

PREFACE

Ted Widmer

On July 6, 1787, Thomas Jefferson wrote to his future son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, and urged him to learn Spanish, for reasons relating to the present and the past. «Our connection with Spain is already important and will daily become more so», Jefferson reasoned, and then added a thought from the historian's perspective: «Besides this, the ancient part of American history is written chiefly in Spanish».

The John Carter Brown Library has always believed deeply in that thought. Toward that end, generations of librarians have collected works of great scarcity relating to the great epic of Spanish America. We welcome scholars from around the world to study these books and maps, and to deepen the world's familiarity with this essential history through publications, lectures and conferences.

For all of these reasons, we were proud to unite with our friends from the Grupo de Investigación Siglo de Oro (GRISO) at the University of Navarra to plan an international conference on «Viejo Mundo y Nuevo Mundo en las crónicas de Indias». In June 2010, many old friends returned to Providence to attend this seminar, including an impressive number of scholars from the GRISO network who are former Fellows of the John Carter Brown Library. One of the scholars of that network, Angel Delgado Gómez, resurrected an exhibit that he curated here in 1992, on «Spanish Historical Writing About the New World». Many other scholars from GRISO played an essential role in coordinating the seminar, including Ignacio Arellano and Pilar Latasa, all of whom had attended the JCB's public events during a festive visit to Madrid in 2008. In other words, the seminar was a family homecoming of sorts, and the JCB was proud to play host

to so many scholars of such distinction. We hope that it is the beginning of a long tradition of academic exchange and interaction between our institutions and countries, in keeping with the advice Thomas Jefferson gave.

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