
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Since July of 1981, the New Mexico editorial team has worked closely with members of the *LARR* Editorial Board and anonymous referees in the evaluation of more than 350 manuscripts. This experience has reinforced our earlier decision to place primary emphasis on voluntary submissions and the peer review process to determine the content of material published in *LARR* rather than trying to solicit submissions on specific topics.

A small group of editors, whatever their intellectual talents, would find it impossible to remain abreast of research developments in the more than twenty disciplines that contribute to Latin American area studies. The peer review process, which draws upon the expertise of persons in these disciplines, is therefore essential for manuscript evaluation. While theoretical and methodological standards may vary across disciplines, properly conducted peer reviews can insure that the manuscripts accepted for publication reflect the informed judgment of specialists that the research presented is on the leading edge of scholarship.

For this reason, the current editors have continued to emphasize peer reviewing, increasing the standard number of external evaluations from three to four for each manuscript that passes the preliminary screening. Thus far the New Mexico editorial team has drawn upon the services of 283 different specialists to evaluate one or more manuscripts. We have also initiated a quiet system of accountability by sharing with the referees all the manuscript evaluations and the editors' disposition letter to the author, deleting names and other material that might identify the persons involved. The result has not only served to give the referees some feedback on the results of their efforts and to inform them about how the editors are doing their job, but it has led to a considerable improvement in the quality of evaluations. Referees no longer feel, as

one put it, that their comments disappear down some "black hole." The opportunity to compare evaluations helps the referees, as well as the editors and authors, to learn from the evaluation process.

The readers of *LARR* therefore can pick up each issue with some assurance that they are being presented with a cross-section of current research on Latin America that has been judged by their colleagues to be of merit. While most readers probably turn first to the material dealing with their own field, their comments suggest that much of the pleasure in reading *LARR* comes from the chance to review material in other disciplines.

The pattern of manuscript submissions since our last report to the readership (in *LARR* 18, number 2) shows some changes as well as a high degree of continuity. The rate of submissions per month has increased by 22 percent since that report, an encouraging sign of vitality in Latin American studies. Between February 1983 and the end of April 1984, 174 manuscripts were received. Of the 130 manuscripts that entered the review process, by the end of April 1984, 21 had been accepted, 88 were rejected, 4 were withdrawn, and 17 were still in process. Of the 109 manuscripts for which the review process reached completion (those either accepted or rejected), the rate of acceptance remained at approximately 20 percent, or one of every five submissions.

In terms of the disciplines represented, political science remained in first place, increasing from 22 percent of all submissions in the preceding period to 29 percent. Other disciplines were more evenly represented. Sociology moved to second place, and economics was the third-ranked discipline, narrowly edging out history. Submissions on languages and literature held at 9 percent, while anthropology submissions continued to gain, reaching 6 percent. Other fields such as geography, education, communications, and urban studies accounted for the remaining 15 percent.

<u>DISCIPLINE</u>	<u>Feb. 83– April 84</u>	<u>July 81– Jan. 83</u>	<u>Oct. 77– Jan. 79</u>
Political Science	29%	22%	34%
Sociology	16	8	13
Economics	13	14	7
History	12	18	15
Languages and Literature	9	9	10
Anthropology	6	4	2
Other fields	15	25	19
Total	100%	100%	100%

Twenty-eight percent of the manuscripts evaluated came from outside the United States, with submissions from Latin America dominating. Thirty-six percent of manuscripts were submitted by authors of Hispanic or Luso-Brazilian origin, a number resident in the United States, Canada, or Europe. Twenty-five percent of the manuscripts were submitted by female authors. In sum, manuscript submissions to *LARR* are continuing to reflect the diversity of disciplines, topics, national origins, and other variables that make the field of Latin American studies an intellectual feast as well as a subject of considerable relevance in troubled times.

Gilbert W. Merx
Albuquerque, New Mexico