

EDITORIAL

Report from the Editor (2019)

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During 2018, the Latin American Research Review (LARR) consolidated important transformations initiated in recent years. Our associate editors in 2018 were Mónica Espinosa Arango (anthropology, Universidad de Los Andes, Colombia), Fabrice Lehoucq (book review editor, University of North Carolina), Claudia Ferman (documentary film review editor, University of Richmond), José Molinas Vega (economics, Instituto Desarrollo, Paraguay), Michel Gobat (history, University of Pittsburgh), Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel (literature and cultural studies, University of Miami), Flavia Freidenberg (politics and international relations, UNAM, Mexico), and Gioconda Herrera (sociology, FLACSO-Ecuador). Our managing editor Sara Lickey is in charge of the editorial process.

Manuscripts Received

LARR received 314 manuscripts during 2018 and 59 additional manuscripts during the first quarter of 2019. The number of submissions in 2018 represents a slight increase of about 4 percent over the total received in the previous year, but the historical pattern suggests that we are finally observing a stabilization in the number of manuscripts after a decade of steady expansion. In 2008, LARR received 131 submissions. A decade later, the number of submissions has increased by 240 percent. In spite of the transition to open-access format, the journal has not been able to expand the number of published articles at a similar pace, which means that LARR now has a more demanding review process and rejections are unfortunately more frequent.

About 60 percent of all regular submissions—that is, excluding submissions for dossiers—are in the social sciences, with slightly over 40 percent originating in the humanities (anthropology, history, or literature and cultural studies). This figure reflects a growing reputation of the journal in the humanities; in the past, two-thirds of the manuscripts received by LARR were in the social sciences.

Figure 1 reports on the number of manuscripts received in 2018 and during the first quarter of this year, by discipline. The most active fields in 2018 were politics and international relations (22 percent of all

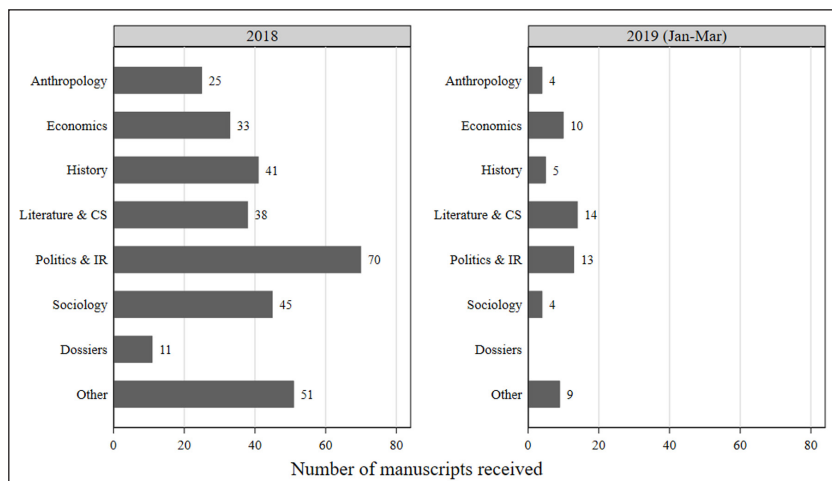


Figure 1: Number of submissions, by discipline.

submissions), sociology (14 percent), history (13 percent), and literature and cultural studies (12 percent). About 50 percent of all manuscripts received in 2018 were sent for external peer review.

Decisions Made

The editorial team made 258 final decisions on manuscripts during 2018 and 113 additional decisions during the first quarter of 2019. **Table 1** classifies those decisions in three groups: rejections after internal editorial review (i.e., desk rejects), rejections after external review (based on referees' reports), and accepted papers (normally after one or two rounds of revisions). About 19 percent of all final decisions made in 2018 correspond to acceptances, with the rest being desk rejections (56 percent) and papers declined after external review (25 percent).

Figure 2 displays the average number of days required to reach each type of decision. On average, it took 37 days to reject manuscripts after internal review, 182 days (about six months) to reject manuscripts after peer review, and 367 days (about a year) to accept articles for publication after revisions. There is considerable room for improvement in this workflow, and our priority for next year will be shortening the review time.

