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Seeing the Sites

Latin American Studies Online: A Review of Free Peer-Reviewed Journals

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Abstract

Public services librarians seeking to assist researchers in Latin American studies are increasingly augmenting their searches to include online publications not generally indexed in typical library journal and newspaper databases. Allan Scherlen introduces us to this multifaceted world of Web publications in Latin American Studies, centering on two free online peer-reviewed journals that offer an alternative to the traditional subscription model of journal publishing in Latin American studies.

Introduction

Interest in Latin American studies, especially its culture and contemporary issues, continues to grow in the academic community. With that growth, serial resources, especially online resources, are becoming increasingly important to scholars working in the area. Seeking to provide students and scholars with ready access to the expanding array of academic journals in Latin American studies, librarians are increasingly directing users to electronic sources, such as e-journals, foreign news sites and online arts, and cultural publications. From popular magazines and commercial Web sites to more specialized scholarly e-journals, the task of sorting through the online serial literature of interest to Latin Americanists may at first seem daunting for one unaccustomed to these resources. Some are not in English and many may not be indexed in the standard library article and newspaper databases. This paper briefly outlines the topography of Latin American studies online serial literature and then focuses on an emerging class of free online peer-reviewed academic journals in Latin American studies, centering on two publications that currently exemplify this movement away from the traditional subscription model of scholarly communication.

Among the numerous Latin American academic journals currently being published, few are dedicated to providing all current and past content for no subscription charge; nevertheless, discussion continues in academia about ways of reducing the cost of distributing scholarly information and more freely promoting the growth and exchange of

human knowledge.[1.] Certainly low-cost, high-quality e-journals should be fostered and encouraged. This article illuminates and celebrates two emerging free online journals in the area of Latin American studies: DeRLAS: Delaware Review of Latin American Studies, a full-text, scholarly, peer-reviewed e-journal, and CiberLetras, Journal of Literary Criticism and Culture, an online literary journal devoted to the study of Hispanic literature and culture. With both English and Spanish language content, these e-journals are respected in the Latin American studies academic community. Both have shown their dedication to publishing free quality, peer-reviewed research online and have established track records of continuous publication for five years. While neither is currently listed in Ulrich's Periodical Directory or Serials Directory, both are cataloged in OCLC and have ISSNs.

Some General Background on Latin American Online Serial Literature

Trying to access full-text online journals in Latin American studies can be complex and confusing. Researchers can expect to utilize online journal aggregators, journal archival services, document delivery services, and individual publisher sites to obtain the necessary online content. For example, many important publications such as Journal of Latin American Studies and The NACLA Report on the Americas are available by subscription online directly from the publisher and/or via aggregator full-text databases such as InfoTrac OneFile and/or EBSCO's Academic Search Elite. Online journal archive services, such as JSTOR, provide access to the back file of some important titles such as Latin American Research Review, Latin American Perspectives, and Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs (the precursor to Latin American Politics and Society).[2.] Project Muse provides electronic access to a number of online Latin American studies related titles as well. [3.] The core journal, Bulletin of Latin American Research, can be accessed online through some subscription packets to ScienceDirect.

There is also a growing body of online Latin American newspapers and magazines. For example, the Latin American Network Information Center (LANIC) of the University of Texas lists eleven Mexican national newspapers online.[4.] Some Latin American publications have English language content, for example, The Tico Times of Costa Rica and Honduras This Week.[5. and 6.] Other Latin American sites dedicated to sharing cultural and historical information and a number of literary and creative arts e-journals are entirely in Spanish, such as El Quenepón from Puerto Rico.[7.] Furthermore, numerous sites with regional traveler information exist, such as Mexico Connect.[8.] Increasingly, a number of online Latino newsletters provide information for specific Latin American communities, such as Queondas.com, focused on immigrants to the United States from El Salvador.[9.] While many of these publications can be found by searching the Web, Latin Americanists generally utilize major Latin American Studies clearing house sites, such as that at LANIC. [10.]

Evaluating Online Latin Americanist Publications

The primary goal of this article is to inform librarians of examples of what may become a growing trend—free, online, scholarly publications in Latin American Studies run on modest budgets by small groups of dedicated scholars. Each review briefly outlines the background, mission, and scope of the publications, the niches they fill, intended

audience, and the spirit behind their efforts to survive. Also considered are graphic design qualities, aesthetic appeal of the sites, ease of navigation, and the integrity of the site with the query, Is it adequately administered, updated and maintained?

