



Executive Summary

Publishing Spanish Writers in English

Place: King Juan Carlos I Center of New York University

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Time: 9:00am – 5:00pm



Opening Remarks

The event took off with opening remarks by **Guillermo Corral**, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of Spain in Washington DC. He stressed the importance of publishing more Spanish-language writers especially given the dominance of the Spanish language in the nation, and introduced **Valerie Miles**, founding editor of Granta and curator of the event.

Panel I

The Transatlantic Publishing Conversation in Market Terms

Paz Gaspar, Former Director Cultural Area, Grupo Planeta

Tina Jordan, Vice President, American Association of Publishers

Moderator: **Guillermo Corral**, Cultural Counselor, Embassy of Spain

Tina Jordan gave a broad overview of the U.S. publishing market based on AAP (American Association of Publishers), a trade association funded by all the major book companies in the U.S. that is dedicated to advocacy, first amendment issues, and copyright.

Key points:

* Book publishing in the U.S., including commercial, educational, and scholarly publications, represents an expansive 27 billion dollar industry.

* Based on U.S. publishers' sales, there is an **overall increase in publishing for 2014**, especially in books for children and young adults, and in academic publications. In books for adults there was an overall increase, except in hardback publications.

* Mass-market publications, such as small paperback books sold at airport shops, have been hit the most by digital sales (i.e.: e-books).

Paz Gaspar gave an overview of Spanish publishing, a competitive and diverse industry largely made up of small and medium sized enterprises.



Key points:

* After a period of steady growth from 2005 to 2011, a **trend of decline** began in 2013.

**The number of active book publishers in Spain went down 3.2% with 934 publishing houses ceasing their activity. The number of published titles decreased by 14.9% from the previous year. There was an overall decrease in titles in any of Spain's official languages. The biggest drop was in "Science & Technology" and "Social Science" books.

* A vast majority (90%) of the 89,130 titles published in 2013 were printed by **private publishing** houses in Madrid and Catalonia. 74% were print books and 23% e-books.

* **TRANSLATIONS** represent around ¼ (22%) of book publications every year, mostly fiction books for adults, books for children and young adults, and social science books. Spanish publishers translate books written originally in more than 50 languages, but translations are mostly made from English-language books, regardless of the original language of the book.

* **BOOK SALES:** In the last six years, there has been a 30-40% decline in **book sales** within Spain's internal market. The majority of sales between 2012 and 2014 were for adult fiction and non-fiction books. Bookstores remain the main channel of sales as Spain has the largest number of bookstores in the European Union (4,336). In 2014, the majority of sales were in the metro areas of Madrid (31%) and Barcelona (16%).

* **E-BOOKS:** E-Books account for more than 23% of publishing production (70% fiction and 30% nonfiction).

Panel II

Literary Fiction

Barbara Epler, President & Publisher, New Directions

Jonathan Galassi, President & Publisher, Farrar Staruss & Giroux

Moderating: **Valerie Miles**, Founding Editor, Granta Español

Barbara Epler and **Jonathan Galassi** introduced *New Directions* and *Farrar Staruss & Giroux*, two old publishing houses that have published the works of Borges, García Lorca, Nicanor Parra, Pablo Neruda, Carlos Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, and most recently of authors like Roberto Bolaño, Enrique Vila-Matas, Alejandro Zambra, Juan Villalobos, Antonio Muñoz Molina, among



others. **Valerie** moderated the discussion, asking questions about the failures and successes of working with Spanish-language writers.

Key points:

*The market for Spanish-language translations has never been stronger. There is a growing realization that the Spanish-language has a lot to offer, there are more translation subventions and support, including the promotional support of magazines with fiction sections (i.e.: *The New Yorker*).

*At the same time there are **difficulties** that come with publishing and selling translations. Choosing which books to translate can be a shot in the dark. Books that are usually translated, especially in Spanish, are rarely part of the commercial circuit. The translations don't tend to generate as much money as the original titles. Finding new translators who are also experts in the field proves to be a challenge. For small publishers, 7-year licenses (as opposed to 15-year licenses) can be punitive compared to the amount of effort put into developing the authors, and into promotional and editorial work.

