
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

With this third issue edited at the University of New Mexico we are able to complete publication of the backlog of book review essays bequeathed by the former *LARR* editors in North Carolina. This legacy was extremely helpful in making possible a smooth transition of *LARR*'s editorial functions. The need of authors, publishers, and readers for reasonably current book reviews, however, requires continued effort. To facilitate the coverage of newer books in future numbers, the book review essay section of this issue is composed entirely of manuscripts commissioned and accepted at North Carolina.

The book review essay section was introduced by the North Carolina editors, designed in their words to "go beyond the particular books in question to reflect upon the state of current research on the topic or subfield in question." Their innovation has become one of the more valuable features of *LARR*, judging from correspondence received since its introduction. This format allows coverage of a broad range of issues while providing an assessment of books published on Latin America. Topics covered by the book review essays follow the trends in book publishing on Latin America, at least insofar as the *LARR* staff is able to obtain review copies.

The most serious problem in maintaining a balanced coverage in the book review essays is the difficulty of obtaining books published in Latin America. Press runs are often small, and books frequently are printed with a local market in mind. By the time the *LARR* editors are apprised of an interesting book, it is likely to be out of print. Latin American publishers may not respond to requests from abroad, in part because some are not equipped to export their books. The incentives that lead U.S. publishers to provide review copies to *LARR* often do not exist for Latin American publishers. For that reason, the *LARR* editors appeal to Latin American colleagues wishing review of their books to mail a copy directly to the *LARR* offices in Albuquerque. We cannot guarantee that all books received will be reviewed because reviewers do

not invariably complete the essays they promise, but we will do our best to see that such works are included among those for which reviews are commissioned.

The solicitation of articles for *LARR* raises different issues from the commissioning of book review essays. Upon assuming our responsibilities, the current editors decided to solicit manuscripts very sparingly, usually only upon the strong recommendation of third parties, in order to avoid imposing any bias in the pattern of submissions. We realized that this approach might need reconsideration should unsolicited submissions become inadequate or unduly slanted in some topical or ideological direction. Experience thus far has not led us to revise our initial approach. The pattern of submissions is somewhat more evenly distributed by discipline than in earlier years. The nations, historical periods, and topics covered by submissions vary widely, as do the geographical areas from which they originate. The number of manuscripts is adequate for the maintenance of high quality as defined by the peer-review process and allows for the publication of accepted manuscripts in a timely fashion. As seen from the editors' vantage point, Latin American research retains both vitality and scholarship, as well as interdisciplinary relevance.

A matter of concern for all academic journals is that of economic survival. To date *LARR* has maintained an adequate revenue flow due to a large readership of nearly four thousand subscribers, adjustments in subscription rates, and financial support from the University of New Mexico. The key element has probably been the level of support provided by host academic institutions. The viability of *LARR* in years to come will depend on the continued provision of appropriate levels of support by future host institutions. Should the state of the economy not improve and be reflected in further cutbacks for higher education, such support may become a matter of concern. Rather than compromising the integrity of the editorial and production processes, other avenues of support would then have to be sought.

At the April 1983 meeting of the LASA Executive Council in Austin, a proposal to have *LARR* charge submission fees was discussed. Because *LARR*'s financial situation is at present relatively healthy, this proposal was not acted upon, but it will almost certainly be revived in the future. The editors would be most receptive to expressions of opinion on the matter, as well as on other aspects of *LARR* affairs, content, and quality.