

E-Journal Proliferation in Emerging Economies: the Case of Latin America

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Abstract

In recent years, Latin America has been one of the world's fastest areas of growth for Internet connectivity. While numerous studies have examined the factors contributing to this communications explosion, this paper concentrates upon one of its effects – the proliferation of freely-available, scholarly, peer-reviewed electronic journals in the fields of literary, cultural and area studies. This paper argues that in the field of Latin American studies, the majority of e-journals are being produced in Latin American countries, rather than in the US or the UK for example. It is Latin American academics, rather than their US and UK counterparts, who are embracing new technologies and the opportunities facilitated for effective dissemination of research.

In order to understand this marked move towards electronic scholarly journals, this paper outlines the state of Internet connectivity in the region, the financial and material constraints and other restrictions placed upon academic publication, and the lack of international visibility of Latin American scholarly print journals. While questions need to be addressed as to the future sustainability and preservation of these free journals, many of them managed by individual academics and funded by their universities, this paper argues that electronic publishing offers Latin American academics an unprecedented opportunity to disseminate their research. Furthermore, this model gives international academics immediate, free access to important research that is emerging from the continent, which is the subject of study. Such access has the potential to revolutionize the way that international academics approach Latin American studies and to encourage a greater degree of international academic debate.

E-Journal Proliferation in Emerging Economies: the Case of Latin America

Introduction

The debate surrounding the future of academic publishing and the proposed replacement of print journals with electronic versions is undoubtedly vibrant. Articles concerning the impact of the digital age on scholarly publications are numerous, wherein the advantages and disadvantages of electronic publishing in the face of spiralling journal costs are analysed and possible models for scholarly publishing reform are discussed.¹ Diverse models, which are already in place or are under consideration, offer alternatives to the traditional process of academics submitting papers to print journals to which their institutions must then subscribe. These models include publishers producing a subscription-based electronic version of their print journal; e-print repositories; authors posting their articles on their own Web sites; and peer-reviewed electronic-only journals (Kling, Spector and McKim, 2002). Evidently, this debate's momentum is unlikely to diminish: issues of storage and archiving, copyright, authorship, and editorial procedures, for example, need to be considered at length. Despite the potential benefits of publishing scholarly articles in an electronic format, it is perhaps fair to say that the tradition of academic print publication will not diminish in the immediate future. What this paper seeks to explore, in contrast, is the impact of electronic publishing in countries where the tradition of scholarly print publication, and to some extent the publishing industry in general, is significantly less strong. Using the continent of Latin America as a case study, this paper will seek to argue that in the absence of such a struggle between different publishing formats, as there exists in the UK, initiatives with electronic publishing are being allowed to flourish.

This paper begins by briefly sketching the current state of Internet connectivity in Latin America terms of a boom in recent years, the associated caveats, and cautious optimism for its future development. I then examine general aspects of print publishing in Latin America, with

particular consideration of the continent's journal publication and its failure to impact upon the international academic stage. Some of the facts regarding recent e-journal development across the continent will be outlined together with discussion of their increasing visibility, and the importance and relevance of a new wave of country-specific publications. The paper concludes with comments about the potential impact of such publications both for Latin American scholarship and for UK-based Latin Americanists.

Internet growth in Latin America

In recent years, Latin America has become one of the fastest areas of growth in the world in terms of establishing Internet connectivity and gaining Internet users (Everett, 1998; Stinson, 1998; Muñoz, 1999). Various data is available to support this claim, although the problematic nature of measuring Internet usage means that the accuracy of these statistics cannot be guaranteed. Nonetheless, a report in 2000 from the International Data Corporation for example surmised that 'the number of Internet users in Latin America will more than double from 13.3 million by year-end 2000 to 29.6 million by year-end 2003'.² A similar claim was made by Nazca Saatchi & Saatchi, the Latin American branch of the British advertising agency, who stated that 'the region's inhabitants are coming online at twice the rate of the rest of the world.' (Stinson, 1999). In addition, the company predicted that '34 million people in the region will have entered the electronic arena by the end of the decade.' Both national government and international initiatives, including investment from the World Bank, have been largely responsible for the region's boom in Internet growth which took place around the end of the last millennium. Such investment has resulted in the successful establishment of large national networks, including the pioneering Red Científica Peruana (RCP),³ Colombia's Red CETCOL, an extensive academic and communications network,⁴ and Argentina's online university (part of the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes) that serves students throughout the country, continent and as far as the US

and Japan. Virtual scholarly communication is thus gradually becoming a reality in certain Latin American countries.

