

ON THE PROFESSION

UK Society for Latin American Studies

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ALLAHAR continued...

the Association to provide the region, its countries, its diasporas, and their various sectors with advice, assistance, practical support, and the ability to develop policy proposals in areas that are critical at all these levels. We are also developing capabilities for supporting and conducting research on the region and its diaspora. We intend to draw upon scholars and practitioners (both members and nonmembers of CSA) and to develop a consortium of universities with significant Caribbean Studies components (programs, departments, institutes) with these proposed interventions in mind. We are developing a Caribbean Policy Institute to undertake research and policy oriented activities.

The Caribbean Studies Newsletter

The Caribbean Studies Newsletter is the official publication of the Caribbean Studies Association. It is published twice a year and is distributed to all Association members as well as to newsletter subscribers. Members have online access to the newsletter and those without such access can request a paper copy of the newsletter to be sent by mail. ■

The UK Society for Latin American Studies (SLAS) was founded in 1964 and is one of the leading Latin American studies organizations in Europe. It aims to promote interest in Latin American Studies and to deepen knowledge and understanding of issues pertinent to the region, primarily through the promotion, discussion, and diffusion of research.

SLAS embraces multidisciplinary work, and our publications, lectures, and conferences feature work from across the social sciences and arts disciplines. This promotes the cross-fertilization of ideas, approaches, and methodologies leading to innovative and perceptive interdisciplinary research. Our members' work continues to have a significant influence, breaking new intellectual ground and earning an international reputation for Latin American studies in the UK.

SLAS also seeks to provide a community for students, academics, and others with a research interest in the area to share knowledge and practice. SLAS links all those who work on Latin America in different fields, disciplines, and universities within a very special community which is distinguished by its friendliness and support, in terms of looking past academic hierarchies to engage with the thoughts of fellow scholars, be they research students or professors. An electronic monthly newsletter disseminates up-to-date information about events and new publications to the entire membership. We currently have over five hundred members, including academics, Ph.D. students, and journalists mainly from the UK, but also Latin America, mainland Europe, and the United States. We are also closely linked to the Postgraduate Institute for Latin American Studies which runs research workshops, seminar series, and an annual conference for postgraduate students.

The central meeting place of SLAS members is its Annual Conference, which is held in different locations around the UK, and occasionally mainland Europe, attracting around 180 participants each year. In line with the Society's encouragement of interdisciplinarity, the academic panels vary widely in terms of discipline, ranging from economics to music via anthropology, politics, history, literature, geography, and film. The Conference provides an invaluable forum for the sharing of research and a platform for joint research projects and publications.

We also hold an annual lecture with the aim of reaching out beyond the academic community by promoting interest in Latin America amongst a wider public. These lectures are usually given by non-academic experts and focus on issues of current popular interest, with an emphasis on accessibility and participation.

One of the central aims of SLAS is to offer support to academics through grants and scholarships. These include support for local conferences and seminars, postgraduate travel and fieldwork grants, and visits from Latin American scholars, as well as various essay prizes. Last year SLAS awarded nearly £18,000 (\$36,000) under such practices, making a significant contribution to the research of many scholars. We look to increase the amount available in the coming years.

Key to SLAS's success has been its journal, the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, which is published four times a year and has gained international recognition for publishing original research of current interest on Latin America and the Caribbean from all academic disciplines within the social sciences, history, and cultural studies. The *Bulletin* also publishes a substantial section of book reviews, covering

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publications in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Technology has allowed a significant increase in the journal's accessibility and it is now available via nearly three thousand libraries, via which articles and whole journals may be downloaded.

In 2007, in conjunction with Blackwell Publishers, SLAS launched its Book Series Project to publish one interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary work a year that addresses and reflects the interests of SLAS members. Whilst beginning as an annual publication, it is hoped that the series will expand to several publications per year once it is established. A copy of the book is included in the membership subscription.

Finally, SLAS contributes to wider issues in research and policy through its membership of key UK organizations such as UKCASA (UK Council of Area Studies Associations), the British Academy Panel on Latin America and the Caribbean, the Standing Conference for Centres of Latin American Studies, and the Joint Initiative for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean. These organizations give SLAS an important voice at the national level on a wide range of issues from research funding to government policy.

During its forty year history, the Society has faced many challenges in terms of interest in Latin American studies, at academic, student, and governmental levels. However, SLAS has proven itself very resilient, not only due to the quality of its publications and the strength of Latin American studies in the UK, but also to the dedication of its members and the supportive and collegial nature of the Society. ■

In September 2007, Michaëlle Jean, Canada's Governor-General, addressed the LASA Congress in Montréal. Shifting effortlessly from English to French to Spanish to Portuguese, she recalled her youth in Haiti, her family's move to Canada, and her work across the Caribbean and the Americas as a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Her personal experience embodies Canada's growing connections with Latin America and the Caribbean over the past half-century—through migrations and myriad other exchanges. Academic research in Canada also reflected these changes. In 1969 a group of scholars organized the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS). As a Canadian organization, it operates in two official languages—English and French—with Spanish and Portuguese also playing important roles. The association will be celebrating its fortieth anniversary next year, and its membership has grown to some three hundred members.

The association's main activity is its conference, held every eighteen months, generally off-cycle from the LASA Congress. Many Latin Americanists attend both the CALACS and the LASA congresses, and are members of both organizations. CALACS conferences have been held across Canada, and as far afield as Guatemala. The last two conferences have been held in Western Canada, reflecting the strong and growing community of Latin Americanists in that part of the country. The 2006 conference was hosted by the University of Calgary, while the 2008 conference is being jointly hosted by two institutions in Vancouver: the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. The 2008 CALACS congress also marks the first time in almost twenty years that CALACS has held its congress as part of the broader congress of the Canadian Federation of Humanities and

Social Sciences (CFHSS). The CFHSS congress is, in the words of its organizers "the largest annual academic gathering in Canada, bringing together over 8,000 delegates who represent over 75 learned societies." In the future, CALACS may hold its meetings in conjunction with the CFHSS more frequently, in order to take advantage of the critical mass of scholars and associations, and the opportunity to meet with related organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Hispanists, and the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID).

The Caribbeanist presence in CALACS has also grown considerably in the past few years. Canada is home to a vibrant community of scholars studying the former British, French, and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean. For many years, this community was underrepresented in CALACS. However, over the past two conferences, CALACS has sponsored targeted initiatives to encourage Caribbeanist participation in the congresses and the broader life of CALACS. These initiatives, led by an energetic committee of Caribbeanists, have helped expand the presence and profile of Caribbean scholars and Caribbean studies within CALACS.

In addition to the large conference, CALACS has also begun to promote smaller regional workshops—with roughly 50 participants—and other grassroots initiatives. Over the past several years, for example, CALACS has supported workshops on economic and demographic change in Latin America, hosted by the University of Guelph; a graduate student conference on Latin American and Caribbean representations of the nation at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver; and a workshop in Quebec City. In the future, as funds permit, CALACS hopes to support other similar endeavors.