

EDITORIAL

Report from the Editor on the 60th anniversary of LARR (2025)

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The year 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the creation of the *Latin American Research Review*! This special date provides an opportunity to learn a few curiosities about LARR's past. This account is based on the reports of LARR's founders and former editors and on my own participant observation in LASA.

LARR was launched in 1965 by the Ford Foundation, the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress and a group of universities. The first home of LARR was the University of Texas at Austin and its first managing editor was Richard P. Schoeder, an Andeanist anthropologist who studied with John Murra (Cline 1966). LARR has been mostly hosted by public universities, which are home to some of the largest and strongest Latin American Studies programs in the US, except for a brief period at the University of Notre Dame, whose Kellogg Institute has had a significant engagement with Latin America. After leaving the University of Texas at Austin, LARR was hosted by the University of New Mexico, which sponsored the journal for two decades, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Florida, where it has been located during the last five years. Area studies have been historically understood in the US as a service to the public to further understanding and goodwill towards other regions of the world as well as to spread US influence globally, a form of “soft power” that is in question nowadays.

LARR is the flagship journal of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which has over 13,000 members dedicated to the study of the region. However, the journal was created a year earlier than LASA, and for most of its history it has been relatively autonomous from the association. LARR became more entwined with LASA after 2007, when the publication moved to McGill University in Canada under the editorship of Phillip Oxhorn and LASA assumed its financial and production aspects (Oxhorn 2008).

According to sociologist Gilbert Merkx (2002), long-term editor of LARR from 1982 to 2002 when the journal was at the University of New Mexico, an aim of LARR's founders and editors was to make the journal as inexpensive and widely available as possible. For Merkx, LARR represented the ideal type of professional journal priced for use rather than profit. LARR's editors took pride in the journal's affordability and accessibility and the high quality of its academic content. Merkx noted that these characteristics could not be taken for granted because editors and associations were often approached by commercial enterprises. The editorial and managerial autonomy of LARR and the zeal of its editors protected it from the economic pressures of the time.

Since 2016, *LARR* became an open access and online only publication. This resonated with the tradition of making *LARR* widely available and affordable for the largest readership. After the shift to open access, LASA's leadership and *LARR*'s editors have made efforts to make sure than authors can publish at no cost to them if they do not have institutional or grant support specifically earmarked for open access publication. Publishing Gold Open Access without cost to authors is an important advantage of choosing *LARR* as an outlet for publication.

Merkx noted that the journal was created in 1965 for the purpose of disseminating knowledge on what was then "the new field of Latin American Studies." There was interest in the study of Latin America in the US since the early twentieth century, when a series of institutions and publications like the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, the American Association of teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, some Centers for Latin American Studies and the Permanent Committee on Latin American Studies, which published the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, were created. However, interest in Latin American Studies dwindled during World War II and immediately afterward because Latin America was not a war zone. The Cuban Revolution revived US interest in the region in the 1960s. Latin America was rediscovered as a laboratory of rapid social change where it's possible loss to the communist block endangered national security. A development program, the Alliance for Progress, was created to promote socio-economic change and avoid the spread of communism. In this context, Latin American Studies gained traction and public and private funds flowed for the study of the region (Cline 1966). *LARR* and LASA were launched in this conjuncture. The US public and US public servants aimed to acquire deep knowledge of Latin America, which included the study of languages, cultures, history and politics. For those reasons, political science and language and literature have historically been central disciplines in *LARR*. On the other hand, since the launching of the journal, the editors have sought wide disciplinary representation.

Since the 1970s, the editors of *LARR* became interested, not only in publishing US-produced knowledge on Latin America, but also in making scholarship by Latin Americans available to an English-speaking audience. For instance, according to political scientist Jonh D. Martz (1979), who was the editor between 1973 and 1978 as well as a former officer in army intelligence, *LARR* had "special correspondents" in Latin American countries who worked to attract more and better manuscripts to the journal. In 1979, 30 percent of the manuscripts published in *LARR* came from outside the US, particularly from Latin America. *LARR* published the likes of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Guillermo O'Donnell at that time. Articles could be submitted in English, Spanish or Portuguese, but they were then translated into and published in English. The decision to publish in three languages, English, Spanish and Portuguese, is more recent and dates back to the 2000s. Multilingual publication opens a space for different traditions of scholarship and allows authors to express themselves in the language in which they feel most comfortable. On the other hand, it creates some complexities for editors in terms of finding appropriate reviewers and copyediting. Multilingual publication also assumes a highly educated audience who can read in several languages. All in all, the advantages of multilingual publication outweigh its difficulties.

