From Toronto to San Francisco Looking Ahead to LASA2012

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Some six months before the hugely successful LASA2010 meeting in Toronto, the LASA Secretariat was already laying the groundwork for a conference to be held more than two years later. LASA will next convene in San Francisco May 23-26, 2012. This will be the Association’s landmark 30th International Congress. It will also be the first Congress to be held in the continental United States since Las Vegas some eight years earlier, and it will be the first LASA meeting in California since Los Angeles in 1992. The Congress theme, apropos of the decade that is now beginning, is “Toward a Third Decade of Independence in Latin America.”

As the newly appointed Program Co-Chairs for LASA2012, we are honored to be working with LASA president Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida and Executive Director Milagros Pereyra on the organization of this major event. We are also grateful for the strong support and wise insights of our two predecessors for the Toronto Congress, Javier Corrales and Nina Gerassi-Navarro, who organized such a marvelous conference in Ontario. Javier and Nina will prove a tough act to follow, but we intend to show them that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

We have been preparing the LASA2012 program since last summer, and we are pleased to report that our work has so far run smoothly. Our first task was to identify the co-chairs for the 34 thematic tracks approved for San Francisco. Following recent LASA practice, we recruited not one but two colleagues for every track, and we divided the outreach efforts between the two of us. In general terms, Gabriela was in charge of identifying and contacting scholars who were more linked to the humanities, while Tim focused on scholars closer to the social sciences. Although the criteria used in the selection were varied, we made an effort to find people who have strong reputations and whose research represented, in our view, the most interesting and/or innovative trends in their fields. We also sought to achieve a good mix of senior and junior faculty, as well as representatives of U.S. and foreign academic institutions, including Latin American, Canadian, European, and Australasian universities.

The selected track chairs were subsequently approved by LASA and were invited to attend! Holding the next Congress in the spectacular surroundings of the Bay Area is sure to add to the attractiveness of LASA 2012. Along with the President, the Executive Council, and the Secretariat, we look forward to working with the Program Committee to produce a memorable 30th International Congress.