

President's Report

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LASA2010 will take place in Toronto from October 6 to 10. Thanks to the efforts of Program Chairs Javier Corrales and Nina Gerassi-Navarro, as well as the dedicated efforts of dozens of track chairs and co-chairs, and literally thousands of LASA members who submitted proposals for panels and papers, by the time this issue of the *LASA Forum* is published, the Congress program will be completed. Even before LASA2010 convenes, work is already beginning on the next LASA Congress—May 23–26, 2012, in San Francisco.

This issue of the *Forum* marks the bicentennial of the outbreak of the wars of Independence with two striking essays by Jorge Domínguez of Harvard University and Leandro Prados de la Escosura of the Universidad Carlos III. Each in its own way confronts long-cherished conventions about the political impulses (Domínguez) and economic consequences (Prados) of the multiple civil and international conflicts that made Latin America independent. Domínguez points to the forgotten (and sometimes desperate) liberality of some loyalist commanders and the corresponding loyalism of the slaves they freed and the indigenous subjects whose rights they defended, especially in the Andes. He draws a complex and nuanced portrait of the meaning of independence and its legacies. Prados challenges the view that the Latin American economies fared poorly after independence. In absolute terms, most of the new republics suffered setbacks that retarded economic growth for two or more generations. Nevertheless, the economies of the rest of the pre-industrial world did no better than Latin America in the nineteenth century. Zero or low growth may have been the best the Latin American economies could do, he suggests, so comparing them to the fast growing success stories of the North Atlantic may not be fair or even useful.

The *On the Profession* essays in this issue take note of a relatively new phenomenon in Latin American studies—the revival and expansion of work on Latin America's economic history. Last January, as Carlos Marichal reports, Mexico hosted the Second Latin American Economic History Congress at which scholars from all over Latin America as well as Europe and the United States presented an astounding total of more than 300 papers. Economic historians have formed new national associations or revived older institutions in nearly a dozen countries, including Uruguay (host of the first Latin American Congress), Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina. The essays by Luis Bértola (Uruguay), Graciela Márquez (Mexico), and Adolfo Meisel (Columbia), provide a glimpse of the intellectual ferment and organizational activity that have swept this field into a new and dynamic stage of its development.

Returning to organizational matters, the LASA Executive Council met in Toronto in February. The Council discussed whether to change the frequency of LASA Congresses from once every 18 months to once a year (probably in the spring). The change would certainly make it easier to remember when the next LASA Congress will meet. It could also increase opportunities for participation while keeping the size of the Congresses small enough to meet in less expensive, smaller cities both in Latin America and the United States. And it would make LASA's finances more manageable. On the other hand, the change could pose challenges for regional associations that schedule their meetings in the LASA off years and even make it more difficult for members to attend every Congress. The Executive Council will revisit this question when it meets during the Toronto Congress in October. Members are urged to communicate their views to the LASA Secretariat or to any of the members of the Executive Council.



The LASA Executive Council also accepted a recommendation from the editors of the *Latin American Research Review* who proposed that LASA rely mainly on the Internet to make *LARR* accessible to Latin American members. The cost of mailing paper copies of the journal to Latin America now far exceeds the membership dues LASA charges to Latin Americans. As postage rates continue to rise and Internet access expands, it makes sense for LASA to stop mailing paper copies except to those members willing to pay a surcharge to cover postage costs. An added benefit of this change in policy is that *LARR* will now be available for free download to all users in Latin America. The next issue of *LARR* will contain a full explanation of the new policy.

Finally, this issue of the *Forum* contains a request for proposals for two important activities of the Association that are now up for renewal or reassignment. The first of these is the editorship of the *Latin American Research Review*, LASA's flagship journal. *LARR* is currently edited by Philip Oxhorn, who has done a truly splendid job along with his collaborators at McGill University. The second is the directorship of the Film Festival, a popular and valued feature of every LASA Congress. LASA is greatly indebted to the current film festival director, Claudia Ferman of the University of Richmond, who has served in this post since 2004.

See you in Toronto. ■