In the early 2000s, *LARR* returned to its first home at the University of Texas under sociologist and geographer Peter Ward (Ward 2006). His first editorial report shows that the structure of *LARR* has been quite consistent. It has been known for its high-quality research articles, widely read analytic reviews of several books, and research notes that introduce readers to new archives, research techniques or bodies of data. While preserving the original structure of *LARR*, Ward also wanted the journal to be a space for new ideas. He started the practice of sponsoring research forums at LASA and opened *LARR* to new trends like Cultural and Latino Studies. In the early 2000s, the system of submission and review for the journal was still manual. Ward worked to make the system fully electronic.

Phillip Oxhorn, a political scientist then at McGill University in Canada, was the editor from 2008 to 2016. Oxhorn focused on special thematic issues that examined important problems from multiple perspectives. The first issue under his editorship was entitled “Living in actually existing democracies.” Oxhorn led the creation of the Latin American Research Commons, renamed LASA Press in 2025, which was started with funding originating in *LARR*.

The last editorship before the current one was headed by political scientist Aníbal Pérez Liñán (2016–2020). He completed the transition of the journal to open access and emphasized its visibility and impact promoting the journal in social media and creating an associated blog (Pérez Liñán 2020). Pérez Liñán focused on improving *LARR*’s impact factor which increased considerably under his editorship. He realized that disciplinary journals had higher impact factors than interdisciplinary publications. For that reason, he organized *LARR* by disciplines. He also created the award for the “best article” to enhance the attractiveness of publishing in *LARR* as well as the visibility of the journal. Finally, he negotiated the transition from Ubiquity Press to Cambridge University Press, a move that brought a better submission system, the opportunity to publish FirstView, and greater academic reputation to *LARR*.

During the first five years of the current editorial team, there have been continuities and changes. We have preserved the journal’s basic structure, invented by John D. Martz in the 1970s, but added a Debates section. The section is intended to allow Latin American styles of writing in the essay tradition to have a presence in *LARR*. It is also intended to encourage the submission of theoretically-oriented pieces on significant topics in Latin American Studies. We conducted the transition to the new submission system of Cambridge University Press and lowered the time to publication by at least one year.

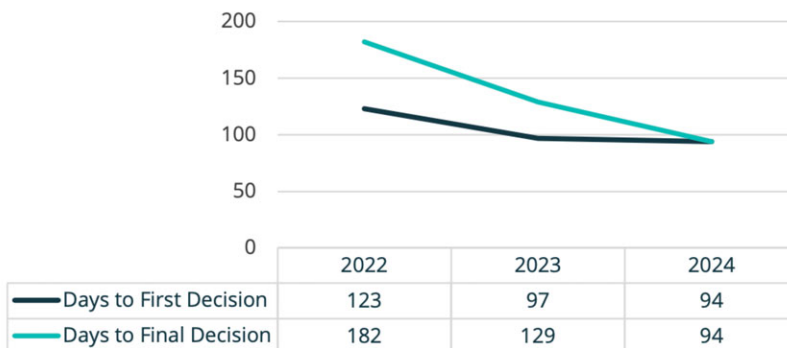
I am the first woman to ever lead *LARR*, and several of the associate editors are women who lead feminist, gender and sexuality aware perspectives in their fields, particularly in disciplines like political science and economics, where women have been historically underrepresented. The team has promoted diversity, equity and inclusion in the journal. We have diversified the pool of authors and reviewers and have published widely on race, ethnicity, racism, gender and sexuality. We have prioritized current issues like democratic backsliding, human rights, the struggles for memory, and the advance of authoritarianism and the far right.

Under the current team the journal has returned to its traditional interdisciplinary emphasis. Articles are no longer organized by disciplines, but as thematic conversations. These are not necessarily special dossiers but freely submitted articles that the editorial team arranges by topics.

We have encouraged disciplinary diversity and have worked on raising the profile of the disciplines that were less well represented in *LARR*. The discipline of Economics, which was not strong traditionally, has grown considerably thanks to the efforts of Rosaluz Durán of Universidad de Lima. The current team added the discipline of Geography, now under the care of Eric Carter of Macalester College. The journal has made efforts to raise its profile in Anthropology with the help of Juan Carlos Callirgos of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Lima.

