**SILAS Executive Report 2017**

This Executive report covers the period from the last SILAS AGM on 27 June 2015, at the 5th SILAS Conference at UCC, Ireland. The SILAS network of researchers, students and independent scholars continues to benefit from the generous work of volunteers among the Executive committee. As president, I thank them on behalf of the membership for their support and enthusiasm over the last two years, without which, the solid progress we have made in advancing the aims of the society would not have been possible. Special thanks are due to Jean-Phillippe Imbert and Steve C. Gooch who are finishing their term on the SILAS executive.

**2015**

The conference “*Entangled Histories and Cultures: Re-mapping Diasporas and Migrations between Ireland and Latin America*” was hosted by the Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies (SPLAS) at UCC and supported by the Embassy of the Argentine Republic and the Mexican Embassy in Ireland.

**2016**

Building on a very successful conference, SILAS and SPLAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the President of UCC on 28th April 2016. To mark the occasion Professor Peadar Kirby gave a stimulating lecture on the study of Latin America in Irish Higher Education to a very engaged audience. Professor Nuala Finnegan, Head of the Department of SPLAS, led the organization of this inaugural annual lecture and prepared the MOU. We are delighted that Nuala is representing UCC on the SILAS executive. SILAS looks forward to a mutually rewarding exchange of resources in the areas of expanding research partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration that also facilitates student mobility.

**University College Cork** maintains extensive engagement with Latin America and has signed agreements with universities including the University of São Paulo; the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico; Universidad Nacional de Colombia; and Universidad de La Habana. In addition, UCC took part in State visits to Brazil (2012), Mexico (2013), Colombia, Peru and Cuba (2016). UCC is a partner in the AMIDILA or Academic Mobility and Inclusive Development in Latin America, an Erasmus mundus programme (2013-2016) that has facilitated staff and student mobility exchanges between Cork and Central America including Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. UCC, through Erasmus plus, has also participated in mobility programmes to Bolivia and El Salvador.

On May 13th 2016 SILAS collaborated with the Latin American Solidarity Center and Maynooth University in organising a seminar on **Irish-Latin American Solidarity in the Context of the 1916 Rising** exploring historical and contemporary connections between Ireland and Latin America. The event was funded by Maynooth University Centenary Commemorations Committee. Academics, activists, journalists and development workers contributed to panels covering two main themes: Irish influence in Latin America and Latin American influences on Ireland.

The production of an international touring exhibition entitled ***The Irish in Latin America***was commissioned by Ambassador Sonja Hyland, at the Embassy of Ireland in Mexico, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade. It was launched in UCC by Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, in January 2017 and again in February 2017 in Havana during the Irish state visit to Cuba. The exhibition, which can be seen [here](https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/mexico/news-and-events/2017/irish-latin-america-exhibition/), was curated by Margaret Brehony with generous contributions from SILAS members. The SILAS website and journal proved an invaluable source of materials for the production of this colourful and attractive 26 panel exhibition. It is available on loan from the Department of Foreign Affairs in English and in Spanish. It has been on display in Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, Argentina, and Uruguay and will travel to Peru next year. In Ireland it has been on display in UCC (Jan 2017), NUIG (September 2017), the first Global Diaspora Congress in UCD (August 2017) and it will go to the EPIC Museum of Migration in Dublin early next year. The exhibition is helping to raise the profile of SILAS and has generated some excellent media in Spanish and English. The links will be available through the [www.irlandeses.org](http://www.irlandeses.org) website.

**SILAS website**

Due to financial constraints, the retainer arrangement with the SILAS web administrator, Philip Barron, finished in April 2016. We thank him for his work with SILAS. Since then, Steve Gooch and myself have made small changes or additions to the site. The site needs more dedicated attention and in order to maintain our profile internationally SILAS really needs to make an investment in updating the website. We need to prioritise securing funds to engage a web developer to do this. We are growing a community of people interested in Irish Latin American Studies through social media on a SILAS Facebook page. Members can help to grow our profile by joining us on Facebook - follow us and invite others to follow us. We use Twitter to a lesser extent but by 2018 we guarantee more activity in the twittersphere.

