

Final Report on the 31st International Congress in Washington, DC

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From May 28 to June 1, nearly 4,000 LASA members and guests converged on the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington for the Association's 2013 International Congress. The Congress started with a series of pre-Congress workshops directed primarily to younger members of the profession, for example, workshops on publishing, databases, and a visit to the Library of Congress. The awards and welcoming ceremony on Wednesday evening was highlighted by an address from José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, followed by a reception hosted by Georgetown University.

Conference attendees participated in over 900 different panels, roundtables, and special sessions. These events took place in the spacious meeting facilities of the Marriott Wardman Park, and many addressed the Congress theme of "Latin America: Towards a New Social Contract?" The LASA Film Festival, again curated by Claudia Ferman, was an important complement to the panels and workshops. The Book Exhibit offered a streamlined way to explore new publications and to meet with editors. Of course, much of the real intellectual and social exchange took place in informal meetings among friends and colleagues.

The Washington setting provided LASA members not only with attractive social and cultural opportunities but also with access to sites of historical and political importance, national and transnational government agencies, and a variety of nongovernmental organizations with activities in the Latin American region.

As expected, the shift from an 18-month to a 12-month conference cycle reduced the number of proposals for a program with a limited number of available slots. Over 1,500 proposals were submitted for panels or individual papers, approximately

one-third less than for the San Francisco Congress of 2012. Given the ample number of meeting rooms in the Marriott Wardman Park, this decline in the number of proposals allowed track chairs to reduce the rejection rate and accept a much higher percentage of proposed papers and panels. A higher acceptance rate was an objective of LASA for this Congress cycle, so we are pleased to have made progress toward meeting this goal. We expect the new annual cycle to help alleviate space constraints, balance supply and demand, and allow for more inclusive and manageable Congress programs.

As has been the case in recent Congresses, the rate of acceptance for prearranged panels was greater than that for individual paper submissions. LASA's experience suggests that prearranged panels are more likely to cohere intellectually than panels that are cobbled together by track chairs from individual paper submissions. We thus encourage LASA members to continue to play a proactive role in organizing panels around a common theme that provides for greater analytical focus. **Please note that under the annual conference cycle, proposals for LASA2014 will be due in just a few months, on September 3, 2013.**

By all indications, members have been enthusiastic about recent program and technological innovations introduced for LASA Congresses. This is especially true of the pre-Congress workshops, which have been well attended and generated very positive reviews, and of the "LASA app" real-time conference software that runs on tablets and smart phones. Future Congresses are likely to make greater use of social media to foster communication among LASA members and to facilitate program coordination.

We have heard from many members who found LASA2013 to be rewarding and

enjoyable, so with our work on that Congress now complete, we would like to offer a special word of thanks to all the track chairs* who generously devoted their time and energy to evaluate proposals and shape the final program. Their volunteer spirit makes LASA what it is today. We would also like to express our gratitude to the outgoing president, Evelyne Huber, and the members of the Executive Council for their leadership and support. Finally, we thank the remarkably efficient and patient staff of the LASA Secretariat at the University of Pittsburgh, who did so much to make LASA2013 a success—Milagros Pereyra-Rojas, Sandra Klinzing, Pilar Rodríguez, Soledad Cabezas, and Israel Perlov. We wish our successors, Florencia Garramuño and Raúl Madrid, great success with the planning of LASA2014. We know that the support of the LASA membership and the LASA Secretariat will continue to make LASA Congresses the site of rich intellectual, professional, and personal growth.

* Silvia Ares de Kurlat, Santa Arias, María Isabel Belausteguigoitia Rius, Merike Blofield, Sarah Brooks, Maxwell Cameron, Rubí Carreño, Marcos Cueto, Guillermo de los Reyes, Mary Finley-Brook, Patrice Franko, Elías García Rosas, Ben Goldfrank, Margaret Keck, Marcus Kurtz, Jorge Lanzaro, Juan Pablo Luna, Lillian Manzor, Leonilde Sérvolo Medeiros, Mariselle Meléndez, Eyda Merediz, Carmen Millán, Paula Miranda, Egon Montecinos, Scott Morgenstern, Raúl Necochea, Elías Palti, Aldo Panfichi, Leigh Payne, Anthony Pereira, Enrique Peruzzotti, Joanne Rappaport, Matt Samson, Gonzalo Saraví, Andrew Schrank, Ana Serra, Ken Shadlen, Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, Catalina Smulovitz, William Stanley, Joel Stillerman, Augusto de la Torre, María Amelia Viteri, Alexander Wilde, Wendy Wolford, Ana Wortman. ■