Articles Published

Volume 53 contained 72 articles (including book and documentary film review essays) written by 89 authors. About 43 percent of the authors were women; 20 percent of the authors were located in Latin America, 10 percent in Europe, and the remaining in the United States and Canada. As in previous years, the Latin American authors were most frequently from Brazil (6 percent) and Chile (6 percent). Irrespective of the manuscripts' origins, 60 of 72 published articles were submitted in English, 8 in Spanish, and 4 in Portuguese.

LARR covers a wider range of subjects than most area studies journals. Of 42 research papers published in 2018, 55 percent were in the humanities (anthropology, history, literature and cultural studies) and 45 percent in the social sciences (economics, political science and international relations, sociology), with literature and political science being the most prominent subjects in each category. **Figure 3** displays the

Table 1: Final decisions made on manuscripts.

Decisions made (%)	2018	2019*
Reject after internal review	56.2	49.6
Reject after external review	25.2	38.9
Accept	18.6	11.5
Total	100.0	100.0
Submissions closed	258	113

* Preliminary figures for January–March.

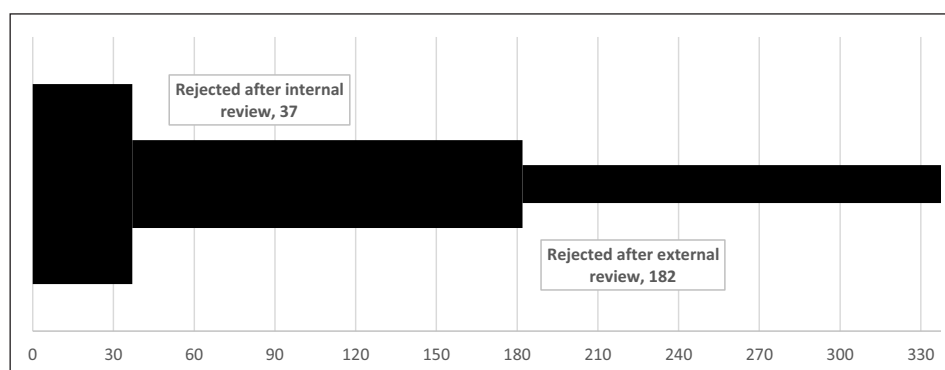


Figure 2: Average number of days required for final decisions on manuscripts.

Note: Values reflect the average number of days elapsed from the date of submission. Reduction in flow reflects the percentages in Table 1. Data correspond to all final decisions made in 2018, but a third of submissions originated in previous years.

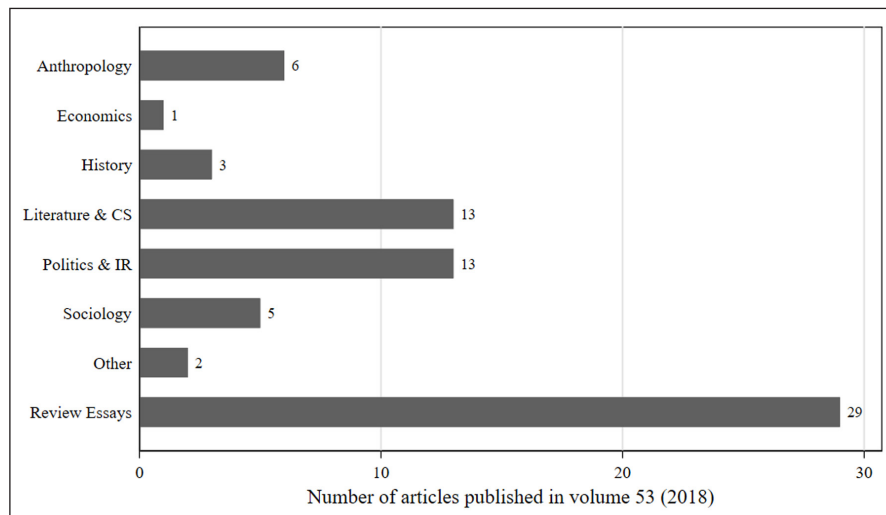


Figure 3: Articles in volume 53 (2018), by field.

number of articles published in each field. LARR also published 27 book review essays and 2 documentary film review essays.