* Spanish is such a big part of our own culture and getting bigger all the time. The Book in the 60s and 70s was very big here, García Márquez was number one on the literary side, Bolaño is probably the most exciting new voice in literature of the past 20 years. There's a realization that the Spanish language has a lot to say to us.

* It's never been a stronger market, at least not in my lifetime, for translation. There are a number of small publishers, Open Letter, Ugly Duckling, NYRB, Archipelago, they're doing amazing work and I think there's a younger generation who think it's mother's milk, less parochial, Bolaño and Aira.

* It's not our fault that the Germans publish every bad American novel!

* We are selling more of the things that really hit, we're selling Knausgaard like crazy. People do want new sensibilities. The standard issue male American fiction is out now. Here's Knausgaard, a man that talks about emotions in a completely different way. And the world is getting smaller.

* A voice out of somewhere that's arresting, that's what happened when Knopf published Camus.

* Not all books need to be translated. There are only some voices that should be translated, the ones that are like a "shot in the dark". Galassi says.

* In New Directions, we are always looking for things that are new, generative.

* There are institutions that do a lot of cultural work, and that helps a lot. And the magazines are really important for us, like *The New Yorker* that means that over a million people see the name.



- * McNally Jackson has a Spanish reading club but they do it in English, which is really fantastic, we always have books there.
- * Books cost money, translations are difficult, so funding help is really important. And travel funds to get the authors over here for promotion is important too.
- * Finding new translators is very important; they are ideally very familiar with the literature from where they're specialists. We can't be experts, so we take people's opinions and interpret them on other people's opinions. They are very valuable and honored parts of the process.
- * We really listen to certain people who help us and know our style.
- * One of the paradoxes of publishing translation is that sometimes the books that end up being the most significant are the ones that aren't on the commercial circuit. They come through suggestions of people who are in our loop. Having to pay a lot of money for books in translation is always very risky, so sometimes we look off the commercial loop.
- * Governments are smart to understand that part of the promotion of their countries' culture is to help disseminate art, as long as they don't censor in the process.
- * We love to bring people here, expose them to media to make the conversation continue. It's something that's been done in Europe very well, now we're doing it here, too.
- * Term of copyright in English but not in translation, that's a big difference and a punitive measure for the amount of promotional work that goes into working on an author in the US.
- * Spain reads more Latin American writers than Latin American writers read Spanish. Bolaño had to go to Spain, but he's a Chilean writer who writes about Mexico from Spain. The Transatlantic movement in publishing is very important; it's what makes the Spanish language market so large.
- * The publishers offer the translation to a magazine for them to serialize it, the publicity director takes care of that work. Literary magazines are sources for us to publish new writers.
- * Literary magazines are important for discovering and for disseminating and promoting the work of writers.
- * Sharing translations is much better and usually one English language country heads the international publication. British English has been Americanizing over the past years so the translations can be shared without a problem.



- * For the smaller houses, they share the translations. The US publishers tend to be better editors so many of the writers are translated and edited in the US, like Javier Marías for example.
- * They try to publish simultaneously or within a short period of time so that the promotion can be done on both sides of the Atlantic.
- * The editors do edit translations with the authors from time to time. Not always, because writers like Vila Matas and Aira are at the top of their art and don't need it, but sometimes it's clear that an editor can help better a text.
- * Information comes from a number of different people, both in house and externally in translators or editors who know the imprint's tastes. They like many different people instead of only one, because that way they have a variety of tastes. They have readers, get recommendations, and talk to people internationally.
- * There is a lot of money for translation from Germany, Switzerland and Austria s
- * Bennett Serf once said that if you're an editor it's better that you know a lot of people than you don't. Publishers are always avid for more information about young writers. People who live here as translators are very busy, they are involved in Pen, they do a lot of work to give us information, but there are a lot of people from abroad who come to visit, and that's also a source of information.

Panel III

Grants and Support

Isabel Ruiz de Elvira Serra, Subdirección General de Promoción del Libro, la Lectura y las Letras Españolas

Ainhoa Sánchez, Acción Cultural Española

Margaret B. Carson, Pen Translation Committee

Amy Stolls, National Endowment for the Arts

Moderating: **Cristina Ruiz**, Embassy of Spain

Isabel Ruiz de Elvira Serra gave an overview of the Spanish government subsidies to encourage translation of Spanish literature into foreign languages at a global scale.



