

EDITOR'S FOREWORD
Latin American Research Review's
First Special Issue

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To the best of our collective knowledge, this special issue, "Living in Actually Existing Democracies," represents the first time in *LARR's* forty-five-year history that the journal has published an issue dedicated to a single theme outside its regular production schedule. We selected the theme of this issue—living in actually existing democracies—to inaugurate what we plan to be a regular feature of *LARR* in the coming years. Not only is the theme extremely relevant to understanding the challenges and possibilities the region as a whole faces in today's world but also it is a topic that truly requires a multidimensional and multidisciplinary perspective to capture its complexity. Indeed, the driving goal behind *LARR's* new commitment to periodically producing special issues is to create a unique space for the analysis of timely issues through multiple lenses and in multiple voices.

The decision to invest the considerable resources needed to produce a fourth issue of *LARR* in any given year reflects one of the benefits of the closer relationship between the Latin American Studies Association and *LARR* that began when I became editor in chief. It is also one of the important ways in which the McGill Editorial Committee has attempted to make an outstanding journal even more responsive to the potential interests of researchers and students working in the broad field of Latin American studies—a commitment that LASA's Executive Committee also shares.

Of course, creating a new institution required creating new processes to ensure that it achieves its goals. To start the inception of a new special issue, *LARR's* Editorial Committee (consisting of the four associate editors and me) discusses potential topics in terms of their importance to the field and their suitability to the multilayered approach behind all special issues. Once a topic is decided on, either an associate editor or I take the lead in carrying it to fruition. The first step in that regard is to find a guest associate editor who will work closely with the lead editor from the Editorial Committee, and who brings in a different disciplinary background to complement that of the lead editor from the Editorial Committee.

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The two editors in charge of each special issue then start the long process that begins with the development of a skeletal outline of what should be addressed to do justice to the selected topic. At that point, in designing the process for producing special issues, the McGill Editorial Committee had two choices: issuing a call for papers or inviting particular scholars to make a contribution based on their own disciplines and expertise. Other journals have used both alternatives, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. In the end, we decided that the coeditors of this and future special issues would contact specific individuals in the belief that was the most efficient way to use our limited resources and ensure a minimal breadth of perspectives. Draft papers are then revised in accordance with comments from both special issue editors. Revised papers are then sent out to two anonymous reviewers, also representing two different disciplines. Final manuscripts are then prepared on the basis of the reviewers' comments.

As is always the case with *LARR*, our success can be measured only by the degree to which our readers find the result to be useful in promoting debate and the accumulation of knowledge. With that in mind, we would like to introduce a second innovation for *LARR*: we invite our readers to make suggestions, not only on improving the process but also for possible future special issues. Please let us know what you think!