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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

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Why should one publish in *LARR*? How does one publish in *LARR*? These questions are asked by graduate students, foreign colleagues, and researchers moving into Latin American studies. For the benefit of such prospective authors, it may be worth reviewing the pros and cons of publishing in this journal.

The first question may seem simple but is actually complex. The answer depends on the relative weight given to alternative forms of publication. A *LARR* article is obviously to be preferred to no publication at all, but is it preferable to saving the material for a book or publishing it in a disciplinary journal? It depends. A book is probably worth more for purposes of tenure and promotion than a single article in any journal. But for many research-oriented universities, a track record of consistent publication in refereed journals may be valued more than books. Then there is the issue of whether other journals might be preferable to *LARR*. Publication in one of the leading journals in a disciplinary field, such as the *American Sociological Review* or *World Politics*, is almost certainly more useful for institutional advancement to the professional in that field than an article in an interdisciplinary journal. Other things being equal, the candidate for tenure or promotion probably should seek to publish in the disciplinary journals of her or his field before considering *LARR*.

Publication in *LARR* does have value for tenure and promotion, of course, particularly if the candidate's departmental colleagues include other Latin Americanists. Moreover, an article in *LARR* confers something not often achieved with publication in a disciplinary journal: visibility among the wide cross-section of professionals from different fields who are interested in Latin America. *LARR* now has a circulation base of some 5,500 subscribers, about three-fourths of whom are in the United States and the remainder distributed throughout the world. Research on Latin America published in a disciplinary journal is likely to be read only by that fraction of colleagues interested in Latin America, whereas the

readership of *LARR* is by definition committed to the study of Latin America. Moreover, area specialists tend to be intellectually voracious: they are interested in everything about the area, or at least everything that touches on their interests, regardless of disciplinary origin. Judging from the comments received by the editors, it is difficult to escape the impression that subscribers actually read their *LARR* issues, in part if not in whole. Hence it is probable that an article in *LARR* would attract a larger readership than the same piece in a disciplinary journal of larger circulation.

The devotion of the *LARR* readership may explain a phenomenon that has attracted the attention of the editors. On meeting an author of a *LARR* article, it is commonplace for the editors to ask the author about the response to his or her article. The answer is often something like, "That piece attracted a lot of attention," or "A lot of people saw it," or even "Suddenly, everyone knows who I am." "Everyone" presumably refers to the Latin Americanists who read *LARR*. It can be added that few scholarly books sell as many copies as *LARR*. Moreover, books are less likely to be read than articles. Thus if dissemination of one's research on Latin America is an important goal, then *LARR* can be recommended to the prospective author.

The question of how to publish in *LARR* is more straightforward. As with any journal, prospective authors should first keep in mind the mission of the journal. While *LARR* covers a broad region and a wide variety of disciplines, it is devoted to the publication of research per se. *LARR* can accept only those manuscripts that clearly fall within this publishing mandate, that is to say, surveys of current research on Latin America or original research contributions of general and interdisciplinary interest, as well as essays reviewing books devoted to research on Latin America. Yet it is surprising how many other types of manuscripts are submitted, such as prescriptive policy essays, recommendations for reform, theoretical articles, analytical exercises, critical exegeses, opinion pieces, and reconsiderations of some topic or concept. As meritorious as many of these submissions may be, they have one element in common: they present neither new research findings nor the current state of research.

Authors should also keep in mind the brief but important "Instructions to Authors" printed on the bottom of the last page of each issue. Manuscripts should not exceed fifty double-spaced typed pages, yet many are longer. Excessive length creates a hardship for editors and referees and lowers the odds for acceptance. If not controlled, publication of longer manuscripts would result in the appearance of fewer pieces. Manuscripts should also be unpublished in any language and not under consideration by any other journal. This caveat has sometimes been ignored, although with the help of the referees most such cases come to

light before the review process is concluded. The instructions advise authors to consult the famous *Chicago Manual of Style* on matters of style and documentation, a request honored too seldom.

Once a piece reviewing or presenting genuine research on Latin America has been submitted in proper format to *LARR*, it is likely to be sent out for review. It will then be read by three to five referees. Because *LARR* referees exhibit a passion for knowledge and a willingness to share their information, their evaluations may be very thorough, and to the inexperienced author, disheartening. While most manuscripts are rejected on the first reading, many of these rejections include an invitation to resubmit the manuscript following revisions. This invitation should be taken seriously because it is premised on the referees' finding that the research has merit. Many authors do not resubmit, but a high proportion of those who rework their material along the lines suggested by the referees eventually have their work accepted for publication.

After a manuscript has been accepted, the collaboration between author and editors enters a new phase. Disciplinary journals often publish accepted manuscripts with only minimal copyediting, assuming that arcane jargon and unexplained statistics will not pose a problem for their readers. *LARR*, in contrast, is an interdisciplinary journal that should be accessible to readers from all fields and many countries. Moreover, the *LARR* editors strive to uphold the tradition predating the journal's tenure at the University of New Mexico of maintaining the journal's readability. Accordingly, the *LARR* staff take copyediting seriously, consulting with authors throughout the process and encouraging their collaboration. Judging from the favorable comments received from many authors once this stage is completed, the improved outcome is worth the extra effort made by all.

The entire process may seem intimidating to the new scholar or unpublished author. Yet it should be kept in mind that a fairly high proportion of articles published in *LARR* are authored by junior colleagues, some of them still in graduate school. The reason may be that newer scholars are more willing to take criticism seriously, whereas some of their more senior colleagues take criticisms with less grace. Whatever the causes, the editors take special pride in the role that *LARR* has played in bringing not only new research but new researchers to the attention of the Latin American studies community.

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