*The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Spanish government has awarded subsidies to a number of publishing houses from all over the world. Since 2008, a total of €106,270.00 in subsidies has been awarded to 12 publishing firms in the United States for 20 different projects.

*Most applications received are for narrative prose, essay, and poetry; very few are received for drama and children genres. Among the most subsidized authors are Benito Pérez Galdós, Roberto Bolaño, Miguel de Unamuno, Enrique Vila-Matas, and Federico García Lorca, in order of popularity.

***Who and which projects qualify?** The subsidies are open to private or institutional publishing houses from all over the world that have been active for at least two years. The subsidies are meant for translation projects of works originally written in Spanish, Catalan, Galician, or Basque, which are of particular cultural relevance and form part of Spain's literary heritage.

***What is covered?** The entire amount awarded must be used to remunerate the work of a literary translator or group of translators that are deemed most competent for the job.

***What are the assessment criteria?** The following aspects will be considered: the project's cultural interest within the context and language of publication, the strategic value of the target language in line with Spain's cultural policy abroad, the financial capacity of the publishing house, the translator's curriculum, and the suitability of fees.

***What documents are needed?** The following documents are required: the firm's administrative and legal documentation, a copy of the contract signed by the translator, the translator's curriculum vitae, and the copyright assignment agreement.

***When do I apply?** There is an annual call for proposals in Spain's "Boletín Oficial del Estado" during the first quarter of each financial year. For more information on the application process visit the **web site** of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport:
<http://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/areas-cultura/libro/sc/becas-ayudas-y-subvenciones.html>

Ainhoa Sánchez gave an overview of the Programme for the Internationalization of Spanish Culture (PICE) of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), a public institution coordinated by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Culture of Spain, which was created in 2010 from the merger of three agencies dedicated to the promotion of the Spanish culture (SEACEX, SECC, and SEEI). AC/E is dedicated to promoting Spanish culture and heritage through a variety of cultural programming and initiatives such as PICE.

***What is PICE?** PICE is a comprehensive plan designed to generate international awareness of the Spanish cultural sector in diverse areas including the literature and books sectors, which



encompasses writers, editors, translators, illustrators, librarians, and any other professional involved in the chain of cultural books. PICE is based on two instruments: The Visitors' Grants and the Mobility Awards.

***What are Visitors' Grants?** Visitors' Grants allow international programmers from benchmark institutions and festivals to attend sector events in Spain and learn more about the Spanish cultural sector so that Spanish creators can be programmed internationally.

***What is the application process for the Visitors' Grants?** Calls for applications occur twice a year in January and May, and proposals can only be made by the following Spanish public cultural institutions: AECID; Instituto Cervantes; INAEM; ICAA; Directorate General for Fine Arts, Archives, and Libraries; Directorate General For Cultural Industries and Books; and AC/E.

***What are Mobility Grants?** Mobility Grants allow Spanish creators or cultural professionals to travel outside of Spain to be part of the cultural programming of international foreign institutions (public or private).

***What do Mobility Grants cover?** The grant will cover up to 50% of the costs of the proposed activity; these costs shall be related to the physical participation of the Spanish cultural professional (e.g.: travel, accommodations, local transportation, living expenses and/or pre-production or production expenses, such as leaflets, advertising, simultaneous translation costs, and honorariums). The maximum grant amount is €15,000.

***What is the application process for the Mobility Grants?** Public or private foreign institutions interested in including Spanish cultural professionals in their programming can submit applications in March and September proposing their candidate of choice, who must be a Spanish artist, creator, and cultural professional in their mid career.

Margaret B. Carson gave an overview of the PEN/Heim Translation Fund, a translation-driven grant with a \$730,000 endowment established in by Michael Henry Heim in 2003 to promote the publication and reception of translated world literature in English. The average grant is \$3,000, half of which is paid upon receipt. The other half is paid upon completion. 10 -12 grants are awarded per year.

***Who and which projects qualify?** The grants are open to all translators (new or established) from all over the world seeking to translate fiction, poetry, drama, and creative fiction works into English. Projects for new translations are preferred. If the proposed project is a retranslation, there must be a good reason for it. Anthologies are not funded.

