EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THIS EXTENDED EDITION, MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS AND ACCEPTANCE REPORT FOR 2004, AND *LARR*'S "IMPACT FACTOR"

THE RATIONALE FOR THIS EXTENDED EDITION OF *LARR*

LARR readers may be wondering about the reasons for this "bumper" extended edition containing almost 200 additional pages. This is a strategic decision by the editors to almost triple the number of review essays included in vol. 40, no. 3 as a one-time mechanism of clearing the backlog of essays that had begun to accumulate. *LARR* remains committed to ensuring that regular research articles will normally make up between 55–60 percent of any single issue, but we are also determined to avoid review essays on books heavily outdated by the time that the essay appears in print. In any one year *LARR* usually receives around 400 titles, and while it is not possible to broker all of these into interesting and timely thematic clusters, the editors are assiduous in seeking to include as many books as possible, while also maintaining a three year "moving wall" from a book's publication to its appearance in a *LARR* review essay.

So, after careful consideration of a number of options, we have decided to undertake a one-time extended edition. Several of the review essays deal with Puerto Rico and the Caribbean in anticipation of LASA's XXVI Congress to be held in San Juan in March 2006. Enjoy!

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS AND ACCEPTANCE RATES, 2004

It is the practice for the lead editor to report to readers on the patterns of submissions in the preceding year. In the previous report on 2003

Latin American Research Review, Vol. 40, No. 3, October 2005

submissions (see vol. 38, no. 2), I noted that *LARR* had received 33 percent more manuscripts in the first year the journal moved to the University of Texas at Austin (100 manuscripts compared to 75 in 2002), and that this was a welcome "spike" in submission rates over recent years.[1] In 2004 the number of submissions was 98—almost identical to the previous year.

MS SUBMISSIONS AND PUBLICATION BY DISCIPLINE

As in previous years, in 2004, political science (including government) continued to stand out with 37 percent of all submissions (and 29 percent of published articles in vols. 39 and 40), and although economics as a stand-alone category continues to show very few submissions, combined with political economy (spanning as it often does both economics and politics), the two make up about 9 percent of all submissions and, ultimately, a similar proportion of published articles. History submissions rose marginally in 2004 (up 12 percent), although the discipline continues to fare quite strongly in terms of published papers (26 percent of all papers), suggesting that the flow is generally of an especially high quality. There was a modest increase in the arts and humanities (including cultural studies) together with literature and language, comprising 18 percent of all submissions (up from 14 percent in 2003), but the conversion rate into published papers is somewhat lower—around 9 percent—and the *LARR* editors continue to encourage submissions of high-quality papers in these disciplinary areas. Sociology dipped slightly from 16 to 11 percent, but the conversion rate to published papers remained solid, at around 10 percent.

While it would make little sense to report on submission rates for book review essays, which are commissioned, several of the less-represented disciplinary areas on the full articles submission side are compensated for by book review essays. For example, 16 percent of review essays were in culture, literature, and language; history was 31 percent, whereas archaeology and anthropology covered 9 percent of review essays (slightly exceeding the percentage of regular articles). Overall, the number of reviews in political economy (20 percent) and political science/government (25 percent) reflects the large number of books that are published on these topics every year. Although the *LARR* editors do not try to redress disciplinary imbalances between book review essays and regular articles, we welcome the greater balance across disciplines that the review essays offer.

1. The all-time high was 118 in the mid-1990s, as reported by former Editor Gil Merkx (*LARR* 30, nos. 3, 5).

SUBMISSIONS BY COUNTRY

Perhaps the most dramatic change in submissions over the previous year was the more than doubling (to 38 percent) of paper submissions from scholars outside of the United States, and most of these were from Latin America. This is most encouraging, and although only 17 percent of articles published in vols. 39 and 40 came from outside the United States and Canada, this is almost double that of the previous year. The editors hope that the rate of published articles from Latin American scholars will continue to increase, but whatever happens, the rise in submissions is an important first step in including more scholarship from Latin America in *LARR*. Latin American scholars are reminded that *LARR* publishes in both Spanish and Portuguese, and readers may have noticed that starting in vol. 40, no. 1, *LARR* introduced a new section, "Translated Abstracts," in an effort to broaden access to a non-English-speaking readership.