The relaunching of dossiers at *LARR* has raised much interest. Several special dossiers on environmental issues, threats to democracy, indigenous politics and economies, experimental forms of writing, independent editorship, multidimensional measurements of poverty and other topics of interest are in the process of being reviewed. Please note that dossiers do not become separate issues, but sections within *LARR*’s four yearly issues. Due to production constraints, *LARR* can only publish four issues a year. However, we have flexibility regarding the number of articles that an issue can accommodate. All research articles for dossiers are submitted individually through the submission platform and are peer reviewed like any other research article. Authors interested in organizing a special

Peer review turnaround times (mean)



Production turnaround times (mean)

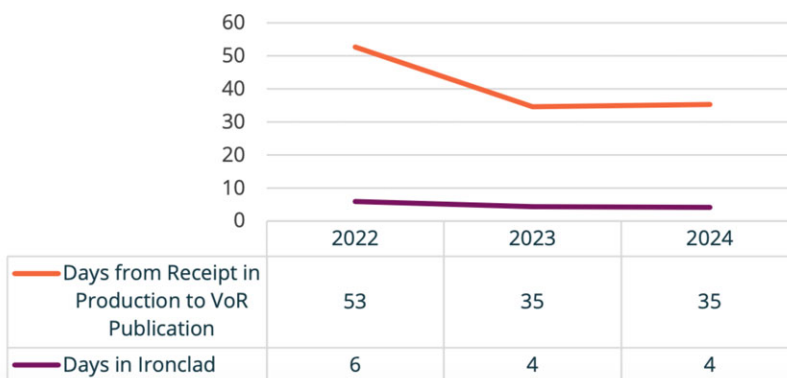


Figure 1. Journal turnaround times.

Source: McKeen (2025).

issue may send a brief proposal stating their idea, its contribution to the literature, the names of authors, titles, and abstracts of the papers that would ideally become part of the dossier to the editor in chief for evaluation.

LARR continues to enjoy a strong academic reputation. The 2-year impact factor with Web of Science grew from 0.7 in 2023 to 0.8 in 2024. The five-year impact factor stayed at 1.2. Scopus cite score went up from 1.4 in 2023 to 1.5 in 2024. LARR's total citations went up from 1,288 in 2023 to 1,537 in 2024.

LARR received 266 new submissions in 2024. From those, we published 62 contributions in volume 59. LARR's acceptance rate was 21.8 percent in total, including book and film reviews, and 15.93 percent for original peer reviewed research articles, including debates and research notes. The turnaround times have also improved. The days to first decision decreased from 123 in 2022 to 94 days in 2024. The days to final decision decreased from 182 in 2022 to 94 days in 2024 (McKeen 2025). See Figure 1.

The articles published by country in 2024 are shown in Figure 2, which highlights LARR's broad geographic reach and the fact that its authors are coming from a diversity of countries in North America, Latin America, Europe and beyond. We particularly encourage submissions from Asia, Oceania and other regions of the world that are developing an interest in Latin American Studies.

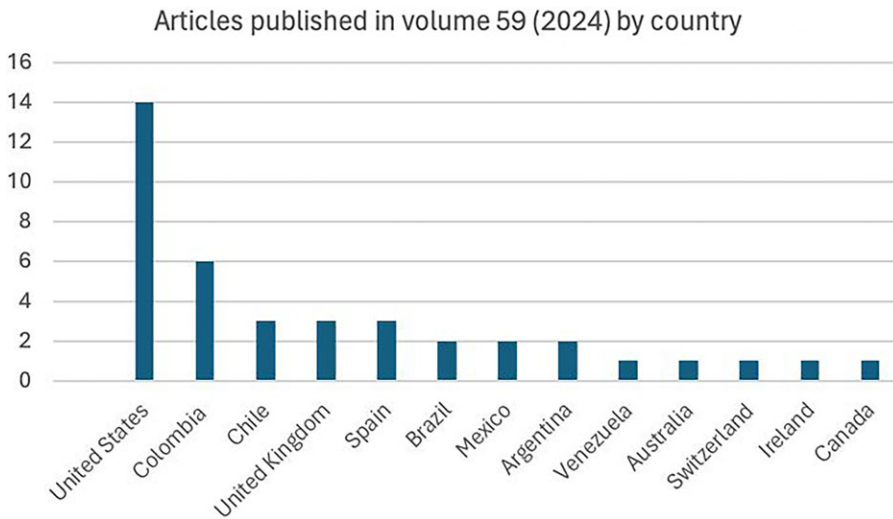


Figure 2. Articles published by country (2024)