***What are the assessment criteria?** The following aspects will be considered: the literary quality of the original work, the quality of the translation, the excellence of the supporting



material (see next question), the project's alignment with the goal of the Fund, which is to increase diversity of voices and introduce new authors. Given that the purpose of the Fund is to support translations that would not exist otherwise, having significant funding support from another source will also be taken into account.

***What documents are needed?** The following documents are required: the translator's curriculum vitae, a translation sample of 7,000 to 8,000 words (10 -12 single spaced pages), a two-page statement provided by the translator describing the importance of the original work and justifying the importance of this work's translation, as well as a short biography and a bibliography of the writer of the original work. Additionally, proof that English-language translation rights are available should be provided, unless the work is under the public domain (published prior to 1923).

***Are there any post-award benefits?** Announcement of award attracts interest of publishers, who are put in contact with the winners. Over half of the 123 projects to date have already been published.

*** When can I apply?** The submission period for the 2016 period will open in September 2015 and close in January 2016. For more information visit: <http://www.pen.org/content/penheim-translation-fund-grants-2000-4000>

Amy Stolls gave an overview of how the National Endowment for the Arts, the federal agency in charge of supporting the arts in America, supports translations into English of literature in other languages. She emphasized the NEA's commitment to promoting the importance of translation and its status as an art form.

***What grants are available to support translation?** ART WORK grants are available for organizations and non-profit publishers publishing translations. AUDIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT grants are available to support book festivals, reading series, literary centers, and service organizations, such as the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) and the Center for the Art of Translation, which support translation and bring translated works to audiences.

***Are there any grants for individual translators?** The TRANSLATION FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM offers grants to individual translators. Since 1981, the NEA has supported 348 translators to translate literature from 66 languages originating in 84 countries. The grant awards range from \$12,500 to \$25,000 and having an NEA grant can often facilitate publishing.

***How many individual grants are awarded per year?** Every year the NEA receives between 90 and 100 applications and usually awards between 20 and 50 per year.



***Who and which projects qualify?** The fellowship is offered to U.S. citizens only. Translations of works that have not been previously translated into English are highly encouraged. If the proposed project is a retranslation, there must be a good reason for it. Anthologies are also funded. The translator must have the original work's translation rights for the proposed language. The translator must be previously published as demonstrated by at least 20 pages of translation of creative literature into English published in print or digital form within the last 5 years.

***What are the assessment criteria?** The NEA considers the artistic excellence of the translation, as well as the artistic merit of the work, which encompasses the importance of the proposed project, the extent to which the language, the author, and the specific work are inadequately represented in English translation, the applicant's ability to carry out the proposed project (as demonstrated by the translator's proficiency in the language to be translated, and the familiarity with the culture and knowledge of/and or cooperation with the author whose work will be translated), and the significance of the author and the original work. Having other grants or forms of support does not disqualify you from applying.

*** When can I apply?** The application deadline is in December. For more information visit: arts.gov

Panel IV

The Rights Divide

Anna Soler-Pont, Founder and Director, Pontas Literary and Film Agency

Chad Post, Director, Open Letter

Elizabeth Kerr, Editor, Foreign Rights Director, W. W. Norton

Amy Hundley, Rights Director and Editor, Grove Atlantic

Moderating: **Ira Silverberg**, Art & Literature Consultant

Anna Soler-Pont discussed the current state of the Spanish publishing industry, as well as the role of a literary agency in the translation process. Additionally, she emphasized changing the industry to meet what is best for readers.

Key points:



* Spanish language is spoken by 500 million people around the world but its regional variations are great. Global rights to a translation are often acquired by publishing houses based in Spain and these translations are then distributed throughout the entire Spanish-speaking world. This is detrimental to many Latin American readers.

* Spain's control of Spanish-language publishing is slowly diminishing, however, as the industry grows in places like Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia.

* Argentina's ban on the importation of books has allowed their industry to grow.

* The poor state of Spain's economy has removed the country from its position of authority in publishing over all Spanish-speaking countries.

* The power of English globally is clear in the opportunities that it brings to publishing houses, and as a result even those who emphasize other languages often feel it is necessary to invest in a number of English texts.