However, tempering the optimistic and celebratory tone implicit in these reports on Latin America's Internet growth is the fact that these figures represent only about 2% of Latin America's entire population: in contrast around 60% of Americans are Internet users (Molloy, 2000). It must be appreciated that growth in Internet usage may indeed be a double-edged sword for developing countries. While a small percentage of individuals may now take advantage of access to the information super-highway and its corresponding educational benefits, those that are not connected are in danger of becoming even more isolated. Critics contest the pervasive optimistic view that Internet communications promote democracy and global civil society, claiming that such a view cannot be considered reality in present-day Latin America where the Internet has merely served to increase the social gap between 'information rich' and 'information poor'.⁵ Molloy cites the 1999 Human Development Report from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 1999), which notes that:

Those with income, education and – literally – connections have cheap and instantaneous access to information. The rest are left with uncertain, slow and costly access. When the people in these two worlds live and compete side by side, the advantage of being connected will overpower the marginal and the impoverished, cutting off their voices and concerns from the global conversation. (p.6)

Indeed, several commentators have noted that Internet users in the region tend to be urban, male, white, upper-class and proficient in English (Gómez, 2000).⁶ And while Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela and Chile, for example, have led the way in Internet connectivity and usage, the rest of the region remains largely untouched by the digital age. In her suggestive article, Molloy outlines the argument expounded by various critics that the Internet in Latin America is now an elite, commercial and entertainment phenomenon that has little impact on

social reform (Molloy, 2000). Nonetheless, she draws attention to ‘the fact that so much money is being invested actually creates space that has the potential for education, research and other socially beneficial purposes’ (Molloy, 2000) and indicates that within the work of Ricardo Gómez, to take one example, a staunch critic of any utopian vision of the Internet in Latin America, there is a degree of optimism. It is evident, Molloy suggests, that despite his criticism Gómez is confident about a positive involvement of the Internet. He imagines the Latin American Internet’s development into a space where ‘well-informed and organized users take advantage of the opportunities for relevant information exchange [...] and collective action for equality and social responsibility.’ (Gómez, 2000, p.77). This vision is arguably already becoming a reality as evidenced by the growing number of electronic scholarly journals in the humanities which are being produced in Latin America.

It is interesting to note that while significant research has been conducted into the investigation of science journals from Latin America, consideration of academic publications in the humanities is limited. It is this paper’s contention that, relatively speaking, scholarly work in the humanities – specifically Latin American studies – by Latin American academics is gaining greater visibility through publication in locally-produced e-journals.⁷

The Shift Towards Electronic Publishing

There are reasons other than the rapid growth of Internet usage to suggest why Latin America should be making a significant shift towards electronic publishing. Certain factors indicate an urgent need to find an alternative to print publication if Latin America is to assume a credible position in the international academic arena. Virginia Cano has conducted research into the international visibility and credibility of Latin American print journals, based upon the levels of ISSN assignment, listing of an editorial board, evidence of a peer-review process, outline of journal scope, and consequent eligibility for inclusion in international indices. Her work offers conclusive evidence that Latin American journals are failing to impact upon the international

academic stage (Cano, 1994; 1995).⁸ Although science journals formed the majority of Cano's sample for study, the principle of her findings can arguably be applied to the humanities. Cano found that a worrying number of Latin American journals did not have ISSN numbers, declaration of scope or evidence of peer review. Such erratic bibliographic control (Cano, 1994, p.55) precludes the inclusion of these journals in international indices and results in the work of Latin American academics remaining essentially invisible to international academia. Similarly Juan Voutssas and Ana María Cetto have noted that locally-produced journals are mainly distributed within the region of production itself with distribution outside the region representing an almost insignificant percentage (Voutssas and Cetto, 1996). Furthermore, even if Latin American journals are held in international libraries, such is the relative lack of paper quality and weakness of bindings that they are unlikely to weather regular usage (Grover, 1988).

Since academics publish both to disseminate their research and to gain scholarly recognition, few are likely to publish in journal with a limited audience such as those currently being printed in Latin America. The lack of international credibility and visibility of many a Latin American print journal problematizes their chance of attracting prestigious contributors and, correspondingly, the journal struggles to improve its status. Equally, the opportunities for Latin American academics to publish in internationally visible, cited and recognized journals may well be hindered by their own restricted access to such publications. High subscription costs and low library resources must result in Latin American institutions struggling to fill their shelves with the important periodicals, which in turn restrict the academics' access to the current major thinking within their field. At the same time, the limited access to prestigious journals and international scholarship that Latin America-based academics are granted obstructs their inclusion within major scholarly networks and, by association, the opportunities to publish in the major journals.