In terms of the pattern of submissions by country content focus there was little change from 2002–2004, with the exception of Brazil, which dropped from 22 to 13 percent. Mexico (16 percent) remains important, as do papers with a general Latin American or comparative multiple-country focus (21 percent). The more discrete breakdown of data for country of focus that we now use shows that Central American countries are quite well represented (12 percent), and Argentina and Chile also figure prominently (10 and 6 percent respectively) in submissions.

ACCEPTANCE RATES

Turning to the analysis of the acceptance and rejection rates for 2004 (previous year's figures appear in brackets), of the 98 (100) articles submitted for consideration in 2004, 56 (53) were rejected after internal review, these being considered either unsuited to *LARR*'s multidisciplinary audience or, prima facie, judged unlikely to receive positive recommendations from a stringent external review. Thirty-nine (47) went out for external review, after which just under 70 percent were rejected, although 45 percent of these were encouraged to revise and resubmit. Of those subsequently resubmitted, 71 percent were accepted, although sometimes after a second round of revisions.

Thus, in 2004 the overall rejection rate of manuscripts (internal and external review combined) was 88 percent (almost the same as in 2003). While an overall 12 percent acceptance rate for manuscripts is not quite so fierce as the single-digit level of some of the leading disciplinary journals, *LARR* nevertheless continues to be one of the tougher journals in which to get one's article accepted. However, if we take account of the high rate of acceptance for manuscripts that are revised and resubmitted, the overall final acceptance rate rises to 20 percent.

But if we are tough, we also endeavor to be reasonably fast in terms of review time. Readers may have noticed that in vol. 39, no. 3, *LARR* introduced a manuscript timeline for regular articles indicating the dates of receipt and final decision(s). This makes *LARR*'s performance in speeding up the review process transparent, and fosters greater awareness of our success in making the review process expeditious. In 2004 the average turnaround time for rejection at the internal stage was 14 (13) calendar days—well inside the one-month target that we set ourselves when *LARR* moved to the University of Texas. And in 2004, of the 40 percent of submissions that went out to full external review, the average review time was 87 days (i.e., just under three months) from first receipt of the manuscript to a final decision letter being sent to the author. Outside of the medical and biological sciences, a turnaround time of less than three months is considered quite fast. Review times for manuscripts after R&R (revision and resubmission) are generally much shorter—often less than a month. Once accepted, a manuscript is normally allocated to the next issue being built, and therefore should appear within nine to twelve months. We avoid "queuing" manuscripts, since this would delay publication still further.

In short, although we have a stringent review process and relatively low acceptance rates, we seek to treat authors respectfully by offering a fair and timely reading of their work. *LARR*'s goal is to ensure that it continues to publish high-quality research, if possible from a broader base of Latin American-resident scholars, and to do so expeditiously.

JOURNAL IMPACT AND IMMEDIACY FACTORS

A frequent enquiry that I receive as Executive Editor is how is *LARR* viewed within the profession—whether as assessed by peer survey, or by "objective" indicators such as journal citations, and the journal's "impact" upon the research community. North American and European academe is increasingly driven by institutional and professional concerns for objective performance indicators. Technology and the broadening of electronic publications greatly enhance the capacity to obtain accurate citation measurement and "usage" (e.g., the number of "hits" or downloads registered in a given period). These data are becoming more widely available from commercial counters, and from electronic publishers and archivists such as JSTOR, which offers its journals (including *LARR*) very detailed reports and information about the numbers and specifics of individual articles that have been accessed online, and whether or not these were downloaded.

Such trends and demands will require greater transparency and agreement about the standards and measures of evaluation that are applied in the scaling and ranking (quality of publication venue, etc.) in the

future. Thus, an evaluation of a journal's impact is likely to be in the front-line of academic and peer evaluation.