* An agency will only participate in the translation process if they consider it a valuable investment.

Chad Post addressed the role of multiculturalism in the publishing industry and how he guides his publishing students at the University of Rochester.

Key points:

* In buying books as opposed to selling, the main issue that arises with language is in the selection of a translator for a particular work. It is important to select a translator from the appropriate nation to which it will be distributed, and publishing students should be encouraged to perfect the vernacular of a particular country.

* As a reviewer it is vital to contextualize the background of a work and expose the reader to where that writer fits in the tradition of the literature of their language.

* Especially with Spanish language, editors often do not feel it is necessary to prepare a translation in advance for a publisher.

* Due to the diversity of Spanish, there is no centralized hub that contributes to funding Spanish texts in the United States. Some funding comes from certain countries but is a luxury of countries with stronger economies. The top contributors are Spain, Argentina, Mexico, and Chile, the four of which make up about 75% of all Spanish books published in the US.



* Open Letter publishes e-books in various languages through Open Letter After Dark at the University of Rochester. This has illuminated the consistent desire of all the authors and publishers for a perfected English version to send to editors around the world.

* Amazon Crossing has been the third-highest publisher of Spanish-language texts in the last seven years.

Elizabeth Kerr discussed the changes in the industry today as well as its diversity throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

Key points:

* It was only with the rise of the big publishing companies about 15 years ago that the acquisition of world rights to Spain became common. A slow reversal of this is beginning to happen.

* The publication of indigenous literature seems to be in hotspots that include Bogota and Mexico City.

* In the publication of literature as opposed to nonfiction, distinction of Spanish vernacular between nations is more vital.

Amy Hundley highlighted the international dealings of the Spanish-language book industry.

Key points:

* The use of a separate marketing team aids in the process of selling international books.

* Even in translation to English it is necessary to “Americanize” a translation that will be targeted at a United States audience.

* Growth in Latin American publishing houses is likely inspired by the prohibitive expense of importing books from Spain and other countries.

Panel V

Trends in Contemporary Spanish Fiction and Non-fiction

John Freeman, Former Editor of Granta

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Valerie Miles, Founding Editor of Granta en español

John Freeman discussed his previous work with Granta, a diverse literary magazine that has made a great impact in bridging English and Spanish literature. The importance of literary journals to the success of writers was emphasized. **Valerie Miles** introduced him, lauding **John** as an impactful individual. Additionally, she moderated his talk, questioning him about his work and future. Notably, **John** and **Valerie** facilitated the publication of Granta's Best of Young Spanish-Language Novelists issue.

Key points:

- * Literary journals function as a back door into publishing.
- * English readers tend to know older Spanish-language writers, such as from the 1940s and 1950s, but are unfamiliar with modern works. Attempts should be made to expose English readers to Spanish writers, and literary magazines have this power.
- * People make all the difference. One person's proclivity towards one specific area can affect the direction of a publishing house's work. Sometimes companies tell us that we are replaceable and, yes, sometimes that's true but many times it's not. People can play a key role in the value chain.
- * A "clever reader" wants to be constantly exposed to new things.
- * Sometimes literary trends occur simultaneously in different locations, and translations can expose this and allow writers to be compared. This is a positive activity, although translated writers are frequently labeled as the counterpart of a local writer, and this can lead to distracting misnomers.
- * It can be difficult to expose more scholarly writers, although it is vital. There are growing hubs of innovative writers in the Spanish-speaking world. **Valerie** showed a visual piece by Sebastià Jovani as an example.

Panel VI

ICEX, New Spanish Books

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Ignacio Dominguez Doncel discussed the New Spanish Books program, an online guide listing Spanish and Latin American titles with rights available for translation and publishing in the American market. Their main goal is to develop Spanish publishers' business in the international rights market.

Key points:

***SYSTEM:** New Spanish Books asks publishers or agents from all over Spain and Latin America for books that they deem appropriate to bring to the United States and translate to English. A conference is held once a year in which these books are reviewed by a panel of industry experts from all over the country consisting of professors, translators, agents, librarians, authors, editors, and publishers. The panel narrows this list down to 12-15 titles, utilizing reader's reports as well. This short list is shared with the market, and they promote these titles to the publishing industry.