Further obstacles to academic research and its publication across Latin America are created by severe lack of funding to public universities. As Pablo Gentill points out, (Gentill,

2000), budget cuts and the failure to increase public funding for higher education have jeopardized the long-term agenda of research in Latin America. The booming student population and necessary increasing number of staff have not been matched by proportionately increasing budgets with the result that the salaries of academic personnel have plummeted. Furthermore, in order to cope with the growing student numbers, staff are now hired primarily to teach and are given few incentives to research. Gentill notes that the 1990s saw Latin American governments implement policies to cut back public spending on higher education in order to prioritize primary education funding: all this, concludes Gentill, has had a 'powerfully negative impact on the ability of public universities to function as research institutions' (Gentill, 2000). Correspondingly the support and development of print scholarly journals has hardly been a priority for the academic community in recent years.

In addition, various commentators have noted the publishing industry to be in a general state of decline in Latin America, deeply affected by military dictatorships and the failure of populist governments, coupled with huge external debt crises particularly in the 1980s. According to an report prepared for the US Office of Cultural Affairs, in Latin America 'ideological repression and censorship joined forces with sharp devaluations and surging inflation, soaring financial costs and profound changes in consumer preference and production and in the marketing and distribution modes implicit in the process of globalization' (Moneta, 2000). This report claims that trends in publishing in general have shifted away from the literary and the academic to focus on entertainment: critical essays have given way to self-help manuals and small scale publishers are being replaced by large publishing conglomerates who promote novelty items and products of mass consumption. Furthermore, the notion of a 'product cycle' is taking hold, wherein novelty and change are the order of the day, and genres and writers of a short shelf-life receive the greatest promotion. While these particular claims relate primarily to the commercial sector, its impact upon academic publishing surely cannot be ignored. If commercial publishing is suffering in Latin America, it is logical to assume that academic print

publishing is unlikely to be enjoying a boom. All this coupled with the relatively low upstart costs of electronic publishing and rapidity of production (Day, 1995), the move away from the print press, certainly in the case of Latin America, seems logical.⁹

The Proliferation of Latin American E-Journals

The claim of this paper is simple: in the field of Latin American and Hispanic studies, the majority of freely-available, scholarly electronic journals are being produced in Latin American countries. Notably, and as far as investigations to date can deduce, there are no electronic-only nor hybrid print-electronic journals for this subject being produced in the UK. While both Spain and the US are contributing to online scholarship in this field, it is to a surprisingly much lesser extent than the effort of some Latin American countries. This observation can be demonstrated by means of searching the Humbul Humanities Hub, which forms part of the UK's Resource Discovery Network (RDN). Humbul discovers, evaluates and catalogues online resources for learning, teaching and research in the humanities. At the time of writing, there were 44 online resources catalogued in Humbul that offered an electronic journal devoted to Latin American and Hispanic studies. Of these 45, 32 were online publications from Latin American countries. So although the US and UK clearly have a greater capacity to produce electronic journals, it is academics, editors and organizations from the developing countries who are making the best use of technology in an academic capacity and exploiting the opportunities it offers for dissemination of research. It could be argued that the incentive for Latin American e-publishing initiatives is perhaps far greater than in the US or the UK, due to reasons outlined above. However, advocates of electronic publishing in North America and the UK, for example, would perhaps disagree, claiming that here there is an equally pressing need for reform. Nonetheless, the result of this embrace of e-publishing is that Latin American scholarship is on the brink of receiving an unprecedented level of dissemination and visibility.

