

Report of the LASA Business Meeting

XXIX International Congress Toronto, Canada | October 9, 2010

President's Report

LASA President John Coatsworth reported on two decisions taken by the Executive Council at its recent meeting. 1) The printed *LASA Forum* will soon be available exclusively on the Internet. Members will be notified about the dates of the mailing of the last printed issue and the availability of the subsequent issue on line; 2) LASA will hold Congresses *annually* following LASA2012 in San Francisco. An annual Congress is assumed to be at least somewhat smaller than meetings held each 18 months, allowing the Association to meet in cities in Latin America that currently cannot accommodate large gatherings. LASA2013 will take place in May, 2013, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Report of the Secretariat

LASA Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas reported that the membership had decreased twelve percent in 2010, compared to the same period in 2009. A decrease had occurred as well in 2008, typical in a non-Congress year. Moving to annual Congresses should aid in keeping up membership numbers and help prevent yearly fluctuations. The *LASA Forum* in electronic format will be available to everyone, regardless of membership. Pereyra is currently in negotiations with service providers for the Congress in San Juan. Possible sites for LASA2014 include Puebla, Mexico and Barcelona, Spain.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Kevin Middlebrook reported that LASA finances are very sound and that LASA's accounting is in line with all legal requirements. He noted that the Association's books are professionally

audited each year, and reported that LASA has new auditors. The audit report will be available before the end of 2010 to any member who wishes to examine it.

In line with good practices of transparency and openness, in the next six to ten months the Association will rebid the current account management contract that it has with current LASA Endowment managers Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in Pittsburgh. On the financial side, LASA has not yet fully recovered from the 2008-2009 crisis. At its height, the Endowment stood at \$4.5 million; as of early September it was valued at a little over \$3.8 million, about 20 percent off its peak. This is still better than many university endowments because LASA has remained rather conservatively positioned. The Endowment is invested about 60 percent in stocks, close to 35 percent in bonds and the remainder in cash. The Investment Committee remains cautious about a full return to the stock market; however this also means that when the market does recover LASA will be a little slow on the upside as well. Over the next six to twelve months the new Treasurer, working with the Investment Committee, may want to move gradually back into stocks, depending on market conditions.

Over the past years LASA has taken a strong position in favor of social responsibility investment (SRI) as an option for management of the Endowment. At this point about 28 percent of the Endowment—about one-half of the equities—is in socially-filtered funds. These results are constantly checked against such benchmarks as the S&P 500 to make sure that LASA is not suffering losses. Thus far the Association has more than held its own on the SRI side. This may expand in the future.

LASA is also required to keep in cash reserves the equivalent of one year's

operating budget; currently this amounts to \$1.5 million. Thus total assets are equal to \$5.3 million. If and when the markets return to good health it may be possible to move some of the cash reserve into the Endowment.

A question was asked regarding expected additional costs to emanate from the move to an annual Congress. President Coatsworth responded that some additional staff costs are assumed; one additional staff person will be hired. However, additional revenues from an annual Congress as well as savings generated by not mailing the *LASA Forum*, will offset these costs.

A second question had to do with the possible impact of an annual meeting on the activities of Sections, and concerns about attrition, since this has occurred with other associations. President Coatsworth responded that the EC will monitor the impact of the decision on the Sections. The decision to move to an annual Congress is not written in stone; it is being done to improve the quality of the meetings and make the program more open than it might be. The EC will re-evaluate the decision after three Congresses to make certain that the change has been beneficial. The Association will check with Sections about their activities/calendars to make certain that the decision does not adversely affect them.

A third question had to do with the size of Congresses. President Coatsworth's noted that the EC believes that a range of 3,000 to 3,500 Congress participants would be ideal. The largest Congress in LASA history took place in Rio de Janeiro. Many members as well as the EC felt that this was a bit large and impeded some activities because of its size. Congress size also restricts the number of cities in which LASA can meet, causing high costs for room rates and transportation. It was then asked if LASA had done a study

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of other associations larger than LASA that meet annually and what was the result. President Coatsworth responded that such a study had been done but had inconclusive results. No association had decided to move to a longer interval between conferences. The point was made that these larger organizations do meet annually and find venues in which to meet. The President's response was that none of the associations meet outside the United States; it is the non-U.S. venues that are restricted by Congress size. Coatsworth reiterated the EC's desire to keep the quality of the Congresses high, to increase the number of possible venues outside the United States and keep costs lower, all without placing an undue burden on the Association or the Sections.

A final question addressed any possible negative affects on current funding bases. The President's response was that the annual Congress would allow LASA to be on foundation calendars on an annual basis, and to take better advantage of foundation schedules. The intention is to have outside funding sources know that they should put LASA on their schedules for funding every year.

Lastly, Coatsworth thanked Middlebrook for his excellent work as LASA Treasurer and announced that Cristina Eguizábal would take over the role of treasurer on November 1st.

