

## EDITORIAL

## Report from the Editor (2018)

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During 2017, the *Latin American Research Review* (LARR) completed its transition to open-access format. Our associate editors in 2017 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, Ministry of Planning, 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 301 manuscripts during 2017 and 121 additional manuscripts during the first quarter of 2018. The number of submissions in 2017 shows a slight decline (of –6%) over the total received last year, but the number of submissions in the first quarter of this year represents a 51% *increase* with respect to the same period in 2017. This pattern reflects a steady expansion in the number of authors seeking to publish in LARR. Over the past decade, the number of manuscripts received by the journal has grown by 159%. Unfortunately, and despite the open-access format, we cannot increase the number of published articles at a similar pace, which means that rejections are becoming more frequent. We discuss some of the challenges and constraints faced by the journal in the last section of this report.

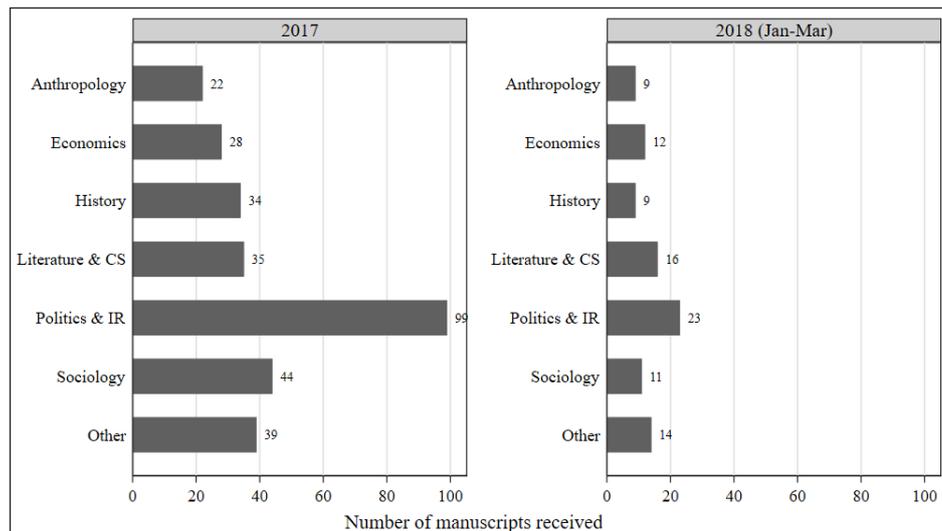
Two-thirds of all submissions are in the social sciences, with the remaining third originating in the humanities (anthropology, history, or literature and cultural studies). We encourage more submissions in the humanities. As we show below, this imbalance in the number of manuscripts does not translate to the articles published by the journal.

**Figure 1** reports on the number of manuscripts received in 2017 and during the first quarter of this year, by discipline. The most active fields in 2017 were politics and international relations (33% of all submissions), sociology (15%), and literature and cultural studies (12%). About 48% of all manuscripts received in 2017 were sent for external peer review.

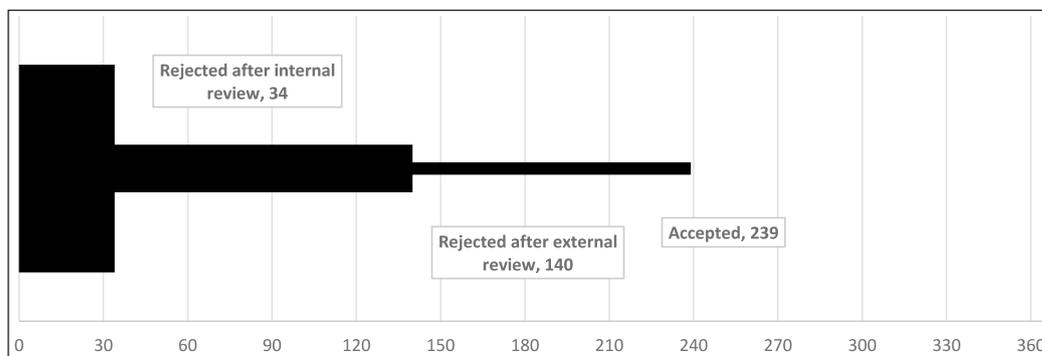
**Decisions Made**

The editorial team made 193 final decisions on manuscripts during 2017 and 79 additional decisions during the first quarter of 2018. **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). Although 71% of all final decisions made in 2017 correspond to desk rejects, this does not mean that LARR rejected 71% of submissions without external review. About 51% of all manuscripts received last year were desk rejected, but this figure represents a large number of manuscripts compared to the pool of manuscripts already under review from previous years.

**Figure 2** displays the average number of days required to reach each type of decision. On average, it took 34 days to reject manuscripts after internal review, 140 days (about five months) to reject manuscripts after peer review, and 239 days (eight months) to accept articles for publication after revisions. This represents a substantial improvement compared to last year, and the editorial team keeps working to shorten response times.



**Figure 1:** Number of submissions, by discipline.



**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 corresponds to all final decisions made in 2017, but submissions may have originated in previous years.

**Table 1:** Final decisions made on manuscripts.

Decisions made (%)	2017	2018*
Reject after internal review	71.0	67.1
Reject after external review	22.8	25.3
Accept	6.2	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Submissions closed	193	79

\* Preliminary figures for January–March.

## Articles Published

Volume 52 was the first volume of LARR published exclusively online. Once the journal became open access, the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) suspended publication in traditional print format. Volume 52 contains 74 articles (including book review essays) written by 102 authors. The volume shows considerable diversity—but also some imbalances—in terms of gender (38% of the authors are female) and geographic region: 35% of the authors are located in Latin America, 52% in Canada and the United States, and 13% in Europe. The most common countries are the United States (46% of LARR authors), Brazil (10%), and Chile (8%).