Some of these electronic publications referred to here are produced in association with particular academic bodies, such as the Academia Brasileira de Letras (the Brazilian Academy), who make available in electronic form their print peer-reviewed journal. This hybrid print-and-electronic format is certainly being undertaken outside of Latin America, but this fact does not deny the advantages offered by such a model. Furthermore, the Brazilian Academy's electronic version is still freely available. Other journals listed are the result of work by government-funded cultural initiatives, such as the journal *Ajos y zafiros* from the Centro Cultural Perú Virtual (Virtual Cultural Centre of Peru), or *La letra del escriba*, the critical journal of Cuban literature hosted by CubaLiteraria, the national Cuban literary portal. However, a significant number of the resources are electronic-only university or independent publications established by individual academics. Some receive financial support from universities (the University of Chile is particularly supportive of e-journals published by its various faculties), or from user-donations. As if in response to the suggestion by Sandra Whisler that 'if left to their own devices, scholars might construct an electronic world in which both publishers and librarians see their roles reduced or eliminated' (Whisler, 1997), academics and writers in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Chile, for example, have done precisely that by means of the creation of their own e-journals.

Scholarly Quality and Visibility

While the growth in the production of electronic journals is evident and certainly impressive, quality remains the key issue. In the wake of Cano's research, it is illuminating to monitor the level of ISSN assignment, evidence of peer-review, declaration of editorial board and journal scope in electronic journals, however relatively small this particular sample of humanities journals may be. Of the 32, 25 journals had ISSN numbers: this equates to 78% of the sample which is undoubtedly a significant figure.¹⁰ All journals, however, listed an editorial board, and outlined the peer-review process and journal scope. According to a report surveying the reactions

of US academics to e-journals (Sweeney, 2000), Dr John Cannon of the University of Nevada-Reno, and editor of the *Electronic Journal of Science Education*, commented that the peer-review process of e-journals was probably even more thorough than that of printed journals in order to establish the high standards necessary to convince the readership of their credibility. Dr Cannon noted that electronic publishing, therefore, could only strengthen the integrity of academic rigor. This may well be true for the Latin American e-publications, which have a greater incentive to impact upon the international field considering the relative invisibility of Latin American scholarship. I would suggest, therefore, that the editors and publishers of this new wave of Latin American scholarly publications are indeed implementing the minimum requirements for a publication to be credible and are working to raise their visibility.

At this nascent stage of e-journal development, an initiative such as Humbul provides an invaluable service in terms of awareness-raising and information dissemination crucial if electronic journals are to build a readership. In an article on ‘The Future of Electronic Journals’, Hal Varian warns that:

If we currently suffer from a glut of information, electronic publication will only make matters worse. Reduced cost of publication and dissemination is likely to make more and more material available. This isn’t necessarily bad, it simply means that the filtering tools will have to be improved (Varian, 1998).

The very fact that these publications have been included in the Humbul catalogue is indicative of their quality: resources must comply with a strict collection development policy that stipulates scholarly quality and interest, and relevance to the UK HE communities in particular. Such is the growing importance of the humanities e-journal that Humbul now conveniently lists, in a dedicated section, all the e-journals held in its database for each humanities subject area.¹¹ Bringing all the journals together in this way further facilitates access to these publications. In short, Humbul is the necessary filtering tool that Varian stipulates.

Performing an equally important task is the SciELO project, an initiative that originated in Brazil and that now operates out of Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela as well with plans existing to establish collections throughout Latin America. SciELO is an electronic library of predominantly scientific academic peer-reviewed journals but its collection of humanities journals is growing steadily. According to its mission statement, SciELO is:

a model for cooperative electronic publishing of scientific journals on the Internet. Especially conceived to meet the scientific communication needs of developing countries, particularly Latin America and the Caribbean countries, it provides an efficient way to assure universal visibility and accessibility to their scientific literature, contributing to overcome the phenomena known as 'lost science' (http://www.scielo.org/model_en.htm, accessed 17 August 2004).

While this model is clearly science-orientated, the humanities journals included within SciELO are significant contributions to the field, as will be discussed further below. Of the Latin American journals catalogued within Humbul, nine were made available through SciELO Brazil and Chile. Again, the fact that these journals are archived in SciELO is a guarantee of quality since journals must comply with a collection development policy. While it may be said that such a small number of humanities journals can only represent a very limited contribution to the field, I believe that they are representative of a growing trend towards online publishing in Latin America, in the area of Latin American studies, that is simply not rivalled by counterparts in the US and the UK for example, whose academics dominate the field.