DeRLAS Background and Scope

DeRLAS: Delaware Review of Latin American Studies
<http://www.udel.edu/LASP/>, ISSN: 1536-1837.



DeRLAS: Delaware Review of Latin American Studies is one of the few online peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journals in Latin American Studies whose past and present content is available for free. Beginning such a publication was originally proposed by members of the University of Delaware Latin American Studies Program as a means for making the program better known both among scholars in the field and among potential students wishing to study Latin American Studies at the institution.[11.] It was the brainchild of two faculty at the University of Delaware, Norman Schwartz, in anthropology, and América Martínez, of foreign languages and literatures. Until very recently, both served as coeditors.[12.] For five years now, with an annual budget under a thousand dollars, the two editors, one student assistant, and review board readers have produced a respected scholarly publication. The journal continues to be free online. From time to time though, the possibility of charging for subscription has been discussed among the editors; however, there are no immediate plans either to issue a paper edition or to charge for the online subscription. The eleven-member board of editors who peer-review submissions include faculty from the University of Pittsburgh, George Washington University, and Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), Yucatan, Mexico, to name a few. [13.] Since the first issue, the editors of DeRLAS have invited Latin Americanists working in all disciplines to contribute. The journal frequently receives submissions from all over the world.[14.]

DeRLAS accepts submissions in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. These are all peer-reviewed by two to three scholars chosen for their expertise in the subject matter of the item submitted. Writers who submit material are asked to follow simple, clear submission guidelines described on the “Submissions Instructions” area of the site. To date, the journal has received submissions from writers in profession ranging from professors to military personnel. The journal is interdisciplinary; published articles have explored geography, anthropology, literature, history, and even genetics. The total number of hits to the site averages between 200 and 300 per month.[15.]

General Design and Navigation

The front page of DeRLAS has a simple, attractive design. The absence of images facilitates easy page loading. In a compact area at the top of the main page, against a subtle watermark background, the e-journal displays all its essential sections in no-nonsense text links. The three main areas of the site—Articles, Profiles, and Book Reviews—are set off from secondary or functional sections of the site. Those sections

include the editorial board Notes, Submission Instructions, and Connections to Latin American Studies Related Sites (see Figure 1).



Latin American Studies

Delaware Review of Latin American Studies
ISSN 1536-1837

Articles, Profiles, and Book Reviews -- Interviews and scholarly contributions to the field

Notes -- Editorial board comments

Editorial Board Members

Connections -- UD connections to Latin America

Submission Instructions

Conferences and Events -- Worldwide events of interest to Latinamericanists

The Delaware Review of Latin American Studies (DeRLAS) is a refereed scholarly journal on the Internet about all aspects of Latin American society, culture and history. We invite scholars interested in these subject to contribute their articles.

Articles must be unpublished material of high academic quality.

Please send your contribution as an e-mail attachment, or in a diskette, which may be Word or MacIntosh. An abstract of 50-100 words should be included. Articles may be in Spanish, Portuguese or English. See "Submission instructions" above.

Please send articles to:

Dr. Judy McInnis Foreign Languages & Literatures Dept. University of Delaware Newark, DE 19716 jmcinnis@udel.edu	Dr. Norman B. Schwartz Dept. of Anthropology University of Delaware Newark, DE 19716 nbsanth@udel.edu
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Figure 1. Delaware Review of Latin American Studies (DeRLAS) homepage.

Simply arranged navigation links beneath the banner of subsequent pages assist readers. The Articles pages contain navigation links back to Home and to the Profiles Index. The Profiles and Book Review sections both contain navigation to Home and to the Articles page. The secondary sections have various combinations of these navigation links beneath their banners, with emphases on sending readers to the articles and/or back to the homepage. All pages have a link at the bottom to the Latin American Studies Program at the University of Delaware, as well as a note of the last update.

Issues and Archives

The first issue of DeRLAS appeared in December 1999. It is published semiannually in the winter and summer. Each issue has typically contained two to three articles, a few book reviews, and an occasional profile of recent research by a Latin American scholar.

DeRLAS integrates access to its archive of past issues dating to December 1999 with access to the current issue on the same Articles Web page, placing the most current issue at the top of the list on the page. The Articles page displays the linked issue numbers (four volumes, with two issues each) and date of issue. The date of last update, located at the bottom of the Web page, is useful in ascertaining if material has been recently added or changed.

The articles in DeRLAS are laid out nicely on the page. The author's e-mail address is provided with a "mail to" link beneath the name. The article itself is preceded by an abstract in English and Spanish, as well as a linked list of sections of the article for easy navigation. Footnotes are linked to their corresponding references at the bottom of the article.

Searching and Indexing

To find articles on a particular topic in DeRLAS, one may either browse the issues or use a general Web search engine, such as Google.[16.] The site does not yet have its own internal search engine. Since the archives are still fairly small in number, browsing is not difficult; however, one cannot use any of the major indexing or abstracting services to find articles from DeRLAS. Searches for DeRLAS in The Handbook of Latin American Studies (HLAS Online), INFO LATINOAMERICA, Ingenta, GEOBASE, PAIS, MLA, or SocAbstracts were unsuccessful.[17., 18., 19. and 20.] The editors informed me, however, that they are pursuing plans to have the journal indexed in one or more of these resources. [21.]

Added Online Value

In addition to its current and past journal issues, DeRLAS provides other content expected of an online journal. These features include a list of upcoming conferences (under Conferences and Events) and a list of links to institutions or groups in Latin America that have some connection to programs at the University of Delaware (under the link Connections).

Site Maintenance

DeRLAS is functional, easily navigable, and well maintained. All links and images appear to work and the pages load quickly. The instructions for submissions are easy to find and follow, and the Web pages are free of clutter or excessive graphics. At present, the site is up-to-date.

CiberLetras Background and Scope

CiberLetras, Journal of Literary Criticism and Culture

<http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/>, ISSN: 1523-1720.

CiberLetras is a free online critical journal about the literature of Spain and Latin America. It publishes articles, reviews, and interviews in either Spanish or English. The site is based at and funded largely by Lehman College, City University of New York. The journal originated because of concern among some Latin Americanists about the lack of serious academic journals devoted to Spanish language literature freely available on the Internet.[22.] They were also interested in providing journal literature to students who could not afford a subscription to a literary journal. The two founders and coeditors of the e-journal are Cristina Arambel-Guiñazú of Lehman College and Susana Haydu of Yale University. They assembled an advisory committee of four scholars from Yale, La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and La Universidad de Buenos Aires and an editorial committee of twenty-five scholars representing institutions throughout the United States and Europe. The journal employs one staff member who handles the technical maintenance of the Web site. The modest cost of the operating the journal is absorbed by Lehman College.

CiberLetras accepts submissions in Spanish or English, which are read by the two editors. Those to be considered for publication are passed on to members of the editorial board for peer-review. Information on submissions can easily be found either on the About page linked from all the top banners and at the bottom of each issue page. The guidelines are clearly delineated and printable.

The readership is primarily from the United States, Latin America, Spain, and Canada. The editors are seeking ways to expand readership to Europe and other parts of the world. Since its founding in 1999, the site has been visited over 59,000 times, averaging between forty and eighty visitors per day.[23.] Guiñazú foresees a bright future for the journal because of generous support by her institution, the increasing number of submissions, and an expanding readership.[24.]

General Design and Navigation

The front page of CiberLetras is an attractive yet simple design, which easily loads and does not distract the reader with unnecessary graphics. The whole Web page sits upon a shaded virtual sheet of paper, aligned to the left of the screen, assuring consistent and pleasant viewing regardless of browser size or resolution. The elegant arrangement of the banner with title of the journal and four essential links (About, Home, Archives, and Links) is eye-catching, attractive, and useful on subsequent pages for navigation around the Web site (see Figure 2). The scrollable areas beneath the banner are laid out in two columns: a narrow descriptive column on the left containing the issue number with both a Spanish and English description of the journal's mission, and a wider main column on the right containing the theme of the current issue and a linked list of article titles.

CiberLetras

Revista de crítica literaria y de cultura - Journal of literary criticism and culture

[ABOUT](#) * [HOME](#) * [ARCHIVES](#) * [LINKS](#)

ISSN: 1523-1720
NUMERO/NUMBER 9

July 2003

¡Bienvenidos a CiberLetras!

Somos una revista electrónica de crítica dedicada a las literaturas de España y de Latinoamérica.

Este nuevo medio de comunicación comienza a surgir en nuestro mundo literario con gran éxito. Promete una difusión instantánea, gratuita y global. Crea, de este modo, una inmediatez con el lector que facilita la discusión y el intercambio de ideas.

Esperamos su colaboración y sugerencias y le agradecemos su interés en esta revista.

Welcome to CiberLetras!

We are a new electronic critical journal dedicated to the literatures of Spain and Latin America.

This new mode of communication is beginning to emerge in our literary world with great success. It

Sección especial: literatura y cultura argentinas de fin de siglo

- **María Amelia Arancet Ruda**
"Memorias" de Edgar Bayley: del invencionismo al objetivismo
- **M. Ana Diz**
La parca Futoransky. Sobre *La Parca enfrente*, de Luisa Futoransky
- **Gabriel Giorgi**
Sueños de exterminio: Perlongher
- **Graciela Gliemmo**
De la narrativa a la teoría: *Peligrosas palabras y Escritura y secreto* de Luisa Valenzuela
- **Hugo Hortiguera**
De la investigación periodística al potin: El relato documental argentino de fin de siglo
- **Oscar R. López**
Santa Evita: ¿Cartesianismo o apuesta por lo Real Maravilloso? Las buenas intenciones de Tomás Eloy Martínez
- **Marisa Pereyra**
Recontar la historia desde la censura: el modo utópico como estrategia de la nostalgia en Reina Roffé y Alina Diaconú
- **Sergio Waisman**
De la ciudad futura a la ciudad ausente: la textualización de Buenos Aires

Ensayos/Essays

- **Mayra E. Bonet**
Casa de campo de José Donoso: Un relato mítico, atemporal y cíclico
- **Laura Fernández**
La pampa de memoria. William H. Hudson
- **Nina Gerassi-Navarro**
Las autobiografías de Eva Perón y Victoria Ocampo: dos voces que se desdican
- **Sofía Kearns**
Una ruta hacia la conciencia feminista: la poesía de Gioconda Belli
- **María Cristina C. Mabrey**
Pilar Miró y Ricardo Franco: Un tributo póstumo a dos atrevidos cineastas del cine español de los setenta
- **Celina Manzoni**
Cartografías culturales: de la ciudad mítica a la ciudad puerca
- **Marisa Moyano**
Escritura, frontera y territorialización en la construcción de la

Figure 2. CiberLetras homepage.

Issues and Archives

CiberLetras is semiannual, publishing midwinter and midsummer. The first issue was August 1999, and the December 2003 issue is the tenth issue thus far. Each issue of CiberLetras usually collects a number of articles around a central theme. For example,

the first issue of CiberLetras was dedicated to Jorge Luis Borges, the second addressed possible consequences of the twenty-first century upon Hispanic literature and culture, and the third was dedicated the early twentieth century Argentine writer Roberto Arlt. Contributions on various topics not related to the issue's theme are also welcomed and included, such as essays, interviews, and reviews.

The linked articles are laid out as a full page for maximum use of space and easy printing. Each author's name beneath the title is linked with a "mail to" e-mail address. The footnotes within the text of each article are linked to the corresponding footnotes at the bottom of the article. The layout of the issue page is delineated in several sections: the main thematic articles, followed by essays, notes, interviews, and reviews.

Archives of past issues are easily found by following the Archives link found in the banner of all the pages. A simple listing of the eight volumes to date, with the title of the theme for that volume, links the reader to each past issue.

Searching and Indexing

CiberLetras was approached by producers of the MLA Bibliography (Modern Language Association) to have all their article indexes in that database. A recent search of articles from CiberLetras in the MLA Bibliography yielded 136 items. I was unable to find CiberLetras articles in other indexes, however, such as The Handbook of Latin American Studies (HLAS Online), INFO LATINOAMERICA, Ingenta, or Arts and Humanities Search.[25., 26., 27. and 28.] The journal is, on the other hand, listed in a number of Web directories, such as the Yahoo Directory of Literary Journals and at the LANIC directory mentioned above.[29. and 30.] It has no internal search engine, so without a citation, a visitor must browse the individual issues or rely on an external search engine to comb the site. [31.]

Site Maintenance

CiberLetras is well designed, attractive, and intuitively navigable. All links appear to function and the pages load quickly. Current and past articles, as well as the instructions for submissions, can easily be found. The Web pages at present are up-to-date and well maintained.

Added Online Value

CiberLetras has a link to Links in the banner on every page. This section is a work in progress, which currently only lists a few Web resources. The most important is the link to the Jorge Luis Borges Collection in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The editors plan to develop this section of the site in the future to provide links to various Web sites and other online publications related to Hispanic literature and culture.[32.]

Conclusions

DeRLAS and CiberLetras are outstanding examples of high-quality, low-cost academic journal publishing in Latin American studies. Despite complaints from the academic community about the high cost of journal publishing, small groups of dedicated scholars

have shown that respectable scholarly communication can be nurtured and facilitated by devoting time and effort into a Web publication project.

Are these grassroots, low-budget, academic journals just an anomaly of academic publishing or the precursors of a growing trend toward a more expanding, decentralized, and decommercialized academic serial literature? Before such a trend can take full flight, scholars must acknowledge the comparable worth of these journals to existing titles, and tenure decisions will have to include these publishing venues. Librarians are already realizing the benefit of including free Web journals in their online library catalogs. Furthermore, some indexing and abstracting services are beginning to acknowledge that these publications are an increasingly important element of scholarly communication and therefore must be included.

References

1. For examples of discussion on the high cost of academic journals, see Gloria S. Werner's article, "SPARC-Alternatives to High-Cost Journals," *American Libraries*, 31 (March 2000): 52, and Charles Goldsmith's "Publish or Perish, but at What Cost to Academia? World's Research Libraries Balk at High Price of Journal Subscriptions," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2001.
2. The volumes under the current title, *Latin American Politics and Society*, do not yet appear in JSTOR, as JSTOR coverage of the journal currently ends at 1999.
3. Currently, Project Muse provides access to *The Americas*, *CR: The New Centennial Review*, *Economia*, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *Hopscotch: A Cultural Review* (archive only), *Latin American Music Review*, *Latin American Research Review*, and *Nepantla: Views from South*.
4. "Newspapers in Latin America—Mexico—LANIC." <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/news/mexico/> (accessed October 23, 2003).
5. *The Tico Times*. <http://www.ticotimes.net/> (accessed October 23, 2003).
6. *Honduras This Week*. <http://www.marrder.com/htw/> (accessed October 23, 2003).
7. *El Quenepón*. <http://cuarto.quenepon.org/> (accessed October 23, 2003).
8. *Mexico Connect*. <http://www.mexconnect.com/> (accessed October 23, 2003).
9. *Presentación QueOndas*. http://www.queondas.com/aqui_estamos/present.htm (accessed October 23, 2003).

10. This Web site provides links to various types of information on Latin American countries, including local news and other publications. Its URL is <http://lanic.utexas.edu/> (accessed November 11, 2003).
11. Background information about DeRLAS's history and operation was courtesy of América Martínez, editor of DeRLAS from 1999 to 2003, interviewed October 30, 2003.
12. The current editors are Dr. Norman B. Schwartz and Dr. Judy McInnis, both of University of Delaware.
13. A complete list of the Board of Editors can be found in the Editor's Notes link at <http://www.udel.edu/LASP/notes.html> (accessed October 23, 2003).
14. Background information about DeRLAS was provided by América Martínez, interviewed October 30, 2003.
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20. Searches of GEOBASE, MLA, PAIS, and SocAbstracts were all subscription access via FirstSearch: <http://0-newfirstsearch.oclc.org.wncln.wncln.org:80/> (accessed November 2, 2003).
21. Interview with América Martínez, October 30, 2003.
22. Background information about CiberLetras was provided by Cristina Arambel-Guiñazú, interviewed October 30, 2003.
23. Web site statistics for CiberLetras provided by NetStats linked at the bottom of each article page.
24. Interview with Cristina Arambel-Guiñazú, October 30, 2003.
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27. Ingenta. <http://www.ingenta.com> (accessed November 2, 2003).

28. Searches of Arts and Humanities Search (ARSearch) were done through subscription access via FirstSearch: <http://0-newfirstsearch.oclc.org.wncln.wncln.org:80/> (accessed November 2, 2003).

29. “Yahoo Directory Literary Journals.” http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/News_and_Media/Journals/ (accessed October 30, 2003).

30. “Academic Journals in Latin America—Regional Journals—LANIC.” <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/journals/regional/> (accessed October 23, 2003).

31. Searches in Google of a number of phrases from article titles within CiberLetras linked successfully to the site.

32. Interview with Cristina Arambel-Guiñazú, October 30, 2003.

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2 Scherlen also joins Serials Review as co-editor of “The Balance Point.”