The volume also presents diversity in terms of substantive topics. Of 45 research papers published in 2017, 58% were in the humanities (anthropology, history, and literature and cultural studies) and 42% in the social sciences (economics, political science and international relations, and sociology), with literature and

cultural studies as the most prominent category. **Figure 3** displays the number of articles published in each field. LARR also published 27 excellent book review essays in all areas. Review essays remain highly popular among our readers.

### Innovations and Challenges

Together with the transition to open access, LARR experienced several innovations during the past year. The journal has developed a strong presence on Facebook and Twitter (@larlrasa), where media coordinator Paloma Díaz Lobos actively disseminates our contents. Our blog (<http://www.panoramas.pitt.edu/larr>), hosted by the University of Pittsburgh and edited by David McCoy in 2017 and José Incio in 2018, shares the journal's research with a broader audience, attracting 5,183 readers in 2017 and an additional 1,855 readers in the first quarter of 2018.

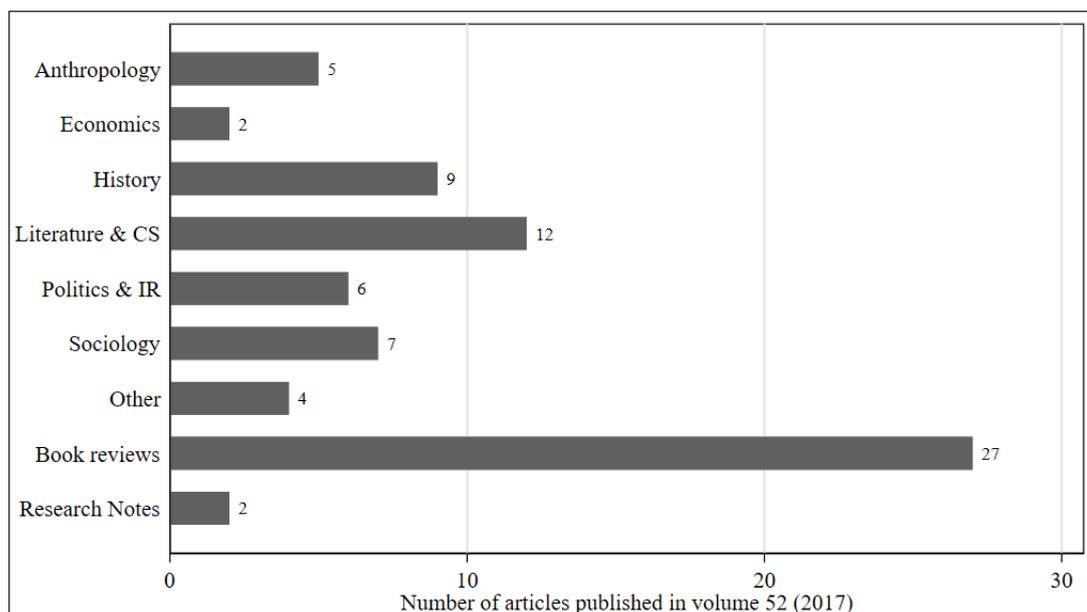
The University of Pittsburgh is also committed to support an annual prize for the best article published in LARR over the next three years. The first prize will consider all articles published in the current volume (vol. 53, 2018), and it will be awarded at the LASA Congress in Boston in May 2019.

Over the next twenty-four months, LARR will publish a series of dossiers, collections of peer-reviewed articles dealing with a common subject and included with our regular issues. Our first dossier, on "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future," edited by Allison Bigelow and Thomas Klubock at the University of Virginia, is included with this issue (volume 53, no. 3). With this issue, we also inaugurate the publication of our documentary film review essays, similar to our traditional book review essays.

These exciting transformations have also created new challenges for our editorial team. The growing number of submissions places greater demands on our associate editors—whose work is voluntary—and potential delays in our response times. More articles also drive longer times to publication: the time elapsed between acceptance and publication currently extends to two years for some papers accepted in the social sciences.

We are analyzing alternative solutions for these challenges, although a greater rate of rejections may be unavoidable in the short run. An expansion in the number of articles published by LARR appears unlikely at this time. LASA has found that the open-access journal envisioned some years ago has been more expensive than anticipated: the association currently pays a publication fee of US\$429 per article posted (to wit, almost \$32,000 for the seventy-four papers published last year). Although we are committed to publish ten research papers and several book or film review essays with each issue, rising costs may constrain our ability to expand the journal and publish regular dossiers in the future.

LASA's Executive Council has also encouraged the adoption of an "early view" policy to make accepted papers available to readers through the LARR website before the formal date of release. Many authors have also advocated for this change. We support the idea wholeheartedly. Unfortunately, our publisher Ubiquity Press does not yet have an established capability to make advanced publication possible without additional costs, but our journal manager Anastasia Sakellariadi has been working to address this issue.



**Figure 3:** Articles in Volume 52 (2017), by field.

These challenges will demand important efforts on the part of the editorial team and support from LASA's Executive Council to sustain the open-access project. But these challenges also highlight the centrality of the journal to LASA's overall mission. LARR continues to publish the best research in Latin American studies, in the social sciences and the humanities, from authors across the world. The journal now makes this research available to students worldwide, without restrictions or subscription requirements. No other journal combines a scholarly tradition of more than half a century with such disciplinary range, research quality, and open access. We hope that LARR will serve as a successful model for interdisciplinary area studies journals in the years to come.

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**LARR**

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