The Impact of Latin American E-journals

The question of impact should now be considered. The field of Latin American studies is being developed primarily outside of the continent itself. The subject's main organization,

SLAS, is US-based; the leading gateway to information about Latin America, LANIC, is based at the University of Texas; and throughout the UK are influential, dedicated research centres, such as Manchester University's Centre for Latin American Cultural Studies. Clearly, there are various reasons to explain why the majority of work is undertaken in the US and the UK – in terms of funding and resources – but this question is beyond the scope of this paper. My suggestion is that the work of those based within the continent that is the subject of study receives considerably less attention than the work of those observers based elsewhere. The opportunities represented by the digital age and electronic publishing in particular have the potential to significantly redress this imbalance. While this paper may be accused of the same utopianism and idealism expressed by certain Internet commentators as mentioned earlier, electronic forms of communications offer Latin American scholars a means of overcoming the restrictions created by their countries' political and economic landscapes. In her article on 'The Internet, Development and Democratization in Latin America', Margaret Everett claims that 'at stake is the ability of Latin Americans and Latin American nations to represent themselves to the world rather than being defined primarily by foreign governments, agencies and media' (Everett, 1998). It is vital that the perspectives of academics based within the field are heard and acknowledged in order for Latin America not to become 'othered' by the perspectives of international critics. And since the opportunities for academics to publish in local print media and the potential for dissemination are extremely limited, alternatives have clearly had to be sought.

In recent years much work has been undertaken to assess the impact of open access electronic journals on scholarly communication, with citation counts being favoured as a way to measure this impact. A study based upon citation analysis which was published in 1996 found that e-journals had, at that time, little impact on scholarly communication (Harter and Kim, 1996). The study concluded that while the Internet is revolutionising informal communication, formal communication is yet to be significantly transformed by developments in technology.

However, more recent studies have found evidence to suggest that free online availability of journal articles can indeed increase impact (Lawrence, 2001; Harnad and Brody, 2004; Brody, Stamerjohanns, Harnad, Gingras, and Oppenheim, 2004; Antelman, 2004). These studies tend to discuss the impact of individual open access articles, (be they in open access journals or e-print (post-print) repositories), rather than individual journals and tend to focus primarily on the sciences. Kristin Antelman suggests that humanities scholars are yet to emulate scientists' growing preference for accessing research material online, and notes that 'a critical mass of open access articles is needed before authors will become accustomed to regularly looking for needed articles online but, when they do, the move away from print is irreversible' (Antelman, 2004, p.377).

Other studies are more cautious than those listed above. An investigation commissioned by Thomson ISI acknowledged that while open access journals may enjoy a wide readership in the future, at present little conclusive evidence can be found to suggest their substantial impact on international research (Testa and McVeigh, 2004). Again this research focused on science journals, a field in which citation counts are perceived - broadly but by no means universally - to be an accurate means of measuring impact. Research into the impact of open access electronic journals in the humanities, using citation analysis or otherwise, remains scant. Measuring impact of journals and journal articles using citation analysis is arguably more problematic and less meaningful for the humanities than it is for the sciences since the journal is not the primary form of humanities scholarly communication. Indeed, monographs and collections of critical essays are equally important forms of humanities research dissemination. Furthermore, there is the sense within the arts and humanities academic communities that citations are an inappropriate measure of impact of research. In order to justify the research funding granted to UK research councils, the UK government has ordered the councils to establish a range of indicators to demonstrate the strength of UK research, its international standing, and thus reassure the Treasury of its investment. The Office of Science and

Technology's decision to use citation data as an appropriate measure – a measure to be adopted by the UK science research councils – was soundly rejected by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (formerly the Arts and Humanities Research Board). Alternative measures have had to be sought, although the solution of creating a 'top ten' list of journals has also met with outrage from the academics.¹² This solution would count the number of articles from UK academics appearing in the 'top ten' to measure the impact of UK research. Opponents of this solution argue that it would result in the destruction of many research careers: with so many academics competing to publish in just a few noteworthy journals, many will undoubtedly be unsuccessful and risk being denied future funding, despite having published in quality journals that do not appear in the top ten. Equally, it is argued that such an elite list could not possibly accommodate the diversity of research within particular disciplines: indeed, more specialist journals or new journals trying to gain prominence could become obsolete.

Those working within more eclectic areas of the arts and humanities may, because of the nature of their field, not be regularly cited despite the importance of their work. Citation analysis cannot account for especially new or unusual avenues of research: published research in the field of, for example, contemporary Paraguayan poetry may not be widely cited since this could be the work of the sole scholar involved in this area. This is not to deny the quality and importance of the work. Indeed, the number of times an article is cited is by no means an indication of its quality, as reiterated interestingly in a study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, which argues that 'the assumption of a positive link between citations and quality is ill-founded, in that we cite articles for diverse reasons, including to refer to research judged suspect or poor' (Walter, Bloch, Hunt and Fisher, 2003).