Report of the XXIX Congress Program Committee

LASA2010 co-chairs Javier Corrales and Nina Gerassi-Navarro presented their report. The philosophy behind the LASA2010 program had been to raise the quality of panels. They had created a website entitled "panels wanted" especially for junior faculty and students to facilitate

panel development. New for LASA2010 was a pre-Congress program, three workshops that were done as a trial. They provided "mini seminars" with only 15 to 20 panel members accepted for each. Two of the workshops wish to continue and will establish listservs. Also new were the Cultural Dialogues, venues for topics of interest and designed for discussion in a less structured manner. Thanks to Claudia Ferman, the Film Festival continues to grow. The child-care service at Toronto was popular and highly subscribed. Both co-chairs acknowledged the EC, the Secretariat, and the Local Arrangements Committee for their assistance. For LASA2009, 3,202 individual paper applications had been received; for the Toronto Congress there were 662. The panels stayed stable and perhaps had more people in them. For 2009, 974 panel proposals had been received; for 2010, 825 had been submitted—more than the number submitted for LASA2007 in Montréal.

President Coatsworth presented a small gift from the Association to each of the program co-chairs.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida indicated that she was honored to be able to continue "constructing" the Association, as begun by her predecessors. LASA has two to three special characteristics that distinguish it. The first is its pluralism, which means that people from different disciplines and methodologies may feel at home. The second is its universality with regard to discipline, intellectual pursuits and academic cultures. This makes the Association very rich indeed. LASA permits individuals to cross over disciplinary frontiers, stimulating research collaboration. Investigators from the "south" often sense

that they are the "source," when they would like to be more than that.

Vice President Tavares de Almeida presented a gift to President Coatsworth as a thank you from LASA.

Resolutions

President Coatsworth reiterated the procedures for submitting resolutions and having them approved by the membership. He noted that three resolutions had been submitted for consideration by the Resolutions Committee; the two resolutions approved by the EC for a vote by the membership are a resolution on Honduras and one on Cuba. He asked if there were any friendly amendments. An audience member asked about the timing of the resolution on Cuba, and whether it would just be academic if not dealt with in an accelerated fashion. It was further noted that the president and the secretary of state have approved new regulations that deal with academic exchange, but for the resolution to have major impact it should reach the White House prior to the elections. President Coatsworth replied that the resolutions will be sent via email to current members; Executive Director Pereyra added that a minimum of a month is required to construct the website, send out the resolutions for consideration and tally the results. President Coatsworth added that this would probably mean that the resolution would reach the White House some time after the elections but hopefully before the official announcement of new government regulations.

There being no friendly amendments to the resolutions they will be passed on to the membership for a vote.

New Business

There was no new official business; however Tommie Sue Montgomery provided some background on the fundraiser she is conducting on behalf of the people of Robinson Crusoe Island. President Coatsworth indicated that although it was too late to include something in the fall *LASA Forum* he, Pereyra and Montgomery should speak about how further to assist her in her efforts.

LASA Award Ceremony

President Coatsworth then called attention to the next item on the agenda, the Award Ceremony, and to the handout entitled “LASA2010 Awards and Recipients.” He indicated that some awards would be acknowledged at this meeting but actually given out as part of a lecture or special presentation.

He acknowledged first the recipient of the Kalman Silvert Award, **Edelberto Torres-Rivas**, followed by the LASA/Oxfam America Martin Diskin Memorial Lectureship, which has two recipients since the 2009 lecturer could not be present at LASA2009. The recipients are **Terry Karl** (2009) and **Carlos Ivan Degregori** (2010). Degregori was not able to be present but had sent a statement to be read later at the Diskin lecture. The LASA/Oxfam America Martin Diskin Fellowship was awarded to **Louis Esparza**.

The recipient of the Media Award is **Carlos Dada**, founder and editor of *El Faro*, a groundbreaking on-line publication in El Salvador, and author of a compellingly written investigative report with new first-hand information on the assassination of Archbishop Romero.

Coatsworth next acknowledged the recipient of the first Charles A. Hale Fellowship for Mexican History, **Carlos Bravo Regidor**. Regidor accepted a check from the president on behalf of the Association.

President Coatsworth then turned to the recipients of the Bryce Wood Book Award and the Bryce Wood Honorable Mention, as well as the *Premio Iberoamericano*. The Bryce Wood Book Award was made to **Brian DeLay** for his *War of a Thousand Deserts*. Unfortunately, Dr. Delay was not present to accept his award. The Bryce Wood Book Award Honorable Mention was presented to **Lauren Derby** for *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo*. The *Premio Iberoamericano* was then presented for the outstanding book on Latin America in the social sciences and the humanities. The 2010 recipient is **Guillermo Wilde** for his book *Religión y poder en las misiones de guaraníe*.

Coatsworth then recognized the editor of the *Latin American Research Review (LARR)*, Philip Oxhorn, who was unfortunately not able to be present. Oxhorn's editorship has been extended for another five years.

Finally, Coatsworth recognized and presented a gift to the Director of the LASA Film Festival, Claudia Ferman. Ferman's directorship has also been extended. In accepting her gift, Ferman thanked Coatsworth and the Association and reported that in the first two days of the Festival there were more than 700 people in attendance.

Coatsworth thanked all in attendance and adjourned the meeting. ■