LARR IN PEER REVIEW

In general *LARR* does quite well in peer review surveys. For example, in a random sample survey of 1400 political scientists from Ph.D. and non-Ph.D. granting institutions in 2002 published in *Political Science and Politics* (the American Political Science Association's principal outlet for research about the discipline), Garand and Giles (2003) ranked 115 journals, including many from area studies, and some from sociology and economics. The study measured subjective evaluations of the *quality* of each journal; the proportion of respondents familiar with each journal (i.e., *visibility*), together with journal *impact*. Overall, *LARR* is considered to be a very strong outlet among political scientists, with an average evaluation score for quality that ranked 15th (equal with *World Development*) and, although *LARR*'s visibility among political scientists is somewhat lower (14.5 percent, ranked 58th), its journal impact score (which also weights evaluations of quality) placed the journal 30th overall. No other area studies journal was ranked so high, or fell into the top 30 in terms of impact or average quality. Among scholars in the subfield of comparative politics, *LARR* is considered a top choice (ranked 5th out of 115). Moreover, in comparison with other journals that focus on Latin America, *LARR* received far and away the highest scores in all three areas (journal impact, quality, and visibility). Furthermore, *LARR* was ranked higher than all other area studies journals that focus on the Middle East, Africa, Central/East Europe, and Asia.

LARR'S IMPACT FACTOR AND CITATION INDICES

So far, so good, but as noted earlier there is a rising demand for systematic and ongoing objective indicators of a journal's quality and of its impact upon research and disciplinary development, beyond that of simple peer assessment. This demand for author and journal citation indices, and their effective measurement, has traditionally come from the fields of medical and natural sciences, where journals provide the primary—and almost exclusive—venue for research publication and where the turnaround time from submission to publication of articles is rapid, so that important findings reported at one moment in time are usually being cited in peer journals within a few months (the so-called "immediacy effect").

However, these objective assessments do not work as well in the social sciences, and especially in the humanities, since these disciplines often rely less heavily upon journals and more upon books and

monographs for reporting research findings; yet books and monographs are rarely included in citation counts. Nevertheless, as more humanities and social science journals enter the citation measurement fray, so we can also expect that measurement will become more sensitive to our disciplinary needs and characteristics, not least as more monographs and writings also become available in searchable electronic format.

Another problem, especially for Latin American studies, is that not all journals in any one field are systematically included in the computation of citation indices. For example, many of *LARR*'s "sister" journals are not included in the annual Science and Social Sciences Editions of the Journal Citation Report.[2,3] Thus, with important journals omitted, citation data suffer a substantial "undercount," and the data are likely to be incomplete and spotty. In some cases, too, there are major problems associated with the ways in which different types of articles are counted, making any comparison potentially even more misleading. That said, citation indices and journal impact factors are here to stay, and below I offer a brief overview of the principal measures in anticipation that, for *LARR* readers at least, forewarned may be also be forearmed.

THE JOURNAL CITATION REPORT[4]

Both the annual science and social sciences editions of the Journal Citation Report (JCR) produced by the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) have been considered the most important source for journal evaluation in the last thirty years, using citation data drawn from "over 7,000 of the world's most highly cited, peer-reviewed journals in approximately 200 disciplines" (Hane 2002, 1). As stated on its Home Page, the JCR "provides a systematic, objective way to determine the relative importance of journals within their subject categories" (ISI 2004a). The science edition covers about 5,700 leading international science journals from the ISI database, while the social sciences edition covers about 1,700 leading international social science journals. Here the focus will be upon the JCR social sciences edition, which attempts to show the relationship

2. In addition to *LARR* these include the *Journal of Latin American Studies* (*JLAS*), the *Journal of Latin American Politics and Society* (LAPS) and *Latin American Perspectives*. The *Bulletin of Latin American Research* (*BLAR*), the *Hispanic American Historical Review* (*HAHR*); the *European Review* and the *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* are not yet included.

3. See http://isi01.isiknowledge.com/portal.cgi/jcr/ Full Journal Titles, 2003 JCR Social Science Edition.(Subscription required for access.)

4. *LARR* Graduate Research Assistant Roberta Villalón researched the JCR and its applications to *LARR*.

between citing and cited journals in order to determine the relative importance of journals within subject categories. It provides a quantitative measure (albeit with caveats) that librarians usually recommend should only be taken into account as a complementary tool of traditional qualitative and subjective assessment of the journals, alongside peer surveys and specialists' opinions.