The content of the articles was disseminated to a broader audience through our LARR-*Panoramas* blog (<http://www.panoramas.pitt.edu/larr>), hosted by the University of Pittsburgh and edited by José Incio in 2018. The blog featured 27 short essays crafted by authors of the original papers, a friendly format that attracted 8,109 readers in 2018. In addition, media coordinator Paloma Díaz Lobos actively disseminates LARR's contents through Facebook and Twitter (@larrlasa).

The LARR-Pitt Best Article Award

Eleven articles published in volume 53 were nominated by our readers for the inaugural LARR-Pitt Best Article Award. The award is presented annually at LASA's International Congress to the best research article published by the *Latin American Research Review* in the volume preceding the congress. The award covers articles published in all disciplines and in any language.

The LARR-Pitt Award is supported by the University of Pittsburgh to honor its long-standing relationship with the Latin American Studies Association, and it carries a monetary prize of US\$500. The inaugural award committee, which evaluated papers in volume 53, was formed by Flavia Freidenberg (UNAM, LARR's associate editor for politics and international relations), Philip Oxhorn, chair (Vancouver Island University, Canada, former editor in chief of LARR), and Michele Reid-Vazquez (University of Pittsburgh).

The committee selected "Representing Blackness in Brazil's Changing Television Landscape: The Cases of *Mister Brau* and *O Grande Gonzalez*" (vol. 53, no. 2), by Eli Carter (University of Virginia) as the best 2018 article, which was honored at the LASA Congress in Boston, in May 2019.

We encourage our readers and authors to nominate their favorite articles for next year's award. The call for nominations remains open throughout the year. The committee that will select the best article for current volume 54 is formed by Monica Espinosa, chair (Universidad de los Andes and LARR's associate editor for anthropology), Caitlin Bruce (University of Pittsburgh), and Matías Dewey (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies). The authors of the best article will be honored at LASA's 2020 congress in Guadalajara.

Future Challenges

The creation of the LARR-Pitt Best Article Award crowns a sequence of important transformations initiated with the journal's transition to open-access format and the end of the traditional print edition in 2016. At the same time, the expansion of LARR has created three challenges related to the growing number of manuscripts received.

The first challenge involves the time required to complete the review process. The growing number of submissions places a greater burden on our editors, whose work is voluntary, and delays our ability to process manuscripts promptly. As noted above, the review process leading to manuscript acceptance took on average about a year in 2018. This is too long for younger faculty subject to the tight schedule of academic promotions. We are working to address this issue, and our associate editors have improved internal response times considerably.

The second challenge refers to the number of articles published. LASA currently pays a publication fee of US\$429 per article posted (about \$31,000 for the 72 papers published last year). Although we are committed to publishing ten research papers and several book or film review essays with each issue, rising costs limit our ability to expand the journal in proportion to the number of manuscripts received. This limitation suggests that a greater rate of rejections will be unavoidable in the future. Moreover, although LARR has planned several dossiers (collections of three to five articles on a common theme) for 2019–2021, budget restrictions have led us to suspend consideration of new dossier initiatives. These constraints impose some difficult choices on a journal like LARR, which is bound to accommodate a broad range of topics and disciplines to reflect LASA's diversity. However, in the absence of new sources of funding, an expansion in the number of published articles remains unfeasible.

The third challenge is time to publication. A larger number of submissions in the social sciences, a fixed number of articles per issue, and an increase in the number of articles published in the humanities mean that articles accepted in the social sciences are taking longer to be released. The time elapsed between acceptance and publication currently extends to two years for some papers accepted in the social sciences. As mentioned in our previous report, LASA's Executive Council has encouraged the adoption of an "early view" policy to make accepted papers available to readers before the formal date of release. Unfortunately, our publisher Ubiquity Press does not yet offer a platform for advanced publication. Our journal manager Anastasia Sakellariadi continues to work on this issue, and we are committed to find a definitive solution for this problem.

These challenges result from the rapid expansion of a journal that has been synonymous with Latin American studies since 1965. The field is now more complex and intellectually diverse than it was a half century ago, and LARR has the opportunity to set a model for interdisciplinary, open-access scholarship for years to come.

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LARR

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