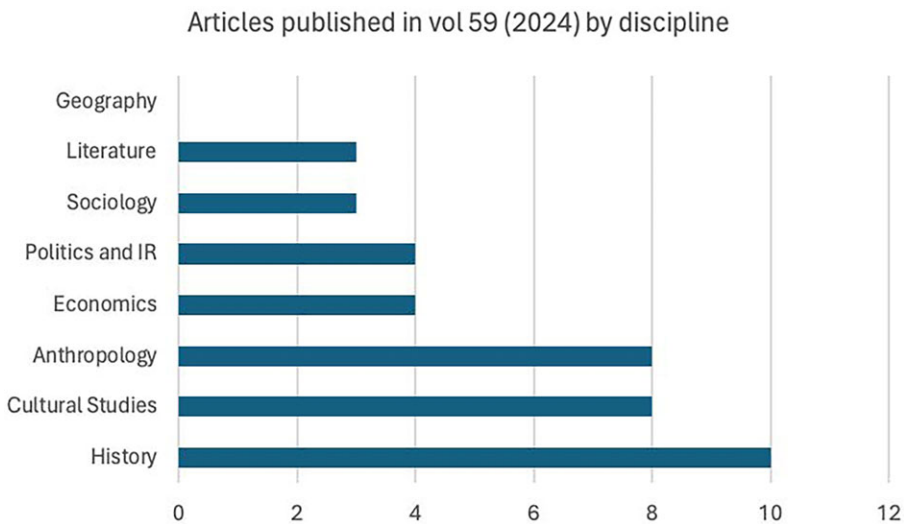


Figure 3. Articles published by discipline (2024)

Figure 3 shows the disciplinary distribution of published articles. There has been an increase of publications in History, Cultural Studies and Anthropology. In 2024, there were no publications in Geography yet, as this is a new area for *LARR*. However, several geography articles are under review or will be published soon. Women made up 36 percent of *LARR*'s corresponding authors in 2024.

Our book review section continues to be very active. Essays written by leading and emerging scholars are extremely useful to researchers, teachers, and graduate students and they are amongst our most cited articles. Volume 59 featured book review essays by Steve Ellner, Alan Knight, Eric Langer, Louis Pérez Jr., Cynthia Radding and Lynn Stephen, among others. Book review essays are edited by historian Kevin Young from University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Book review essays are sometimes solicited by the editor, but



Figure 4. Denisa Jashari, winner of the *LARR-UF* Best Article Award 2024

scholars interested in writing a book review essay may also contact Kevin with a proposal. We also have an active film review section edited by Antonio Gómez of Tulane University. In volume 59 we included interesting film review essays on resource extraction and rural life that will be useful for researchers and teachers looking for recent and notable documentaries. Authors interested in writing a film review essay may contact Antonio with a proposal.

This year, the award for best article went to Denisa Jashari, assistant professor of History at Syracuse University. The title of her article is “The Chilean Christians for Socialism Movement: Liberationist, Third Worldist and Utopian.” The committee made up by Professors Heather Vrana, *LARR* editor for History from University of Florida, Rebecca Bell Martin, Tecnológico de Monterrey and previous awardee, Javier Uriarte of Stony Brook University, made the following comments: “Denisa Jashari’s “The Chilean Christians for Socialism Movement” makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Cold War Latin America. The article uncovers the previously unappreciated role of Chile’s *Cristianos por el Socialismo* (Christians for Socialism [CpS]) in advancing regional and transnational socialist projects by tracing its origins, activities, and influence. The article’s use of a range of historical sources, including interviews and personal archives, is laudable.”

It is exciting to celebrate *LARR*’s 60th anniversary. The journal has kept its brand as a pre-eminent academic publication, while its editors have also innovated to keep it relevant to the times. The biggest challenge that *LARR* is facing today as an area studies journal is the political climate that is threatening area studies and academia in general. The US is closing itself to the world and to knowledge-informed policymaking, which obviously affects area studies. Some of the funding for area studies has been cancelled or its future is uncertain, like the Title VI federal funds that provide much needed resources to teach and learn about Latin America. The possible cancelation of FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) scholarships, which support the study of lesser known (in the US) languages like Portuguese, Haitian Creole or indigenous vernaculars, may also be consequential. The Latin American diaspora, immigrant communities, women and sexual minorities are facing

serious threats to their rights in the US, Latin America and globally. We expect LARR to continue being a space that furthers goodwill and understanding in the Americas and beyond, and where all these pressing issues can be discussed in a rigorous and informed way.

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