THE JOURNAL IMPACT FACTOR

One of the elements that has made the JCR such an authoritative index of journal success for decades has been the so-called Impact Factor (IF), which has been "the most widely used yardstick to express the impact, status, standing, renown, importance, prominence and influence" of a wide range of journals (Jacsó 2002).[5] According to the JCR, a journal's Impact Factor is "a measure of the frequency with which the *average number of articles* in a journal have been cited in a particular year. It is calculated by dividing the number of citations received by a journal in the previous two years by the number of articles published in the same two years in the journal (Jacsó 2002). Once calculated, this index is compared with other journals in the corresponding discipline or area. Taking the Social Sciences Journal Citation Report Ranking by Impact Factor, the top fifty social science journals are mostly psychiatry, psychology, and law journals. Indeed, the highest Impact Factor of the 2003 Edition was 10.625 for *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* followed by the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, (IF= 10.519); whereas all other journals ranked sixteenth or lower had an Impact Factor of 5 points or less.

Compared with these journals which often publish several issues a year and represent disciplines that rely almost exclusively upon journals as the medium for dissemination for scholarship and research or legal findings, area studies journals that publish three or four times a year are never likely to score as high; indeed their scores are usually below 1.0. *LARR* forms part of the "Area Studies Journals" cluster, and yet only Asian or African studies figure in the top thirteen of a total of

5. Two other indicators are often also used: the "immediacy effect" and the "cited half-life." Briefly, the immediacy effect seeks to show which are the "hottest journals" insofar as it gauges how often articles published in a particular journal are cited within the same year—in effect a journal's effectiveness in generating public reaction and citation of work pretty much as it comes straight off the press. The cited half-life measures the number of publication years from the current year that account for 50 percent of the total citations received—a figure that assists primarily in collection management and archiving decisions, since it shows those journals that have a short half-life (i.e., journals whose materials become obsolete quickly), compared with those that are likely to be accessed, and therefore need to be shelved a considerably longer period of time.

thirty-six area studies journals, with Latin American and European studies journals all ranked in lower positions.

In the case of the Latin American studies journals, taking those Latin American studies journals that are included, in 2002, *JLAS* ranked 19th, *Latin American Perspectives* 23rd, *LAPS* 24th, just above *LARR* (25th). However, this is somewhat misleading since the JCR counts *LARR*'s book review essays as regular articles, in effect halving its impact factor. But if book review essays are excluded from the calculations (as we argue they should be since the purpose is to comment thematically upon books published in the previous two or three years, rather than to report ongoing research findings that will be subsequently cited), then *LARR*'s impact factor invariably comes out more than double that of *LAPS* and *JLAS* respectively, with many more citations.[6]

The bottom line is that instruments designed to measure citations and impact factors do not yet work particularly well in our disciplinary and multi-disciplinary fields, nor are they appropriate for journals that are not oriented towards producing a high "immediacy effect," or for publications with longer half-life expectancy (see n. 5). That said, however, it will be increasingly important that *LARR* and other journals seek to ensure that forms of measurement be adopted that provide an objective as possible assessment of journal impact, and that they take adequate account of the differences in journal organization, publication schedules, and formats (electronic versus print copy, etc.). Moreover, as electronic publications spread, it will be important to ensure that citations in venues beyond journals (books and monographs) be adequately captured and reflected in measures of impact and quality. Not to do so will continue to exacerbate the underestimation of the important contribution and impact that area studies journals such as *LARR* make to the advancement and dissemination of scholarship.

Peter M. Ward
Executive Editor, March 2005

6. This has not always been the case: in 1998, for example, *LARR*'s JCR impact factor was twice that of subsequent years (0.897) since at that time book review essays were not included.

REFERENCES

Garand, James C., and Michael W. Giles
2002 "The Prestige (Factor) is Gone." *Information Today* 19 (5) (May).
2003 "Journals in the Discipline: A Report on a New Survey of Political Scientists." *Political Science and Politics* 36 (2):293-308 (April). Hane, P.

ISI
2004a *Journal Citation Reports*. Available online: http://www.isinet.com/products/evaltools/jcr/ (Accessed: February 2005)
2004b *ISI Web of Knowledge. ISI Journal Citation Reports. Online Help*. Available online: http://isi01.isiknowledge.com/portal.cgi/jcr/ (Accessed: February 2005).

Jacsó, P.
2000 "Savvy Searching". *Online Information Review* 24 (2):180-183.
2002 *The Mirage of Prestige*. Available online: http://www2.hawaii.edu/~jacso/extra/infotoday/prestige/mirage-prestige.htm (Accessed February 2005).

JCR
2002 *Journal Citation Reports (JCR). Social Sciences Edition*. CD-ROM.