**SLAS President’s AGM Report
Jens R Hentschke (Newcastle) at Glasgow University in April 2017**

It is a pleasure to be here at Glasgow University, and I would like to welcome you to the AGM. This is the forum at which SLAS officers and BLAR editors report about the health and development of our Society.

As many of you will remember, we had a very successful conference at Liverpool last year, and I would like to thank again Marieke Riethoff and her team. As with Aberdeen, I wrote to the VC, Dean, and Head of School to express our gratitude for the support we received from the host institution. SLAS always hopes that such an international conference also highlights the significance of Latin American Studies.

This is the third time since 2011 that we have come to Scotland for our annual meeting, and it is the second time that Glasgow acts as its host. When SLAS convened here in 1991, David Stansfield was its President, and it is a great pleasure to welcome him today.

This University has a long tradition in Latin American Studies. It was home to one of the five Parry Institutes of the 1960s, and today two of the conference organisers, Mo Hume and Eamon McCarthy, coordinate the Glasgow Latin American Research Network. I would like to thank them, as well as Karen Siegel and Beth Pearson, for organising the 2017 conference and making it such an inspiring and enjoyable event.

We are delighted that Sonia Álvarez, a former president of LASA and leading authority on social movements and protest politics, comparative and transnational feminisms, and Latin American politics and cultures has accepted our invitation to deliver the keynote address. Her research fields figure prominently on this year’s conference programme, which consists of 52 panels with 189 presenters, discussants, and convenors who have travelled to Glasgow from 10 European and 8 Latin American countries, but also the US, Canada, South Korea, and Australia. Thanks to all of you for enriching our academic exchanges.

We are pleased to report that SLAS has made significant progress over the past year. Our finances are healthier than ever. Revenues come primarily from the sales of our journal, the Bulletin of Latin American Research, published by Wiley Blackwell. Including an imminent payment of another £25,000, which we expect early next week, we will have significantly increased our reserves. The Society owes a debt of gratitude to John Fisher. Our partnership with Wiley has been productive and collegial. In March I signed another five-year contract, starting in 2018. Wiley’s new offer includes a further increase in our share of profits. The publisher will continue to manage subscriptions to the journal, that is, the membership fee, and these have remained extremely moderate compared to other learned societies. From next year the annual book will be replaced by a fifth issue of BLAR, thereby distinguishing the journal from its competitors. Now members can opt for an online version, though, for the time being, there is no intention to publish the journal online only. First-named authors will be allowed to share read-only options of their articles with up to 100 colleagues. Wiley will also invest in an app that would be able to host the SLAS newsletter. Feared threats from the government’s Open Access agenda have not materialised; in 2016, only one article was published this way. Therefore, Wiley could lower author-processing fees from £3,000 to £2,500, without a risk of driving sales figures down. Indeed, these remain impressive. In 2016, 4,086 institutions had paid access to BLAR, with a slight decrease of subscriptions in Europe and Japan, but an increase in Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, India, and Brazil. Another 7,766 institutions in the developing world received free or low-cost access, 52 percent more than a year before. In December, our contact Gemma Johnson left Wiley; it was an absolute pleasure to work with her over 14 years and we expressed our gratitude to her. We have already formed an excellent relationship with Gemma’s replacement, Lizzie Brophy.

The SLAS committee wishes to thank Jasmine Gideon and the other BLAR editors for their outstanding work. The fact that three other publishers have approached us over the past two years to take over the journal speaks for its quality. Also, time and again authors have praised the commitment and efficiency of the editorial assistant, Ken Lestrange. I wrote to Ken and thanked him on behalf of the committee. As I reported last year, SLAS and the editors have decided to create a prize for the best article published in the journal in the preceding calendar year. Lucy Taylor will announce the 2016 winner in her report, and then Sarah Bowskill will reveal the name of the PGR student who has won SLAS’s Harold Blakemore Prize and whose impressive essay will therefore be considered for publication in BLAR.

We have already secured conference venues for the next two years. In 2018, we will meet at Southampton’s campus in historical Winchester, and our warm thanks go to Ana Margheritis for all her hard work in preparing this meeting and to the School of Social Sciences of her university for funding a reception and the keynote speaker, Carmen Diana Deere from the University of Florida. This will be the third time in its history that SLAS convenes at Southampton, and it will be the second time that this meeting follows the Glasgow conference. We will also be in safe hands in 2019, when Clara Garivelli and Emma Staniland will invite us to Leicester. All good things come in three: first Richard III, then Leicester FC, and eventually SLAS.

The website has remained an important tool of communication. Since our last meeting it has had 16,847 visits with 30,565 page views. As can be expected, most users, 43 percent, are based in the UK, followed by the US and Russia, with almost the same number of visits, Brazil, and Argentina. After the reconstruction of SLAS’s impressive grant history and the approval of the updated Constitution and Standing Orders by the last AGM, we have continued to invest much time and effort in overhauling the website with the help of our freelance web designer Christy Palmer, who also edits the much appreciated monthly newsletter. We cannot thank Christy enough for all her work, advice, and patience. This year we created a ‘History of SLAS’ site, which includes the original minutes of the meetings of the Latin American Group, the Society’s predecessor, the chairman’s statement on the first SLAS meeting in 1964, the names of all founding members and past presidents, a list of conference venues, and links to some studies on SLAS and developments in our fields. Warm thanks go in particular to Rory Miller and David Preston, but also to eight former presidents who enthusiastically helped with this overdue attempt to preserve our institutional memory.

