

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Pioneering Multidisciplinary Research on Latin America

For more than forty-five years, the *Latin American Research Review* has been recognized as a leading venue for publishing multidisciplinary research. As a result, it is one of the oldest journals of its kind in the Americas, regularly publishing articles from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. But apart from trying to meet *LARR's* demanding standards, what does this actually imply for researchers who might want to submit their work to *LARR* for possible publication? When should they consider submitting their manuscripts to *LARR* rather than to more traditional disciplinary journals? As a multidisciplinary journal, what do we look for when considering a manuscript's potential for publication? And after four decades of publishing, what would we like to see submitted to *LARR* that we do not necessarily receive now?

WHEN TO SUBMIT TO A JOURNAL LIKE *LARR*

Researchers have a variety of alternatives when it comes to publishing their work. One key to their success is being able to match a particular manuscript with the most appropriate venue for its eventual publication. This involves many factors, not the least of which is knowing when a more traditional disciplinary journal might be best. Although there is no simple answer, especially given the fact that many articles could be published in either a disciplinary journal or a multidisciplinary journal, there are a few useful rules of thumb to follow.

First, does the manuscript itself use more than one traditional methodology, or does it make use of a hybrid methodology that does not neatly fit into any single discipline? In either case, a multidisciplinary journal such as *LARR* would be an appropriate choice. Yet the vast majority of manuscripts that are published in the humanities and social sciences do not fit either category. So what other factors might be considered?

Researchers generally want to achieve the largest readership for their work, but this is not necessarily the same as the widest readership or even the most appropriate readership. Multidisciplinary journals offer an exceptionally wide audience in terms of disciplinary breadth. At the same time, area studies journals offer a targeted readership in terms of geographical interest. *LARR* epitomizes these strengths, as more than five thousand members of the Latin American Studies Association receive it, as well as hundreds of institutional subscribers and the countless others who have access to *LARR* through institutional subscriptions.

So why should an author opt for multidisciplinary breadth over interdisciplinary depth? The most obvious reason is to attempt to reach a wide

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audience because the research likely appeals to a variety of disciplines. Multidisciplinary journals like *LARR* are an ideal vehicle for this because people who would otherwise tend to concentrate on their own discipline's flagship publications regularly consult them. Disciplinary boundaries are often notorious for the artificial barriers they create, but sometimes the convenience of having various disciplines represented in the same volume can begin to break down those barriers.

At the same time, cutting-edge research in Latin American studies may not necessarily be considered cutting edge in more traditional disciplinary journals; the issues, both theoretical and empirical, just may not be the same. A disciplinary journal may be less likely to publish a manuscript that *LARR* might endorse enthusiastically simply because other issues appear to be more prominent in the field. And if the journal does publish the article, those same issues dominating a particular discipline may drown out the article such that it becomes lost. By targeting an audience with similar shared regional interests, an author's impact on the profession may therefore be higher through publishing in a journal like *LARR*.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN A MANUSCRIPT

Because *LARR* is a multidisciplinary journal, we also look for certain qualities in prospective manuscripts that may be less relevant to more traditional disciplinary journals. Aside from the requisite focus on Latin American research, it is important that articles published in *LARR* address larger issues that are of interest to its disparate readership. For some, there is a myth that *LARR* is not interested in more theoretical work because we publish actual "research." Nothing could be further from reality. Narrow, descriptive pieces would be better placed elsewhere, no matter how good they may otherwise be. This means that theory is often important because it helps situate articles in the larger contexts that are more interesting to our readers.

This emphasis on the larger issues at stake also means that we are concerned that the articles we publish provide an appropriate level of context. For example, empirical case studies need to be situated in the larger national or international context in which they unfold. Although we often publish single-case studies, they must speak to larger issues and it is incumbent on the author to make the links explicit.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE MORE OF

Multidisciplinary research was, at best, still in its infancy when *LARR* began publishing in the 1960s. In fact, area studies and Latin American studies in particular were still relatively new fields of research. *LARR* was pathbreaking because it sought to make more accessible as wide a range of

research on Latin America as possible. Although there were some noticeable exceptions, researchers rarely explicitly introduced methodologies that combined more than one discipline, much less methodologies that transcended any particular one through systematic cross- or interdisciplinary work. The ideal of multidisciplinary was achieved more often than not in practice as the consequence of including in one volume the research of authors working in different disciplines. In other words, *LARR* as a whole was multidisciplinary even though the majority of the articles it published were not.

We are still striving to achieve a better balance among the various disciplines we publish in each volume, but the idea of multidisciplinary has evolved considerably in recent decades. In particular, there is greater recognition of the need to combine, if not transcend, traditional disciplines to better understand the complex problems of today's world. Traditional disciplines are far from being obsolete, but there is greater recognition that they do not possess a monopoly over what is considered legitimate research. For this reason, we would like to be able to publish more work that is multi- and transdisciplinary in nature, as a unique complement to *LARR's* leadership in publishing a wide range of high-quality research based on single disciplines.

Yet while there is growing appreciation of the need to move beyond methodologies based on a single discipline, little is actually written about how to achieve this. For this reason, we would also like to publish more how-to pieces based on researchers' own experiences. Such work would be particularly ideal for *LARR's* research reports and notes section.

Latin America and how we study it have changed tremendously since *LARR's* inception. *LARR* itself has also evolved to reflect this, all the while maintaining the highest standards of scholarly excellence and a firm commitment to providing a forum for the expression of the widest spectrum of ideas and approaches to research on the region. Beyond that, as *LARR's* new editorial team, we would like to push the field of Latin American studies into new directions. But this ultimately depends on the kinds of submissions we receive. And that is up to you, as *LARR's* potential contributors.

Philip Oxhorn
Executive Editor
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