

Final Report on the 32nd International Congress in Chicago

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More than 3,200 LASA members arrived in beautiful Chicago, where spring was in full bloom, for the 32nd International Congress of our Association, which was held from May 21 to May 24. During four memorable days, members and guests converged in the historic Palmer House Hilton Hotel for over nine hundred panels, roundtables, and special sessions. The quality of debates and discussions kept us bonded to our seats, but those who ventured outside for a walk found the amazing Chicago Art Institute and the Millennium Park just steps from the hotel.

The meeting started with a series of pre-Congress workshops organized by some of the Sections and one workshop on publishing directed primarily to younger members of the profession. This year the Welcoming Ceremony was organized in conjunction with the Kellogg Institute, which sponsored the inaugural Guillermo O'Donnell Memorial lecture. This year's address was delivered by former Chilean president Ricardo Lagos. He used the theme of the conference, "Memory and Democracy," to reflect on the legacy of Guillermo O'Donnell's work, especially his analysis of bureaucratic authoritarian regimes.

The presidential and invited panels attracted great interest. All of the presidential panels addressed the Congress theme and dealt with the many and often conflicting uses and meanings of the concepts of memory and democracy. Invited panels organized by the track chairs were packed with attendees and generated many comments and debates. These innovative panels, which were devised as a way to enable the track chairs to have a greater substantive impact on the meeting, engendered a great deal of enthusiasm and we were happy to learn that they will be continued by our successors, Luis

Cárcamo-Huechante and Rosalva Aida Hernández Castillo.

The panels organized by the Sections and by regular LASA members were also well attended for the most part, and in many of them dozens of people had to sit on the floor for lack of space. As in previous years, the cancellation of participants from Latin America due to economic hardships in their country of origin depopulated some panels, which was unfortunate. In addition, the growth of interdisciplinary approaches and interests that cross different tracks and Sections has made it increasingly difficult to avoid scheduling panels with similar topics at the same time. Nevertheless, we were on the whole quite pleased with the audience and the participation at the panels that we attended.

The LASA Film Festival, curated by Claudia Ferman, was an important complement to the panels and workshops. And the Book Exhibit, with more than 73 exhibitors, offered an efficient way to explore new publications and to meet with editors. As always, of course, much of the real intellectual and social exchange of the Congress took place in informal meetings among friends and colleagues.

We have received much positive feedback from colleagues. As expected, the change to annual meetings that started with LASA2012 in San Francisco has brought supply and demand more into balance, and for the Chicago Congress track chairs were able to accommodate more than 80 percent of individual proposals and 94 percent of panel proposals, allowing for a more inclusive program. Please note that under the annual cycle, proposals for LASA2015 will be due soon, on September 8, 2014.

As in previous years, the LASA Secretariat had to deal with some unpleasant issues regarding visas for scholars planning to attend the meeting. We are happy to report that thanks to the intervention of President Merilee Grindle more than 114 Cuban scholars were able to join us in Chicago, although we were disappointed to learn of the denial of visas to four of their compatriots, several of whom had participated previously in LASA Congresses held in the United States.

Having completed our work for Chicago 2014, we would like to thank the 52 track chairs (listed below) who worked hard during the past year, donating their time and energy to evaluate proposals and to organize invited panels. We also want to thank the outgoing LASA president, Merilee Grindle, for her congenial leadership and for choosing us for this rewarding experience. We also are grateful to the members of the LASA Executive Council for their guidance and support. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the staff of the LASA Secretariat at the University of the Pittsburgh: Milagros Pereyra-Rojas, Sandra Klinzing, Pilar Rodríguez, Soledad Cabezas, and Israel Perlov. Their immeasurable experience and knowledge about meeting planning made our job much easier and we are sure it will facilitate the work of our successors, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante and Rosalva Aida Hernández Castillo. We wish them great success in planning LASA2015!

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