

# President's Report

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LASA's twenty-ninth Congress in Toronto is fast receding into the past. On to the thirtieth LASA Congress in San Francisco!

The Toronto Congress, held October 6-9, 2010, was noteworthy for its manageable size (about 3,500 attended), the appeal and quality of its over 900 sessions, the return of the book exhibit (after its absence in Rio for logistical reasons), and the convenience and comfort of the program facilities in adjacent hotels. For all this, thanks are due to program co-chairs Javier Corrales and Nina Gerassi-Navarro, the sixty-five track chairs and co-chairs who reviewed nearly 4,000 proposals for sessions and individual papers, the local arrangements committee co-chaired by Tommy Sue Montgomery and Eduardo Canel, and the great work of executive director Milagros Pereyra, her hard working staff, and the scores of student volunteers from local universities who helped keep the Congress running smoothly.

The LASA 2012 Congress in San Francisco, to be held May 23-26, 2012, will begin a new era in LASA's history. At its Toronto meeting, the LASA Executive Council voted unanimously to move to annual spring Congresses after San Francisco. Though several sites are still under consideration for dates in May 2013, the Secretariat is looking most closely at San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The LASA Executive Council also decided, again unanimously, to follow the practice of other associations in transforming its newsletter, the *Forum* you are reading now, into an on-line publication. Starting in 2011, the *Forum* will be emailed as a PDF file to all LASA members. It will also be accessible on the LASA Web page. Paper copies will no longer be printed and mailed, saving the Association considerable expense.

This issue of the *Forum* contains two essays reflecting on the centennial of the Mexican

Revolution, both presented at a packed session in Toronto. Alan Knight reviews the historiography of the Revolution from the triumphalism of the fiftieth anniversary in 1960 to the collapse of the regime of the "institutional revolution" and the institutionalization of competitive elections in the past decade. The "monolith has become a mosaic," he writes. The issue is whether "the mosaic makes a recognizable picture." Emilio Kourí's essay focuses on the Mexican Revolution's iconic agrarian reform, the most notable achievement of the post revolutionary regime. Kourí concludes with a sharp challenge to conventional wisdom: "*la Revolución Mexicana redistribuyó la tierra*," he writes, but "*...no transformó sustancialmente el panorama económico de los beneficiarios, en buena parte porque no fue hecho para eso*."

Readers of the *Forum* will also find four essays "On the Profession," written by directors of leading area studies centers and reflecting on the academic and institutional place of Latin American Studies in U.S. universities. Bradley Levinson and Jeff Gould's thoughtful essay on the Latin American studies center at Indiana discusses the need to bridge the gap between area studies and the disciplines while walking a tightrope balancing between competing demands for basic and applied research. Globalization, they write, poses the central challenge for all of us: "the creation of a citizenry that questions its global privilege and seeks to engage with global cultural diversity in a spirit of respectful mutuality." Cristina Eguizábal raises similar issues. Despite high quality and effective organization, she suggests, a certain "malaise" still grips area studies communities in the United States. Dennis Clements and Louis Pérez describe the multiple advantages of consortium arrangements that facilitate collaboration and the pooling of resources between nearby



universities, in this case the renowned Duke-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill consortium established more than twenty years ago. Clements and Pérez express a common concern over the "challenge of diminishing institutional support." Eric Hershberg takes up this challenge as the director of the newest center in the country, the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS) at American University inaugurated on Jan. 1, 2010. Hershberg shows how innovation in programming and approach can offer multiple opportunities to overcome resource constraints and other obstacles.

This is my last report as LASA president. My thanks to all the members, officers, staff, and friends of LASA who conspired to make these past eighteen months so enjoyable and fruitful for the Association. You will hear next from our new president, Maria Hermínia de Tavares, the first president of LASA who lives and works in Latin America. She is an exceptionally distinguished scholar, a former president (2004-08) of the Associação Brasileira de Ciência Política, and currently directs the Instituto de Relações Internacionais at the Universidade de São Paulo. LASA is in good hands. ■