

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Let me extend an especially warm welcome as you open this tenth anniversary issue of *Portal*! This review, originally conceived by Carolyn Palaima and Virginia Hagerty, under LILAS Director Nick Shumway's watch, has become a LILAS Benson institution, providing a reprise of the year's activities, celebrating the breadth and depth of our intellectual community. This issue features work by faculty, students, alumni, and staff, and its contents reflect the interdisciplinary approach we embrace and promote.

As I write this welcome, in the final week of May 2015, two events are foremost in my mind. Our 2015 graduation took place on Friday, May 22, sending off another graduate cohort, with an unusually strong sense of unity, solidarity, and common purpose. Many from that cohort formed part of the UT contingent that attended the 2015 Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Congress in Puerto Rico the following week—the largest delegation from any single university in attendance. The fact that eight graduate students from LILAS had their papers accepted makes this especially impressive, and fitting for the finest Latin American studies program in the country.

This year will be remembered as a time of leadership transition in the library side of our organization. We were thrilled to welcome, early in 2015, our new Vice Provost and Director of UT Libraries, Dr. Lorraine Haricombe. Lorraine brings bold visionary leadership to UTL, with a special emphasis on the principles of open access to scholarly resources, and transformative connections between library professionals and our faculty's core pursuits of teaching and research. These priorities fit beautifully with the LILAS Benson partnership, for which Lorraine has demonstrated strong support. At around this same time, we were very pleased to confirm Benson curator Dr. Julianne Gilland as Associate Director for Scholarly Resources. Julianne brings to this job well-honed leadership skills, a deep commitment to the Benson's core mission, and great creativity in the challenge of adapting that mission to the dynamic conditions of twenty-first-century librarianship.

We will also remember this year for the achievement of our full complement of LILAS dual faculty members. Alfonso Gonzales (joint with Mexican American and Latina/o Studies), Marcelo Paixão (African and African Diaspora Studies), and Paola Canova (Anthropology) join our already stellar group of five—Daniel Fridman (Sociology), Lorraine Leu (Spanish and Portuguese), Carlos Ramos Scharrón (Geography and the Environment), Sergio Romero (Spanish

and Portuguese), and Lina del Castillo (History). These eight scholars have come on board as integral members of our organization, and will enrich and deepen the work of LILAS Benson with uniquely focused energies.

Scholarly Programs, a pillar in the LILAS Benson architecture, welcomes new leadership as well. Dr. Juliet Hooker, who dedicated five years of superb efforts to the job of Associate Director, returned to departmental duties, and Dr. Javier Auyero stepped forward to take her place. LILAS Benson is fortunate to have outstanding faculty members such as Hooker and Auyero as part of our team.

We take immense pride in the public programming—some of it highlighted in these pages—that LILAS Benson sponsors each year. Combining debate on urgent and high-profile current events with deep scholarly exchange, these programs focus on the university community with education of the broader public. We started this year, for example, with a "*foro urgente*" on the crisis of unaccompanied child migrants from the south; LILAS teamed up with Native American and Indigenous Studies in a year-long faculty seminar on tensions between indigenous territory and diaspora funded by the Mellon Foundation; poetry and the spoken word were on vibrant display at the annual ¡A Viva Voz! celebration of Latino arts and culture hosted at the Benson; and in public engagement, we completed another successful round of our signature Foodways of Mexico series. Stay tuned for another exciting year, under Javier Auyero's leadership, in 2015–16.

In closing, and following the theme of embracing change, we are pleased to announce that *Portal* will also undergo a transformation after this tenth edition. Beginning next year, you will find an increasing portion of *Portal* on the web, alongside additional articles and multimedia content. We owe special thanks to Susanna Sharpe and Teresa Wingfield for conceiving these plans, which are sure to raise LILAS Benson communications to new heights.

Enjoy reading, and be in touch with your news, thoughts, and feedback!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles R. Hale". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Charles R. Hale
Director, LILAS Benson