Colombia's two most prominent newspapers. Here he wrote about Colombia's disappeared, the problem of impunity for human rights abuses, the practice of confinement (by which armed groups strictly limit access to and exit from certain communities) and the situation of

the so-called communities of resistance in the Chocó region.” In 2004, Morris’s investigation of the assassination of fellow journalist and humorist Jaime Garzón revealed evidence ignored by government investigators. Afterward the official investigation changed course, the judge citing Morris’s work in rendering his verdict. Like many other journalists Morris’s life has been threatened and he has had a funeral wreath delivered to his home, a familiar Colombian death threat.

Three **LASA Merit Awards in Film** were presented by Claudia Ferman, Director of the LASA Film Festival. The recipients were: Mal de Ojo Collective for their film *About the Struggle* (Alex Halkin, from Chiapas Media Project-Promedios accepted the award on behalf of the Collective); Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre, directors of the film *Maquilápolis* (Lupita Castañeda, factory worker and community advocate featured in the film, accepted the award); and Ignacio Madrazo, director, for his film *La Dignidad Rebelde de la Otra Campaña*.

President’s Report

President Charles Hale thanked all those in attendance and acknowledged the work of the LASA2007 Co-chairs, the Program Committee, the LASA staff, and all those associated with putting together the program for the Congress. He praised LASA Executive Director Milagros Pereyra for her dedication and advice on many issues, and thanked the Executive Council (EC) for remaining “on task” and for “caring deeply” about the Association. Hale acknowledged Past President Sonia Álvarez for her advice and Vice President Eric Hershberg for his assistance in clarifying difficult issues. LASA2007 was the largest Congress to date in terms of

submissions and stood out particularly with regard to innovation and intellectual pluralism.

One of the important tasks of the EC during Hale’s tenure had been to reinvigorate the Commission on Academic Freedom. This effort could be seen in the accomplishments of the recent delegation to Oaxaca.

Hale then indicated that a change had been made to the program to incorporate a more detailed report by the President-elect on the issues he will address during his presidency. For that reason he was being brief in his remarks.

Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director Milagros Pereyra focused on four key areas in her report: membership, finances, Congresses and publications.

Before LASA2007 the membership had grown to 5,141. After Montréal the number of members was expected to reach or surpass 5,500. Currently there are 4,459 Section memberships.

LASA produced its first annual report, which was sent in August to members of the EC, Life Members and institutional donors. It is also available on the website and includes information about the Association, audit reports, and data comparing the LASA2004 Congress with LASA2006.

The Endowment continues under the administration of Smith Barney and its current approximate value is \$4 million. The Fund grew 13 percent last fiscal year and more than four percent so far this year after disbursements which included

approximately \$128,000 for LASA2007 travel grants and \$25,000 for special projects.

A preliminary analysis showed that LASA2007 would be the largest Congress in the history of the Association. There had been an increase over LASA2006 of 32 percent in proposals and 22 percent in preregistrations; seventeen percent more sessions were accepted than for LASA2006. This was the second time that LASA has had to extend the Congress to four days to accommodate the number of accepted sessions. The proposal rejection rate had remained approximately the same, nineteen percent for panels and 13 percent for individuals.

Pereyra indicated that all were delighted to welcome Cuban colleagues to LASA2007. Under current regulations the Association is not permitted to provide grants to Cuban residents but is allowed to pay for their registrations. For LASA2007 the Association did so at a cost of \$13,000.

LASA2009 will take place in Rio de Janeiro June 11-13, 2009 at the Pontificia Universidade Católica (PUC). The University is generously offering its classrooms as well as audiovisual equipment, computer rooms and other necessities without cost to LASA. Representatives of the University are at LASA2007 to observe the program.

At the directive of the EC, LASA has become a member of INMEX, the organization formed to receive the recommendations of labor unions on hotels that protect the rights of their workers. LASA has received various proposals for LASA2010 and is still exploring venues. More information will be provided later.

REPORT OF THE LASA BUSINESS MEETING *continued...*

The editorial component of the *Latin American Research Review (LARR)* will be transferred to McGill University under the direction of Phil Oxhorn, editor of *LARR* at the beginning of 2008. The operational component of the journal will reside with the LASA Secretariat beginning October 31, 2007. One of the benefits of the new arrangement is that the direct subscribers to *LARR* may now become institutional members of LASA at the same price or less, and in addition receive all the benefits of institutional membership. Latin American institutions will have the membership option for just \$85.

The new website for *LARR* is now ready, containing detailed information for authors who wish to submit their publications; the new site is totally bilingual in English and Spanish.

In conclusion, Pereyra thanked all who had worked so diligently during the previous 18 months: the EC, especially President Hale for his continuing support, the Program Chairs for their hard work, Claudia Ferman for her efforts with the LASA Film Festival, and the Secretariat, María Cecilia, Jenna, Sandy, and Israel who had worked hard to offer the members a first class Congress.

Report of the XVII Congress Program Committee

LASA2007 Program Co-Chairs María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba and Neil Harvey acknowledged the assistance of Charlie Hale, Milagros Pereyra, the track chairs, and the Secretariat, María Cecilia Dancisin, Sandy Klinzing and the entire staff, in assembling the various elements of the Congress. Although at the beginning the task seemed a bit daunting, with everyone's assistance things went well. They further acknowledged the Congress

participants for making possible such an interesting program and the people of Montréal for their hospitality.

The Co-Chairs then presented some statistics. For LASA2007, 2106 individual and 752 panel proposals had been received, for a total of 3002. LASA2007 had 1107 sessions, or 20 percent more than LASA2006. (This includes featured and plenary sessions, track sessions, Section sessions, meetings and receptions.)

Report of the Vice President

Vice president/President-elect Eric Hershberg acknowledged that it was an "enormous honor" to have been selected to serve and a responsibility "to which I will devote myself with the utmost of seriousness during the coming years." He recognized that LASA faces important challenges, but he was fortunate to engage them at a time of "great intellectual dynamism among researchers engaged with Latin American affairs, high esteem for LASA among broad segments of the scholarly community, relative financial prosperity for the Association, and at moment when there is capable and devoted staff at the Secretariat who have modernized the operation of LASA far beyond what is immediately evident to participants in the Congress."

Hershberg then focused on the challenges that face the Association, including securing the necessary resources to meet LASA's growth; the burden placed on program chairs by the growing size of the Congress (LASA2007 program chairs had dealt with two times as many submissions as had been reviewed for LASA2004) and the challenge to fit accepted sessions into the program as well as the need to "evaluate how best to support travel to the Congresses within the

constraints imposed by limited resources." He announced that the LASA2009 Program Chairs would be Evelyne Huber and Guido Podesta.

Hershberg then turned to "internationalization and the relationship between Latin American studies and the scholarly disciplines" adding that the growing number of Latin American participants in the Congresses was a sign of progress. During his presidency Hershberg would "endeavor to convey...a commitment to an inclusive Latin American Studies, one whose richness derives from the historically rooted fact that it encompasses multiple disciplinary traditions, methodologies and epistemological orientations, and the equally important fact that now more than ever before Latin American Studies transcends geographic zones that were once taken as the boundaries for *lo latinoamericano*."

Hershberg then addressed the relationship between Latin American Studies and conventional disciplines, particularly the social sciences, adding that "LASA must create spaces both for the multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches that are inherent to the field, and for contributions from individual disciplines... If we lose the capacity to engage any particular discipline, our opportunities to conduct cross-disciplinary work are diminished, and our work within our own disciplines is arguably impoverished... It is precisely by internationalizing Latin American Studies that we can have the greatest impact on opening up the disciplines... One fundamental rationale for our mission to internationalize the Association is to open the disciplines to challenges from those whose perspectives are rooted in distinct contexts and traditions."

Photos from LASA2007

In conclusion Hershberg committed to be responsive to members' recommendations for ways to strengthen the Association's work, and to always respond promptly to urgent issues.

Report of the Treasurer

LASA Treasurer Kevin Middlebrook was brief, owing to the late hour. He focused on four key points for his report: LASA's finances are healthy, due to the Secretariat's careful management as well as a rising membership base that allows the Secretariat to cover all core operating expenses from current revenue. Endowment funds are used only for travel grants and special projects.

Thanks to the efforts of previous treasurers, LASA's finances are professionally audited each year, and the Endowment is professionally managed by Smith Barney.

The EC has engaged in detail the issue of socially-responsible investing (SRI), and at its Montréal meeting adopted a statement of investment principles that addresses both LASA's fiduciary responsibility in managing its Endowment and the importance of moving toward a more socially responsible endowment investment profile.

LASA's Committee on Way and Means is in discussion with members of the Investment Committee to devise a specific strategy for promoting SRI. ■



Welcoming Reception – Table of Honor (from left to right): Victor Armony, Local Arrangements Representative; Helen Safa, Kalman Silvert Awardee; Luc Vinet, Rector, Université de Montréal; Charles R. Hale, LASA President; Her Excellency The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, C.C., C.C.M., C.O.M., C.D., Governor General of Canada; Louise Fréchette, Former United Nations Deputy Secretary General; Philip Oxhorn, Local Arrangements Committee Representative and Editor of the *Latin American Research Review*; Orlando Fals-Borda, LASA/Oxfam America Martin Diskin Lecturer; Stuart McCook, CALACS President.



Her Excellency The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, C.C., C.C.M., C.O.M., C.D., Governor General of Canada



Charles R. Hale, LASA President