**2017**

The biggest event in 2017 was the hugely successful 6th Biennial SILAS Conference entitled *Island Relations, Ireland, Cuba and Latin America* hosted by the Palacio Segundo Cabo, City Historians’ Office and the University Havana, Cuba. The conference was held in conjunction with the first Irish State visit to Cuba and we had the honour of an address to our conference by Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, and Patron of SILAS, at the Colegio Universitario de San Gerónimo de La Habana. California State University, Bakersfield, sponsored the conference programme. Guest authors included Colm Tóibín, Joseph O’Connor, Orsola Casagrande, Pura López-Colomé, and guest speakers Professor. Jane Ohlmeyer of TCD and Professor Dermot Keogh of UCC gave keynote speeches. A cultural programme organised by the Irish Embassy in Mexico enriched our programme of events considerably. The programme is on the SILAS website.

**California State University Bakersfield hosts SILAS event.**

SILAS and the Southern California Irish Studies Colloquium held a one-day conference at California State University Bakersfield on April 22, 2017. The event had the theme “Ireland, Latin America, and the Caribbean: Connections, Contexts, and Comparisons.” The conference was organized by SILAS members Dr. Carol Dell’Amico and Dr. Clíona Murphy, and was supported by funds from the university. The attendees and presenters included individuals from universities in the southern California region. Dr. Murphy gave the introductory talk, “Ireland and Latin America: Broadening the Discussion on the Diaspora.” Dr. Laura O’ Connor from University of California at Irvine moderated the morning panel. Mr. Chris Livingston from the Historical Research Center in Bakersfield gave a fascinating presentation on “Irish and Mexican Footprints in the Archives: Unlocking Kern County’s Diverse History.” The Honorary Consul General of Ireland, Mr. Finbar Hill, and his wife Carmel, came from Los Angeles to attend the event.

***Irish Migration Studies in Latin America (IMSLA)* Journal**

The next journal issue is due for publication in December 2017. A CFP in 2016 on a special themed issue on Independence yielded an insufficient response and our guest editors Caoilfhionn Ni Bheacain and Angus Mitchel have worked on a more general theme with contributions from Irish writers / visual artists/ theatre makers that reflect on their engagement with Irish and Latin American themes / subjects.

One way to increase dissemination of the *IMSLA* journal is to apply for inclusion in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). We discussed this before but this process needs dedicated volunteer editors to review the journal issues on the website to ensure that our standards fulfil the criteria for inclusion in the DOAJ. Please contact me (Margaret.brehony@gmail.com) if you have the skills to work on this.

**In memory of Sinéad Wall**

SILAS and the wider research community in the field of Migration Studies has lost a valued friend and contributor with the sad and untimely passing of Sinéad Wall in May 2016. Dr. Wall (1973-2016) was a senior lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Westminster, London. A native of Wexford in Ireland, Sinéad travelled and lived in Spain before settling in London. She was a member of the *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* Editorial Board and generously gave of her intellectual insights grounded in research and personal experience of the connections between Ireland and the Hispanic world. Her research and publications have provided us with new and challenging ways to think about Irish emigrant identity and particularly in Latin America and Spain. Dr. Wall co-edited a special journal issue of *IMSLA* with Dr. Laura P. Izarra entitled “Travel Writing: Encounters within and through Irish and Latin American Spaces”, in which she published ‘Materialising Irish/Argentine diaspora spaces and transnational identities in William Bulfin’s travel sketches for *The Southern Cross* newspaper (1891-1903)’. Her monograph, *Irish Diasporic Narratives in Argentina: A Reconsideration of Home, Identity and Belonging* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017) was published posthumously in the Reimagining Ireland series. SILAS conferences were always enriched by Sinéad’s innovative research interests in the fields of diaspora, gender, and travel writing. Her enthusiastic and vivacious presence will be sorely missed. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

**2018**

We are currently preparing the organization of a second annual SILAS/SPLAS lecture at UCC on 25th January 2018. The speaker is Cath Collins, Professor of Transitional Justice at Ulster University, Northern Ireland and Director of the Transitional Justice Observatory at the Universidad Diego Portales, Chile. She is a founder member of the Latin American Transitional Justice Network and is presently working to promote region-wide dialogue between forensic, social and judicial actors around legacies of enforced disappearance. Her publications or co publications include the books Transitional Justice in Latin America (2016), The Politics of Memory: Chile from Pinochet to Bachelet (2014) and Post-Transitional Justice: Human Rights Trials in Chile and El Salvador (2010).

**Challenges ahead**

The SILAS network is growing and generating broader interest from different disciplines in the Americas, Ireland and Europe. In order to continue we need your support and expertise in all the areas of SILAS engagement – conference management, research, digital and online publishing, archiving, fundraising and membership development. We encourage you to volunteer and get involved in activities that you have expertise in.

**Conference 2019**

We will be in touch once we have secured a host in Ireland for the next SILAS conference.

Margaret Brehony

President of SILAS