All of this makes assessing the impact of these Latin American e-journals problematic. What is more, the relative infancy of many of the e-journals considered means that it is perhaps too early to tell whether any impact has been made. If we were to attempt a citation count as a measure of impact, despite this method's drawbacks, our study would be impeded by the fact that

of the 32 Latin American e-journals in our sample, only 2 were listed in ISI Web of Science (this problem is also highlighted in Walter, Block, Hunt and Fisher, 2003). A similar and rather superficial attempt at citation analysis may be conducted using Google Scholar, which could offer some initial suggestions as to the reception of these new journals. Of the 32 journals, 11 were listed by Google Scholar as having been cited in other scholarly articles. Of these 11, only 3 journals - *Estudios filológicos*, *Revista brasileira de história* and *Revista estudos feministas* - could be said to have received a notable number of citations (25, 41 and 58 respectively). Importantly, all three journals are archived in SciELO and have both national and international foci, thus able to attract a wider readership than some of the more eclectic journals. It is clear that the 3 journals listed above are having some impact on international scholarship, but this citation count approach cannot offer any evidence of impact from the rest of the sample, nor can it be considered a meaningful measure of impact in this particular field.

It may be more useful therefore to point to the actual contents of these journals in order to predict their potential impact upon scholarship. Of course, any future impact is dependent on a radical change of culture within the humanities communities, as noted by Antelman. Awareness needs to be raised of the existence and development of these journals, which can be achieved by their being indexed in databases such as the MLA Bibliography, and critical evaluation conducted by services such as Humbul. A cursory examination of the contents of these Latin American e-journals does reveal their importance and relevance to UK scholarship, for example: study of the work of canonical authors (such as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa and Isabel Allende) features heavily, who form the backbone to UK undergraduate curricula and remain popular areas of research. What is more, these journals branch into new, relatively unexplored territories (such as Bolivian women writers or aspects of nationalism in Chicano literature). They frequently feature critical studies of the work of artists and writers who are less well-known outside of Latin America, thereby introducing new areas of artistic and literary endeavour to the international academic world. This in turn broadens the scope of the subject

area and invites innovation. Some journals in particular stand out. The aforementioned *Estudios filológicos*, from the Austral University of Chile, is a ground-breaking publication that focuses on such eclectic areas as grammatical forms in nineteenth century Uruguayan Spanish and historical linguistic analysis of texts authored by Chilean women in the sixteenth century.

Sincronía, from the University of Guadalajara, is one of the more established electronic scholarly journals and is extremely impressive. Issues are published quarterly and it has been online since 1996. Its focus coincides considerably with work being undertaken in Latin American cultural studies in both the US and the UK, featuring articles on, for example, cultural and democracy in twenty-first century Mexico. Furthermore, these journals' highly individual and country-specific focus works against the prevalent Western view of Latin America as a homogenous whole. *Ajos y zafiros*, for example, focuses primarily on Peruvian literature and culture; *Literatura y lingüística*, has a marked Chilean emphasis; *La letra del escriba* focuses solely on Cuba. Importantly, such publications highlight each country's uniqueness and encourage consideration of their culture, language, politics and history as distinct from the rest of the continent.

So, not only do these new e-journals represent a real means for Latin Americans to disseminate their research, but the open access nature of these journals connotes an unprecedented opportunity for UK academics to engage with Latin American scholarship. The obstacles facing UK Latin Americanists created by the very geographical distance are gradually being overcome as scholarship goes online. Together with the e-journal, vast and freely available online archives, such as Memoria Chilena and Apuntes del Perú, allow the UK-based Latin Americanist to conduct a good deal of their research successfully without having to travel to the continent every summer vacation. Of course, this should not imply an end to fieldwork but the new opportunities afforded by technology deserve recognition. Free access to the work of those based in the field will only result in a richer, deeper understanding of the subject of study. The impact of these journals is at present difficult to measure, and it is clear that awareness amongst Latin Americanists of these journals needs to be raised in order for a significant impact to be

made. One conclusion to be drawn at this early stage is that repositories such as SciELO are instrumental in achieving a readership and impact. Similar initiatives to SciELO include Red AlyC <http://www.redalyc.com>, developed by the Universidad Autónoma de Estado de México, and E-Journal <http://www.ejournal.unam.mx> from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma of Mexico. Both provide freely downloadable PDFs of print journals or act as a repository for electronic-only journals, and are ground-breaking in their preservation and dissemination of quality, scholarly e-journals. It is perhaps with these repositories where the sustainable and successful future of Latin American e-journals lies.

