

Final Report on the 30th International Congress in San Francisco

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From May 23-26, 2012, some 4,800 LASA members and guests converged on the Marriott Marquis Hotel, San Francisco, for the occasion of the 30th International Congress of our Association. This was the first Congress in the continental United States since 2004 and the first West Coast LASA meeting since Los Angeles in 1992. Over the course of four memorable days, LASA members were treated to over 900 panels, roundtables, and special sessions. Amazingly, these were all held in a single, comfortable, and user-friendly meeting space: the spacious convention center of the Marriott, located right in the heart of the historic city center. The superb quality of these debates kept us mostly glued to our seats, but those who ventured outside were treated to a week of spectacular weather amidst the cultural marvels and culinary delights of the Bay Area.

We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from those colleagues who were able to join us in San Francisco. But needless to say, any conference of this size is not without its problems. Demand for participation in the 30th LASA far outstripped the available places on the program. This was due partly to limitations of our meeting space, partly to our decision to limit the Congress program to three working days (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday), and partly to the attractiveness of San Francisco as a conference site. Thus, track chairs were unfortunately unable to accommodate some very worthwhile panels and papers. We note that an additional factor here may be strong pent-up demand due to the 18-month meeting cycle that we have observed for decades; as LASA now enters a three-year experiment with annual conferences (a 12-month cycle), we may see supply and demand come more into balance, making the Congress size more manageable. Also, while we were

encouraged that 75 Cuban scholars were able to join us in San Francisco, we were puzzled and disappointed by the denial of visas to ten of their compatriots, several of whom had participated previously in LASA conferences held in the United States. Other than these two issues, the San Francisco conference organization proceeded very smoothly throughout.

LASA learns with every International Congress, and San Francisco was no exception. There are several lessons to be taken away. First is that the massive growth in LASA's membership has led inexorably to rising rejection rates at the recent Congresses, and we will be curious as to whether the experiment with annual conferences will attenuate this problem. A second lesson is that full panel proposals are much more likely to prosper than are individual paper proposals: close to half of all LASA proposals are now fully assembled panels. We encourage members to work together to form full panels in advance, and time is of the essence given the newly shortened calendar for submission (the deadline for Washington 2013 is looming on September 1, 2012). A third lesson is that the thematic Pre-Congress Workshops held on Wednesday afternoon—an innovation of our predecessors for Toronto 2010, Javier Corrales and Nina Gerassi-Navarro—have proven resoundingly popular and are now a new LASA tradition. A fourth lesson pertains to the role of technology. LASA members absolutely raved about the “LASA app,” the real-time conference software that runs on tablets and smartphones. We were delighted with the response to this innovation, and the utility of the App is so great that the days of the hard-cover program book are probably numbered.

Having completed our work for San Francisco 2012, we would like to thank the

LASA Business Meeting

May 25, 2012; 6:30 – 8:15 pm; San Francisco Marriott Marquis

68 Track Co-Chairs (responsible for 34 thematic tracks) who selflessly donated their time and energy to put together a successful program. We would also like to thank outgoing LASA President Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida, the members of the LASA Executive Council, and all of the amazing staff of the LASA Secretariat at the University of the Pittsburgh, especially Milagros Pereyra-Rojas and Sandy Klinzing. Their vast experience and insight into the conference planning process were indispensable to our work. ■

President's Report

LASA President Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida greeted those present and indicated that the Congress was going well. Unfortunately, LASA was not able to benefit from the participation of several scholars from Latin America who were denied visas to enter the United States.

Report of the Secretariat

Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas reported that in 2011 LASA membership increased 20 percent over the previous year, to over 6600 individual and institutional members. Membership numbers for 2012 currently are lagging slightly behind those for 2011, but it is expected that individuals who either renew at the Congress or become new members here will add to this number.

LASA currently has 91 Life Members, including 79 paid Life Memberships. Complimentary Life Memberships for Kalman Silvert Awardees have been funded by grants from the AVINA Foundation for the past four years.

For LASA2012 the Association was able to secure \$6500 in sponsorships, including \$2,500 for the *Gran Baile*.

The Secretariat is already working hard on preparations for LASA2013 in Washington DC, which will be the first of the Congresses to be held annually. The Call for Papers is in the LASA2012 Program Book.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Cristina Eguizabal reported that LASA has an Endowment overseen by an

Investment Committee consisting of the LASA president, the LASA executive director, the LASA treasurer and four pro bono investment experts. The Endowment is professionally managed by Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. The Endowment's performance has been more robust in previous years than of late. In 2011 the Endowment stood at \$4.1 million and had a return of 6.79 percent; currently it is returning 6.9 percent and stands at \$4.38 million. Thirty percent is invested in Social Responsibility Investment funds (SRI) and 70 percent in traditional instruments such as equities, fixed income, etc.

Report of the XXX Congress Program Committee

Program Co-chairs Gabriella Nouzeilles and Timothy Power reported that this Congress is the second to host pre-conference workshops and that they seem to be going well. The Co-chairs had asked for suggestions for themes related to the main topic of the Congress. They also had traveled to Pittsburgh to physically schedule the sessions in the available rooms to try to avoid problems such as scheduling popular speakers in small rooms. This had seemed to work well. The participants appear to be happy with the hotel as well as its location; meeting room sizes seem ample.

The membership response to the LASA2012 Call for Papers was excellent and the number of proposals submitted had increased 70 percent over the Toronto Congress. The Co-chairs had not been able to secure a keynote speaker although they had attempted to obtain a commitment first from former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet and then from Tabaré Vázquez, former president of Uruguay.