

## Open Access to *LARR* for Latin America and the Caribbean

MIDDLEBROOK *continued...*

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lower than those for the Domini 400 (45 and 50 basis points, respectively). LASA has allocated \$157,888 (3.9 percent of the total endowment) to it and will monitor its performance carefully.

The Domini 400 and the Neuberger-Berman funds currently comprise all of LASA's "large capitalization" investments and together account for 26.7 percent of the total endowment and 46.9 percent of all equity investments. As shifts occur over time in allocations between "large cap" funds and other equity investment categories, it is possible that LASA's overall SRI commitment may also decline or rise somewhat. However, if the Neuberger-Berman fund performs well, it may provide LASA with an expanded range of investment options across the "large," "mid," and "small" capitalization categories.

LASA members with questions concerning any of the issues addressed in this report can contact me at <kevinmiddlebrook@aol.com>.

Cristina Eguizábal (Florida International University) began her term as LASA's Treasurer on November 1, 2010. ■

In recent years, *LARR* has sponsored a series of workshops on academic publishing at LASA Congresses. When LASA had its first Congress in Brazil I 2009, perhaps the strongest message that came out of the workshop discussion was the importance of open access to research; in other words the ability of researchers and students to be able to access current research via the web free of charge. We listened and on behalf of *LARR*'s Editorial Committee and the Executive Committee of the Latin American Studies Association, I am proud to announce that as of January 2011, anyone residing in Latin America or the Caribbean will be able to access all current and past *LARR* issues free of charge through the LASA/*LARR* website. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first among our peer journals to offer this service.

While the message coming out of the Rio workshop was perhaps unexpected, it should not have come as a surprise. The free exchange of ideas and research goes to the heart of any academic enterprise. Yet in Canada, Western Europe and the United States, we often take for granted how relatively privileged we are in terms of our ready access to extensive library collections and electronic resources such as JSTOR and Project Muse. For most people residing in Latin America and the Caribbean, the scarcity of resources makes such access much more problematic. For example, only 4 percent of universities in Latin America and the Caribbean have access to all *LARR* issues through their institutional membership in LASA.<sup>1</sup> Even adding to this the 2.4 percent of regional institutions that have access to back issues of *LARR* through Project MUSE and the 17.7 percent that offered their students and faculty the opportunity to purchase individual articles through their participation in JSTOR,<sup>2</sup> as well as the access to *LARR* enjoyed by the just over 2000 individual LASA members

who resided in the region in 2009, it is clear that the vast majority of people in Latin American and the Caribbean simply are excluded from use the important research published in *LARR*.

While this new policy is an important advance, the ideal solution would be open access for all, allowing any interested person, anywhere in the world, the opportunity to download articles of interest to them free of charge. Inevitably, the problem is the cost involved: who will pay? While *LARR* is in a unique situation compared to other similar journals since it is the flagship journal of LASA and most of its subscriptions are paid for through individual and institutional LASA memberships, truly open access for all is not financially feasible, even for *LARR*. This is because LASA receives substantial revenues through royalties from Project Muse, in particular, and JSTOR. There are other, non-monetary, elements of risk as well. Open access initiatives are still very new and we know little about their potential implications, both positive and negative. How would potential readers and, perhaps even more important, potential authors view a journal that is available only online and free of charge? While there are some precedents, particularly in the natural sciences, any open access policy by *LARR*, however limited, is even riskier since we would be the first among our peer journals to do so. So while open access to residents of Latin America and the Caribbean definitely has clear and important advantages, restricting such access only to people residing in the region should be seen as a compromise and a strategic experiment; we are trying to address a real need at the same time that we are seeking to minimize risks and understand the larger implications of open access for possible future initiatives by *LARR*. While we have tested its feasibility and attempted to ensure that it is consistent with the various copyright and indexing

agreements *LARR* currently has, the new policy will be carefully monitored.

The new open access policy is also made possible by another policy adopted by the LASA Executive Committee: the third *LARR* issue in 2010 will be last that is automatically mailed to individuals and institutions located in Latin America and the Caribbean. For a number of years, we have been aware of the economic drain that mailing hardcopy issues of *LARR* to addresses in Latin America and the Caribbean entails for LASA. The average cost of printing and mailing the journal is \$80 per member, although individual membership fees for people residing Latin America and the Caribbean is between \$27 and \$53, depending on their income level. This means that LASA is effectively paying a subsidy of between \$53 and \$27 dollars to each of the over 2000 members from Latin America and the Caribbean, which is obviously a substantial amount. The resulting savings will not only make open access feasible for all of Latin America and the Caribbean, it will free up more money for the travel fund that subsidizes the participation of people living in Latin America and the Caribbean at LASA Congresses, as well as other potential special initiatives. Of course, any member from Latin America and the Caribbean can request that hardcopies be mailed to them, provided they pay the difference between their membership fees and the actual cost of printing and mailing the *Review*.

Open access to scholarly literature is a dream shared by many. While we are still far from reaching that ideal, by providing open access to all of Latin America and the Caribbean we have taken a big—and unprecedented—step in realizing it. As this first experiment unfolds, we will inform LASA's membership of its progress. We also will continue to explore new ways of taking

advantage of information technology to make the *Latin American Research Review* as accessible to as large an audience as possible, at the same time that we remain committed to maintaining the highest editorial standards.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> According to Braintrack 2009, there are 877 universities in Latin America and the Caribbean, of which 36 held institutional LASA memberships in 2009. I would like to thank Enrique Mu for his invaluable assistance in collecting this information, along with the essential help he and LASA Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas provided in developing a vague idea into a concrete proposal that the LASA Executive Council would accept.
- <sup>2</sup> Of course, it is very likely that most LASA institutional members also belong to Project Muse and JSTOR. ■