Foreword

It gave me special pleasure to welcome the participants in this conference to the Library of Congress, not only because of the significance of the subject of the symposium, but because this kind of gathering is prototypical of what the Library of Congress should be doing. We are doubly grateful to those who founded the city of Buenos Aires about 400 years ago for inciting so modular a scheme for enlisting the Library of Congress in the community of scholars.

Henry David Thoreau, who hated cities, once described a city as the place where millions of people are lonesome together. He might have used that as a way of describing what libraries sometimes can be, a place where people work on their own subjects and often are not even aware of the community that they have with other scholars. This occasion, bringing together the scholars of several countries and of several disciplines, attests to the concern of the Library of Congress to become a more active community of scholars, a gathering place where scholars do not need to be lonesome by themselves but can be lonesome in community. I am especially grateful, and we all should be, to the staff of the Library who made this possible, and I want to add my word of thanks to Dr. Broderick, who is the assistant librarian for Research Services, and Bill Carter, Georgette Dorn, John Hébert, and the many others on our staff as well as to those on the staff of the Embassy of Argentina. For leadership in developing this symposium, I especially wish to thank the University of Texas at Austin and Stanley Ross, director of the Office of Mexican Studies of that university. It was he who planned the program and recruited the participants.

The city, especially in the New World, has a significance which awakens us to the meaning of cities everywhere but which is not so visible elsewhere. We can celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Buenos Aires. We can celebrate the founding of many North American cities in a way in which it is difficult for the people

of London, or of Paris, or of Rome to celebrate their founding, which is hidden in the mist of prehistory. But, here in the New World, the city is one of our most self-conscious artifacts. The celebration here today of the antiquity and recency of one of the world's largest cities is testimony to our awareness both of our debt to the past and of our power over our future.

We sometimes forget that, in the perspective of the history of our planet, the Spanish language itself is a relatively recent achievement, having been developed only within the last millennium. Many of our greatest cities, too, can trace their lineage in recent history. To paraphrase one of our New England forebears, "All cities are as civilization upon a hill." We are here today to discover our urban inheritance, to see what it brings us, and to find our power and opportunities to shape it together. The city is the most visible, the most graspable, and also the most elusive and the most dissectable of modern communities.

We were especially honored to have the presence of His Excellency, Jorge Aja Espil, ambassador of Argentina, with us because his career embodies most of the dimensions that are explored in these essays. He has explored the world of law and technology and economics, all of which will be seen converging in the papers that were presented to us and are here made available to a larger audience. So his presence was a source of great pleasure for us. We hope that this will be only the first of a continuing series of exchanges on ways of building the community which we all feel and which scholars should always celebrate.

Washington, D.C.

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