***EXPECTATIONS:** By bringing titles from Spain and Latin America, New Spanish Books hopes to engage with readers in a different way and involve the current generation, giving people a taste of Spanish language and culture in a formal manner. The market's response to translated books has generally been positive, which justifies the work of New Spanish Books.

Panel VII

Magazines and Reviews

Edwin Frank, *The New York Review of Books*

Willing Davidson, *The New Yorker*

Larry Rohter, *The New York Times*

Lorin Stein, *The Paris Review*

Moderating: **Valerie Miles**, Founding Editor of *Granta en español*

Valerie Miles introduced each speaker and asked him to talk about his experiences working with Spanish language writers.

Edwin Frank briefly discussed what his work entails, and how he deals primarily with literature in translation.



Key points:

*Literature in translation is currently very popular. While in the past publishers tried to hide the fact that a book might have been translated, now people are very interested in international literature. When translated books were moved from the international literature section in bookstores, sales doubled.

*He credited this success to the current generation's curiosity for the foreign element and discovering languages and traditions through world literature.

Willing Davidson highlighted the difficulties *The New Yorker* faces in choosing stories and selecting which Spanish language writers to feature.

Key points:

*One issue is the language barrier: there is no one in his fiction department that speaks Spanish. They depend on others to bring notable works and authors to their attention, and even then it is difficult to accept positive reviews if they are unable to read a text for themselves. Commissioning translators can be risky, as translations take time to complete and can be quite costly.

*The translator can sometimes be the writer's worst enemy, as a bad translation can ruin a story. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the translator is not always the person most qualified for the job, but the person who is most enthusiastic.

*Regardless, due to the recent success of Spanish writers, the publishing world is more likely to commission translations, thus enriching the shelves of bookstores in the United States.

Larry Rohter described his experience with *The New York Times*, and mentioned that he has written about a variety of world literature that extends beyond text to include music and film.

Key Points:

*In terms of writing, a new voice is what makes a book stand out, especially within Spanish language literature.

*Writers today do not feel the need to limit their work to "Latin American" subjects, and they now write about Russia and the United States, which offers several diverse viewpoints.



*He utilizes newspapers and reviews from other countries in order to have a sense of what is going on in terms of literature in the Spanish-speaking world before it comes to the United States.

*He echoes the ideas of Frank, claiming that due to the success of Spanish-language literature in the United States people have become aware of its tradition, and the younger generation especially has a particular affinity and curiosity to read books by Spanish-language and Latino writers.

Lorin Stein introduced himself as an editor of novels in translation, and some of his work includes the translation of Roberto Bolaño's *2666* and *Savage Detectives*. He discussed these books as case studies, and noted that every piece of literature will be received differently, so it is important to examine the publishing industry on a case-by-case basis.

Key points:

*In addition to publishing two of Bolaño's works (*2666* and *Savage Detectives*) the publishing company also commissioned a biographical essay about the author to serve as a supplement to the writing. However, there was a factual mistake in the essay, in which Bolaño was accused of being a heroin user, which caused the company to receive a lot of backlash. Nonetheless, **Lorin** stated that the essay and its ensuing repercussions were generally helpful as the book was well received by the American market.

Valerie then proceeded to ask the panelists a few questions.

***Are magazines a suitable means to disseminate information about a writer's' work?**

Lorin answered the question by highlighting the issue of the multitude of notable works that exist in the world, and how publications struggle to select only a few. He noted that *The Paris Review* in particular has a circulation of about 20,000 readers, and he believes that they are in fact finding the publication's suggestions helpful. Thus, he suggested that magazines do provide access to Spanish voices in translation.

***How do you edit a translation if you do not speak the source language?**



According to **Willing**, an editor must be very careful when editing a translation, and maintain the notion that the story is for the reader and not for the translator; when a publishing company buys a story, they are buying it for what it is and not what it could be with some editing. Thus, an editor will usually do less with literature in translation than they might with literature originally published in his or her native language.

Edwin added his own commentary, stating that when doing a translation, one has to make choices, and some information may inadvertently be lost. He noted that when translating prose, the literal translation is usually sufficient, but sometimes you have to take into consideration style, particular words choice, or the structure of whole sentences in order to maintain the original meaning.