Conclusion

At present, the proliferation of freely-available electronic journals in Latin America is yet to be significantly affected by cost and archiving issues. Certain universities, academics and editors are currently riding the wave of new technology and are enthusiastically exploiting its revolutionary opportunities for scholarly communication. The sustainability of these university department and independently-run journals is clearly a future concern in terms of securing adequate financial support and the preservation of material as the journals grow in size and status, and the editorial and production workload increases. Soon, initiatives such as SciELO will become indispensable and effective models for e-publishing will be sought. It is questionable whether the current collection of Latin American e-journals will be able to maintain its present non-commercial and, what may be considered idealistic, free-access and free-submission model. For the time being, however, international academics should welcome this new opportunity to access Latin American scholarship. Unlimited free access to the work of those based in the region has the potential to revolutionize the way that international academics approach Latin American studies, and will certainly encourage a greater degree of international scholarly debate.

While emerging economies such as those in Latin America frequently look to the so-called first world for models for national development, it could be said that UK/US debates about electronic scholarly publishing might benefit from closer observation of the proliferation of e-

journals in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, for it is here that we can find real innovation in the dissemination of scholarship.

Notes

¹ This debate has been in circulation since the mid 1990s. See Ignacio Muñoz Delaunoy's comprehensive bibliography of articles related to electronic publishing for a sense of the scope of the debate, and *The Journal of Electronic Publishing*, <http://www.press.umich.edu/jep>, for one of the epicentres of research into the future and impact of electronic publishing, with a particularly scholarly emphasis.

² A review of this report was published by PR Newswire, 16 March 2000 and may be accessed online via Molly Molloy's Internet Resources for Latin America, http://lib.nmsu.edu/subject/bord/laguia/IDC_lanews.txt (accessed 15 November 2004).

³ The RCP, <http://www.rcp.net.pe>, which was established in 1991 and is funded by foreign grants and subscriber fees, is one of the most successful networks in Latin America, providing Internet and World Wide Web access to individuals and organizations across Peru (Everett, 2000).

⁴ See Carty, 1997 for an in-depth analysis of Red CETCOL.

⁵ See Everett, 2000 for detailed analysis of the barriers to Internet development in Latin America and the resultant social inequalities exacerbated as the continent goes online.

⁶ Molly Molloy draws upon the work of Ricardo Gómez in her draft article, 'Background on the Development of the Internet in Latin America'

http://lib.nmsu.edu/subject/bord/laguia/larr_netdev.html (accessed 24 November 2004), which informs much of this paper. I thank Ms Molloy for granting permission to cite her article, and for reading and commenting on an initial draft of this paper.

⁷ The electronic journals discussed in this paper are from the field of Latin American Studies in particular: that is, the study of the literature, culture, politics, society, history and language of Latin America. There are undoubtedly other Latin American e-journals from other humanities fields but the scope of this paper is by necessity constricted to consideration of one particular subject area.

⁸ I thank Dr Cano for giving me access to her research and for her generous advice during the initial stages of this paper.

⁹ There is still much debate over the presumed lower cost of e-journals to print journals: there is the sense that the real cost of producing scholarly journals is absorbed by the peer-review and editorial

process which must be undertaken equally for electronic publications. Andrew Odlyzko has written extensively on the issue of costing and his article, *The Economics of Electronic Publishing*, in particular offers an informative breakdown of the individual costs and explores the possibilities of cost-saving. It should be noted that in 1998, Odlyzko estimated that an article produced in an e-journal would cost \$300 to \$1000 compared to the \$4000 per article charged by publishers.

¹⁰ In Cano's sample, only 42% of the Latin American journals had an ISSN number, compared to 83% of US/UK journals.

¹¹ See <http://www.humbul.ac.uk/about/colldev.html> for Humbul's collection development policy, and <http://www.humbul.ac.uk/ejournals> for the subject-by-subject list of e-journals in the catalogue.

E-journals for Latin American studies may be accessed here

<http://www.humbul.ac.uk/ejournals/list.php?code=ejournal&sub=latin-american>.

¹² http://www.thes.co.uk/current_edition/story.aspx?story_id=2019105 (accessed 2 March 2005).

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