

## From the Outgoing President

by EVELYNE HUBER | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | ehuber@unc.edu

LASA2013 in Washington is behind us, and as always we are thinking ahead to the next International Congress, to be held in a year's time in Chicago. The Washington Congress was a lively event, with some 3,500 participants and three packed days of interesting panels. The opening ceremony with the award presentations was hosted by Georgetown University in a beautiful space and was well attended. We were honored to have Secretary General Insulza of the Organization of American States offer opening remarks with his vision of a region with sovereign states and democratic governments working together to improve the lives of their people. His remarks provided an excellent lead-in to the many panels that considered in one way or another whether some kind of new social contract is emerging in the region.

This was the first Congress on the new annual schedule. One of the main goals of the change to this schedule was achieved: The number of proposals became more manageable within the given time and space constraints, and accordingly the rejection rate of proposals was negligible. All full panel proposals were accepted, and only some 3 percent of individual paper proposals were rejected. So, compared to a rejection rate of over 30 percent in San Francisco, we have achieved a situation conducive to highly inclusive participation. There are some drawbacks as well; some scholars who have attended just about every Congress were not able to come to this one for reasons of time or financial constraints. They were particularly missed in the Sections in which they have been active.

An enormous amount of work goes into planning and organizing a LASA Congress. The program co-chairs, Gwen Kirkpatrick and Ken Roberts, began to work with track chairs over a year ago. Together, we

planned several special panels and invited the participants. Gwen Kirkpatrick deserves particular credit for her successful efforts to engage Georgetown University to host and co-sponsor the opening ceremony and reception. I also want to thank Cynthia Arnson, Director of the Latin American Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, for co-organizing the panel on U.S.–Latin American Relations and inviting the former president of Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez, to that panel. LASA Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas, Sandy Klinzing, Pilar Rodríguez, and other LASA staff members worked tirelessly to ensure that the Congress would run smoothly in all respects, and so it did. They all deserve a big thank you!

One aspect of the Congress that was less than satisfactory was the situation with visas for Cuban scholars. Despite our proactive letter to Secretary of State John Kerry well before the Congress, in which we urged him to ensure that visas to invited participants from Cuba be granted in the interest of a free scholarly exchange, a dozen invited Cuban participants had their visas denied; some 70 visas were granted. Our letter was signed by all former LASA presidents who could be reached and was also sent to a few targeted members of the U.S. Congress. It was followed by supportive letters from other scholarly professional associations. This is clearly an issue that requires our continued attention and a repeat of proactive measures before the next Congress.

This Congress signaled the end of my year-long presidency. It was an honor and a pleasure to serve in this capacity. LASA is a strong organization with lots of dedicated members who serve in many roles, from track chairs to Section chairs and members of award and other committees.



Essentially, the Association is what committed members make of it. And they have made it strong through their dedicated service.

The Fund-Raising Committee made particular strides this year in ensuring a sound financial future for the Association. The former chair, Marysa Navarro, and the present co-chairs, Cynthia McClintock and Kevin Middlebrook, successfully pursued an initiative initially proposed by committee members Carmen Diana Deere and Lars Schoultz, to solicit bequests for the LASA endowment. The results surpassed expectations, with 22 pledges received. LASA members who pledged a bequest became the inaugural members of the Kalman Silvert Society and were honored at a reception. The Fund-Raising Committee has made the bequest campaign a priority in the run-up to LASA's 50th Anniversary in 2016. The LASA endowment is used for travel support and for special projects. Thus, these bequests will improve LASA's future capacity to respond positively to requests for travel subsidies to the Congresses and to support new collaborative scholarly initiatives.

The best aspect of being part of the LASA leadership is that you get to know and work with wonderful colleagues. This is true for members of the Executive Council and particularly for my predecessor and successor as president. Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida, past president, and Merilee Grindle, incoming president, combine the qualities of outstanding scholars with those of skilled leaders and committed team members. I want to thank them both for their support and their contributions to LASA.