A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

THIS HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL AND PRODUCTIVE YEAR AT LLILAS AS WE HAVE TAKEN UP the challenge of the University of Texas’s expressed commitment to developing closer institutional relations with Latin America in a broad range of fields. Mexico has figured prominently this last year, with President Powers’s visits to Mexico and the planned collaboration with Mexican universities in science and technology, business and education, as well as in the humanities and social sciences, which will culminate in a week of workshops in Mexico City in February 2008. The institute’s long-standing relations with Brazil also are being strengthened through cultural exchange programs in art, music, and the performing arts, and collaboration with Brazilian government research agencies over scientific and policy research. Perhaps the most significant trend, however, is the increasing amount of research collaboration that the institute and its faculty have throughout Latin America. The size of LLILAS and the number of its affiliated faculty enable the program to be truly Latin American in scope and diversity, as is seen in the student reports on study abroad and in the numerous conferences and workshops this past year and in the coming year on Mexico, Central America, and almost all the countries of South America.

The library, arts, and community-outreach interests portrayed in the last issue continue, as are shown by the reports on the Blanton’s involvement with the Biennial in Porto Alegre through the work of the Latin American art curator, Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro; the College of Fine Arts’s leasing a colonial mansion in Antigua, Guatemala, for Mayan studies and the forthcoming educational exchange visit of the musical and community development group, Didd, from Salvador in Brazil; and the donation to the Benson Latin American Collection of the NAFTA negotiations archive of the U.S.-Mexico business group, a donation that is the occasion for William Glade’s reflections on trade relations and “value added.”

We began the year with former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s inaugural lecture of the annual Lozano Long lectureship series, in which he reflects on the realities of government—also to be the topic of the second Lozano Long lectureship by President Ricardo Lagos of Chile this coming March. The Lagos lecture will be the keynote at a conference on the performance of left-leaning governments in Latin America, looking at the experiences of Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, and Brazil, the theme of Kurt Weyland’s article in this issue. This last year saw the continuation of our close inspection through conferences of the Mexican political process, a topic that is analyzed in Ken Greene’s article on candidates and voters in Mexico. The issues of activism and popular participation are the foci of three pieces in this issue: Peter Frumkin and Steven Smith discuss the emergence of civil society in Mexico; Rodrigo Sierra reflects on the relation between the environment and democracy; and Karen Engle covers the human rights project in Colombia. Human rights are an increasingly important concentration for both teaching and research in LLILAS, now strengthened by the appointment of Ariel Dulitzky of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS to LLILAS and to the Law School’s Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice.

As Nick Shumway pointed out in the last issue, area studies centers provide indispensable homes for the many scholarly and applied activities that gain insight from working in other cultures. Our challenge at LLILAS is to marshal the considerable financial resources needed for what is a feasible but ambitious program of study.

BRYAN R. ROBERTS, DIRECTOR
Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies