

EDITORS' COMMENTARY

Journal Report, 2003-2009

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This report documents the achievements and contributions of the journal, fall 2003 through summer 2009. It is intended to archive my institutional memory, assist past and potential contributors to the journal who need documentation about the journal's successes, inform the general readership of *Chicana/Latina Studies* about the role of the editor, and acknowledge the incoming lead editor, Josie Méndez-Negrete, who has received five years of generous support from the dean of the College of Education and Human Development, University of Texas at San Antonio. The report is divided into six sections: 1) planning and vision, 2) interdisciplinarity, 3) journal staff, 4) publication record, 5) circulation, and 6) academic evaluation. I close with observations about my six-year tenure as the lead editor of *Chicana/Latina Studies*.

Planning and Vision

At the 2003 MALCS mid-year meeting, the executive committee endorsed my proposal to take the official flagship journal of the organization out of hiatus. Originally housed at The Chicana/Latina Research Center, University of California, Davis, since 1996, the MALCS journal, officially named *Voces: A Journal of Chicana/Latina Studies*, had stopped publishing in 2001 after the publication of volume 3, a double issue. I gathered a group of Latina professors to discuss an initiative to house the journal at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), my institution. In my proposal to MALCS and LMU, I argued that a feminist organization could not allow the labor of past contributors and editors

to become obsolete. When MALCS made a commitment to publish a journal, it accepted the responsibility to value the labor of the largely women of color authors by sustaining the organization's official means of communication. That is, from the beginning, I envisioned a journal that was not only feminist in content but in practice. This feminist editorial practice was the premise of the journal under the management of Adaljiza Sosa-Riddell (1996-2001), who designed a collective of editors to lead *Voces*. My goal was to name this practice and expand it beyond the editorial process by making it come alive through solicitation, review, distribution, design, and mentorship activities.

Because I was a recently tenured and promoted faculty member in the Department of Chicana/o Studies, I knew that I needed the cultural capital of the senior Latina faculty who could help convince the academic vice-president to bring the journal to LMU. Alicia Partnoy (who later served as my coeditor for two years), Deena J. González, Magaly Lavandenz, and Rebeca Acevedo helped me present the formal proposal for support to the Office of Academic Affairs. Then academic vice-president Joseph Jabbra agreed to generously support *Chicana/Latina Studies (C/LS)* for a period of five years (2004-2009) with funds up to \$60,000. This generous financial support was supplemented by in-kind contributions from the Department of Chicana/o Studies at LMU. My home department provided office space and equipment as well as a significant increase in the federally funded student-worker budget, which allowed me to hire nearly a dozen students over the course of six years.

The reinaugural issue was scheduled for fall 2004, allowing me a year of consultation with other editors of academic journals, including Chon A. Noriega and Wendy L. Belcher, the editorial leadership of *Aztlán* and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press. They offered considerable mentorship and strategic support, including a copy of their system for data-

tracking and review coordination. Suzanne Oboler of *Latino Studies* advised me about selecting an editorial board and the use of a faculty *colectiva* at my institution. The LMU Colectiva proved invaluable. It was this body that discussed and implemented the structure, management, budget, and design of the journal. Although the membership changed as Latina faculty left or joined LMU, over ten faculty contributed to the LMU Colectiva during my tenure as lead editor. The LMU Colectiva was the managerial arm, which allowed me to use feminist leadership styles to guide administration. The journal's success could not have been possible without the Latina faculty who were dedicated to collective action. Their lasting contribution was their service as proofreaders and reviewers for manuscripts in their area of expertise, especially the faculty in Spanish and education.

Interdisciplinary Vision

As an interdisciplinary journal, the goal was to create a series of dialogues across multiple fields. Unlike most interdisciplinary journals, the articles in *C/LS* are internally interdisciplinary, engaging debates across a range of schools of thought. Visual arts and creative writing are vital to the staging of these dialogues. Under the leadership of Alicia Partnoy and then Tiffany Ana López, the journal transformed from a book with sections for articles, creative writing, commentary, and reviews—a structure that reinforced disciplinary boundaries—into a book that stages dialogues across disciplines and genres. Since volume 6, each issue of the journal has been organized into thematic sections that emerge from the work itself. In addition, the journal publishes visual art on the cover and within the pages of the book, and the visual works are also staged to critically engage the textual dialogues within the journal. Over the five-year period, fourteen visual artists were represented and fifty works of creative writing were published in the journal. Few journals in women's, feminist, or Chicano and Latino studies maintain this level and type of commitment to

the arts. Typically, the visual arts are meant as decoration, and the artist is not positioned as a contributor to the debates in the field. *Chicana/Latina Studies* is transforming what it means to be an interdisciplinary journal of note.

Journal Staff

It was the responsibility of the National Advisory Board, a body that consisted of the internationally recognized founding leadership and members of MALCS, to recommend topics, scholars, and feminist editorial policy to the co-editors of the journal. This group consisted of twelve members, including Alicia Partnoy, who joined at the completion of her editorship. The National Advisory Board solicited thirty of the 172 articles and creative works submitted to the journal. This type of proactive support for the journal is invaluable; however, I recommend that the journal staff more clearly define the duties of the board. Some board members consistently attended the annual summer institutes, some shared information about potential collaborations or projects of interest to MALCS, and some rapidly answered queries from the editors. Imagine the potential intellectual possibilities if all members of the National Advisory Board committed to proactive leadership. In addition, I observe that the five-year tenure is too long to sustain consistent activity within the board. Therefore, I recommend a three-year term that is staggered so that half of the members are consistently new to the group. Staggering also allows for institutional memory to be shared among the board. These recommendations are common practices among academic organizations, and since MALCS produces the only interdisciplinary journal of professional groups devoted to Chicana/o and Latina/o studies, it is imperative that we provide the highest standards in feminist editorial practices.

The reinaugural editorial board was charged with extensive duties beyond reviewing submissions. This body, which consisted of eighteen professors and independent scholars from across the United States, was responsible for creation

of the feminist editorial policy that guides the production process, including policy for focused issues, the mentorship program, the occasional sections, and reviewing books. Under my direction, this group crafted or approved the feminist editorial policy, which specifies how the journal interacts with contributors and potential contributors, how the editors share information about the production process, and how editors empower the journal staff to solicit material. In short, the feminist editorial policy determines the content of the journal is anti-sexist and feminist and that the management of the journal is also guided by non-hierarchical relationships. In addition, the feminist editorial policy reinforces the rigorous standards of the journal.

Because the group had extensive duties, the title of associate editors, rather than editorial board, more accurately described the members' service. I recommend that this group's name return to the conventional title since all major editorial policy has been determined, and the group can now focus on the traditional role of reviewing submissions and making recommendations to the editors. I also recommend that the editorial board serve for three years and completely change its membership every term. The labor and dedication required should not extend beyond three years. The recommendation emerges from the goal to ensure the highest level of commitment. If the organization is able to fund travel to the MALCS Summer Institute, then the editorial board may accumulate institutional knowledge and a staggered system would then be helpful to the journal.

C/LS worked with three English-language copyeditors, four proofreaders (including a volunteer, Mrs. Mary Catherine Davalos), and two Spanish-language copyeditors. Once we found the ideal copyeditor with volume 6, the copyediting process became more predictable and reliable. LMU generously supported internal copyediting for technical and publication fact checking,

and professors in the Spanish department provided Spanish-language proofreading.

Publication Record

LMU's generous support of *CLS* has allowed for significant and dramatic progress in the area of publication. During my tenure, five volumes were produced in a timely and professional manner; two each academic year with an average of 155 pages per issue. Each book contained academic articles, creative writing, commentary, reviews of books or videos, and the editors' introduction as well as visual art. Ashlee Goodwin, originally a student intern who after graduation continued to work for the journal, must be acknowledged for her graphic design based on the feminist and social justice mission of MALCS, and this concept is evident in the use of space, font, presentation of the contents, and the color band on the cover which suggest equity and collaboration. The book's use of space and graphic design is deliberately intended for easy photocopying, in order to assist in the circulation of ideas within educational settings.

Circulation

On the average, over 400 copies of each issue entered circulation, exceeding the original goal by one hundred copies per issue. This was accomplished even though the journal lacked a formal marketing strategy, the institutional subscriptions increased each year, and have yet to peak. Significantly, we reprinted 200 additional copies of the reinaugural issue, bringing the total circulation to 584 copies of the monograph that focused on the femicides in Juárez. On another level, articles, reviews, and creative works published in the journal have also been reprinted in course readers across the country. In less than five years, six reprints have been requested from MALCS, indicating the value of the journal. Each volume includes at least one article that has been reprinted in course readers at research universities, indicating the continuous influence of

the journal. Reprints signal the intellectual significance of a work as well as the rigor, timeliness, and value of the journal. Faculty at Arizona State University, UCLA, and Washington State University, to name a few institutions, are using the journal in the classroom. As the MALCS Executive Committee continues to strengthen the infrastructure of this volunteer organization, the circulation—including reprints—of the journal will improve dramatically, and therefore, the journal's future is critically tied to the membership and its growth over the next five years. In 2006, I estimated that 660 individual student memberships or 240 memberships at the level of mid-career professionals can allow the organization to achieve financial independence for the journal. Marketing, an original goal of the LMU Colectiva, will also improve circulation, and I recommend that cross-campus and inter-university efforts can help the journal achieve this goal.

The most significant development for circulation has been the journal's recently improved Internet presence. The volunteer labor of Dr. Lisa Justine Hernández (visiting faculty at LMU 2009-2010 and associate professor at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas) must be acknowledged for single-handedly providing MALCS with circulation via the Internet. Dr. Hernández created a searchable database of the journal, which allows Internet-users to locate and read all back issues. Following the feminist editorial policy of the journal, the journal's database is part of a larger project devoted to writings by women of color, which will expand and enhance our readership. I recommend that the journal become indexed and that the website is linked to other similar institutions and organizations in order to further increase its Internet presence. As a new member of the National Advisory Board, I am committed to getting the journal indexed by the major references.

Academic Evaluation

The rejection rate of the journal averaged over 70%, which is significantly

higher than most conventional discipline-based journals. Although our feminist vision calls us to transform higher education and to create our own criteria for evaluating the journal, the flagship publication of MALCS is clearly exceeding standards in higher education. I wish to draw attention to four major accomplishments of the journal. First, *Chicana/Latina Studies* has assisted all of its contributors, editors, and artists with promotion. Assistant professors who published or provided service to the journal were advanced and promoted to tenure; associate professors were promoted to full; and some contributors won grants or other positions of distinction because of their work in the journal. Second, the journal is not only transforming higher education, but it offers meaningful development for individual scholars. Through the Mentorship Program, a one-on-one editing initiative, and the annual Writing Workshops, the journal has assisted thirty-nine authors, primarily tenure-track faculty. Of these, six have published their work in the journal, and two have published elsewhere. Third, as noted, *C/LS is the only interdisciplinary flagship journal in the area of Latino and Chicano studies. No other interdisciplinary Latino studies journal is associated with or is the official publication of a professional organization.* Fourth, the publication record is reaching the arbitrary ten-year mark; many institutions use the decade as the point at which a journal's worth is determined. As it moves to the University of Texas at San Antonio, under the editorship of Josie Méndez-Negrete, *C/LS* has a firm foundation for continued growth and value. I hope my comments here provide authors, readers, and journal staff with evidence about the journal's value and critical importance that they can take back to their institutions.

Observations

When Tiffany Ana López joined me as coeditor, she transformed the fall-issue editors' commentary into a reflection about the MALCS Summer Institute. This is an important maneuver for a professional organization that does not, on principle,

reproduce the Key Note Address or President's Address typically presented at annual meetings. Rejecting those practices as hierarchical, the organization instead values multiple voices through three plenary sessions. As editors, López and I attempted to capture the threads and voices of the plenary sessions and panels at the annual summer institutes, which documents for the readership the important discussions and current debates in our field. Moreover, the fall-issue editors' commentary became the site through which the readership could learn about the dialogues, inspiring consistent participation in the summer institutes. It is a policy of the journal to delete from publication any acknowledgments to the editors or reviewers. Although the genuine thanks inspire each of us who works for the journal, the editors posit that it is our duty to provide such labor. Grateful words of praise are not required; therefore, rather than turn the journal into an altar to its editors, we have elected to quietly accept contributors' generous admirations. No one has registered a complaint, and this is remarkable for editors, reviewers, and authors willing to transform higher education by making it more accountable and inclusive. We know that academia is still a chilly climate. At the 2009 MALCS Summer Institute in Las Cruces, New Mexico, one site committee member noted that approximately one-third of the panels and workshops addressed the hostile atmosphere in higher education. Sadly, MALCS is still relevant, making the flagship journal vital to the academic success of Chicana and Latina studies, scholars who work in this area, and voices on the margins.

Respectfully submitted, Karen Mary Davalos, Editor (2003-2009)