The support of our postgraduate community, which runs its own association, PILAS, remains one of the main objectives of the Society. Last year’s PILAS conference at Newcastle proved to be a resounding success, as I was able to observe first-hand, and we wish to thank the organising team headed by Laura Sariego-Kluge and Diana Morales Arcila. After this meeting, the presidency of PILAS passed to Lourdes Parra Lazcano who runs an enthusiastic Leeds and Sheffield-based committee. It has already organised a workshop on ‘Fieldwork in Latin America’ at Sheffield, the annual ‘PILAS at the British Library’ event, for which SLAS enjoys the support of the Advisory Council on Latin American and Iberian Resources, and the second ‘PILAS@SLAS’ workshop at this Glasgow meeting. Currently, it is preparing the 2017 conference at Leeds, titled ‘Discontinuities and Resistance in Latin America’. PILAS expects about 100 participants from 12 countries and 16 disciplines. Eduardo Posada Carbó from Oxford, Julio Ortega from Brown, and Manuel Barcia from the host university will present keynotes, and the programme will also include a workshop on ‘New Directions in Latin American Studies’ and a film screening and master-class with prize-winning journalist Patricia Simón. PILAS’s membership has risen from 409 to 459 members, its Facebook community from 560 to 619, and its Twitter following from 395 to 619. SLAS congratulates PILAS on this success. Currently PILAS does not charge a membership fee, but its committee has strongly encouraged affiliates to join SLAS. Given the substantive financial support the Society provides to PILAS and postgraduates in general, about one fifth of its annual budget, the SLAS committee has decided to end free membership of PILAS; from September 2017, membership will be handled through SLAS/Wiley.

When we recently looked at the development of SLAS’s membership, we realised that it always peaks in December, then halves in January, and eventually increases steadily. It seems that a large percentage of members renew their subscription late. If we compare the figures for December 2015, shortly after the all-time peak at the golden jubilee conference in London, and December 2016, 348, we have lost 63 affiliates. We have noticed that many participants at conferences, 61 at this Glasgow meeting, pay the higher non-member fee, possibly to get a full refund from their institutions. Others may return to their country of origin after the meeting or postgraduate studies and not renew their membership. We hope that the launch of a fifth issue of BLAR will make membership of the Society even more attractive. Indeed, hundreds of individual subscribers still pay a higher fee than they would as affiliates.

We have continued fostering collaboration with sister associations in continental Europe and beyond, an objective that, after the Brexit referendum, has become even more important. Since the London conference, we have remained in contact with the Dutch NALACS and German ADLAF, and last year NorLArnet showcased research in Norway. We are delighted that Peter Birle, the Director of Research of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin, Europe’s biggest specialist library on Latin America, has accepted our invitation to Glasgow. In January 2017, Vice President David Wood attended a meeting in Milan organised by the Italian Latin Americanists, and I have meanwhile also approached our French, Spanish, and US colleagues and hope that some might think of joining SLAS. The Society is now also a partner of CLACSO and has established links to LSE’s Global South Forum. In this context, I would like to acknowledge the generous support SLAS has received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office over the years.

The last five months have been extremely busy, since learned societies are very keen to play an active role in shaping the next Research Excellence Framework. As President, I attended the meetings of the Arts and Humanities Alliance, comprising of more than 40 subject associations, and a one-day symposium, which the Royal Historical Society, the AHA, and the University of London’s School of Advanced Studies organised on 12 December in order to discuss Lord Stern’s recommendations. SLAS also had input into UK CASA’s response to HEFCE, following a meeting with the funding council’s senior policy advisers on 2 March. In addition, our Society gave its very own response. Without going into detail, all subject associations pleaded strongly for a triple- to quadruple weighting of ‘big monographs’, against non-portability of publications, and against the mapping of submissions onto teaching-focused HESA cost centres, which could make interdisciplinary research invisible.

Finally, I can report that SLAS’s bid to take over the Standing Conference of Centres of Latin American Studies in the UK has been successful. The Chair of this forum will now rotate with the office of Past President of SLAS. At the October meeting, we thanked Maxine Molyneux for her work over the past seven years and approved a new Steering Group, consisting of Linda Newson, Guillermo Olivera, Diego Sánchez Ancochea, Caroline Williams, and myself. We have started drafting a new Constitution and discussing the distinct identity of the Standing Conference.

This has been my last report as President, and I am pleased to hand over the Society to my soon-to-be-announced successor on solid foundations. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work for SLAS and I would like to thank all committee members for their unwavering support, much-appreciated wisdom, and good spirit. Caroline Williams and Ana Dinerstein will leave the committee, and we thank them and wish them well.

Thanks to all of you for coming and enjoy the rest of the programme.

Jens R Hentschke