
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The relationship between Latin American studies and the academic disciplines is a subject of practical importance as well as theoretical interest. At the most practical level, the problematic issue is the extent to which research on Latin America is valued by an individual's disciplinary colleagues in her or his academic department. At a more theoretical level, the issues are often couched in terms of rigor and relevance. Partisans of the academic disciplines may look down on fields of interdisciplinary foreign area studies as lacking the methodological and theoretical rigor of work within the disciplines. In return, scholars doing research on foreign areas like Latin America sometimes view the disciplines as driven by U.S.-oriented and insufficiently comparative agendas that lack relevance for understanding the real-world developments that shape research on foreign areas.

These perspectives need not be mutually exclusive, however, for both may contain elements of truth. Looking on the bright side, they imply the possibility that area studies might combine the best of both worlds: the rigor of the theoretical and methodological tools provided by the disciplines combined with the comparative and historically relevant perspectives offered by foreign area research. This idealized picture of a cooperative effort should also be reflected at the practical level. Thus academic departments, organized by discipline, ought to reward colleagues for research on foreign areas, providing that such research meets disciplinary standards.

In some fields, such as history and anthropology, the relationship between the discipline and foreign area research seems to approximate such an ideal, while in others such as economics, sociology, and political science, the relationship is more tenuous and prejudicial to individuals conducting foreign area research. In such fields, major journals are less likely to publish foreign area research, making it difficult for the scholar to establish his or her disciplinary credentials.

One response has been to found journals dedicated to publishing foreign area research. To the extent that such journals develop a reputation for maintaining appropriate disciplinary standards of rigor, they offer at least a partial substitute for publication in disciplinary reviews. The survival of the newer journals also depends on maintaining sufficient relevance to the foreign area to attract an interdisciplinary readership large enough to cover expenses.

LARR is one of the oldest of the journals focusing on interdisciplinary area studies, a category that has grown larger over time. *LARR*'s careful peer-review process helps to ensure that both rigor and relevance are maintained. In addition, close attention to readability via copyediting helps to enhance the interdisciplinary character of *LARR*, which ultimately depends on readers being able to comprehend articles in fields of specialization other than their own.

From an editor's perspective, it is hard to assess the extent to which *LARR* has contributed to bridging the gap between the academic disciplines and Latin American studies and to gaining disciplinary recognition for *LARR* authors. The anecdotal evidence is encouraging. The long-term increase in submissions to *LARR* from scholars in fields like economics and sociology may also be a heartening symptom of such recognition, although it might simply reflect a growing difficulty in publishing area-relevant research in the journals of those disciplines. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that *LARR* is fulfilling its mission is simply that circulation continues to grow slowly but steadily, resulting in a print run of nearly five thousand copies, almost twice the membership of the Latin American Studies Association.

Manuscript submissions to *LARR* during the year running from June 1990 through May 1991 showed the expected continuity with patterns in recent years. During the 1990-91 period, 116 manuscripts were received as compared with 128 for the previous report period. Of these 116 submissions, 16 were book review essays and 1 was a commissioned comment. The remaining 99 manuscripts entered the review process. By mid-June of 1991, 11 manuscripts had been accepted for publication or accepted pending revisions, 55 were rejected, and 35 were still under original review or a second review following revisions. The publication rate for articles and research notes that completed the review process (those accepted or rejected) continues to be about one of every five submissions.

The distribution by discipline reflected a decline in the proportion of political science submissions to 28 percent of the total. Second place was again held by history with 22 percent of submissions, followed closely by economics with 21 percent and sociology with 15 percent. Language and literature submissions fell to 3 percent of the total, while anthropology submissions remained in sixth place with 2 percent of

submissions. Other fields such as communications, education, geography, planning, and religious studies accounted for the remaining 9 percent of submissions.

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>June 1990– May 1991</i>	<i>June 1989– May 1990</i>	<i>June 1988– May 1989</i>
Political Science	28%	37%	27%
History	22	19	23
Economics	21	16	18
Sociology	15	12	9
Languages and Literature	3	6	10
Anthropology	2	5	5
Other fields	9	5	8
Totals	100%	100%	100%

Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian authors or coauthors, including those living in Europe and North America, submitted 35 percent of all submissions, precisely the same percentage as for the previous year. Women authored or coauthored 21 percent of submissions, as compared with 26 percent in the last manuscript report.

Thirty-one percent of the manuscripts came from outside the United States, as compared with 21 percent for the previous period. Fifty percent of these non-U.S. manuscripts came from Latin America, as compared with 55 percent in the preceding report period. Latin American countries represented were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela. Other countries represented included Canada, England, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden.

We are continuing the long-established *LARR* tradition of publishing two categories of articles: surveys of the current state of research on Latin America and original research contributions of general and interdisciplinary interest. Due to the *LARR* policy of not soliciting articles or research notes, the journal's contents reflect the research interests of its authors and the informed judgments of its referees rather than the editors' sense of what is important. This is as it should be, for the field of Latin American studies is too diverse and too rich to be guided in any other way. The interaction between the authors and referees, monitored by the editors, is the best technique we have for achieving the combination of rigor and relevance to which area studies can aspire.

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