***How do you review a book if you don't know the tradition it's coming from?**

Larry responded by supplying his own method: He does his best to get a sense of the context, but normally a book is able to stand on its own even without cultural background. Nonetheless, he finds having a pre-existing knowledge enriching to the reading, and thus supplements the review as well for the readers.

Valerie then allowed the audience to ask questions.

***Given the situation of the growing number of Spanish speakers in the United States, do publishing companies consider hiring Spanish language staff?**

Willing stated that due to the small nature of his company, it is hard to justify hiring someone based solely on his or her language ability. He suggested that knowing a second or third language can be beneficial when obtaining a job, but asserted that knowledge of the Spanish language is not something they are currently looking for when hiring, especially because publishers are looking at world literature in all languages, not solely Spanish.

Panel VIII

Commercial Success

Johanna Castillo, Vice President & Senior Editor, Atria

Alexis Washam, Senior Editor, Crown Publishing



Sarah Bowlin, Senior Editor, Henry Holt

Laura Persciasepe, Senior Editor, Riverhead

Moderating: **Paz Gaspar**, Former Director Cultural Area, Grupo Planeta

Paz introduced each speaker and proposed a number of questions to guide the discussion. She also prompted additional questions that she received from the audience: Are there groups that publish Spanish literature *in Spanish* by Latin or Spanish origin writers living in the U.S.? Do groups publish books in general for the Spanish speaking public in the United States?

Johanna began discussion by talking about specific novels that she has worked on, and briefly discussed what can make a book successful.

Key points:

*Atria released *Secret Supper* by Javier Sierra a short time after Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, and **Johanna** credited some of the former novel's success to the fascination with Leonardo Da Vicini instilled by the latter. Thus, it is important to know what is currently popular in the United States to know the audience you are hoping to attract.

*Due to *Secret Supper's* success, Atria was inspired to pursue more books in translation, and **Johanna** cited María Dueñas' *The Time Between* as another Spanish sensation that was also well-received in the United States. She noted that both authors are bilingual, and she partially attributes the success of their novels to their ability to speak both English and Spanish due to the promotional opportunities that arise.

*Feeding off of these early successes, Atria has been able to widen their scope of authors, and has also brought in non-bilingual novelists such as Felix Palma who have been equally successful.

*There are still many difficulties that companies must face concerning the cost of translation and the difficulty of persuading companies to buy the rights to a book in a language they cannot read, but she argued that if the story is great and everything aligns properly, books in translation can achieve great success.

The panel moved to **Alexis**, who admitted that although she has not experienced working with a Spanish author, she can comment on her experience with other foreign authors. Key points:



*Within Crown Publishing, she has worked with Hogarth, a branch that focuses on literary fiction from international origin. Within this group, they try to balance literary and commercial fiction in translation.

*The story and the voice of a piece of literature are elements that transcend the national experience.

*Another key factor that can help foreign literature in the U.S. is its reception in other foreign countries; if they are successful in other foreign markets, publishers will be more likely to express interest in purchasing the rights for publication in the United States.

Sarah spoke of her experience both at Riverhead and at Henry Holt, and commented on the trouble she has had taking on Spanish writers.

Key points:

*It is difficult to set up a literature in translation program in publishing houses because to demonstrate need of such a program, a company needs to use its previous successes as support. Although she has had success with authors like Sabina Berman, she doesn't have an author in particular that merits creating a program that can focus solely on literature in translation.

*Sometimes it can take an author a few books to become popular, but thanks to programs like New Directions, bigger publishing houses are beginning to recognize these authors.

Laura, who currently works at Riverhead, stated that while she enjoys publishing international fiction, it is not because she is publishing "writers in translation," but because she is publishing great writers who deserve to be published in other languages. Key points:

*She relies on her friends and sources to tell her what pieces of literature she should keep her eye on, and trusts these suggestions when she asks for reader's reports to be conducted.

*It is important to find new voices, and currently there is a growing trend towards translating the works of female writers.

Paz reiterates a question she posed at the beginning of the panel:



***Do publishing companies publish literature in Spanish for Spanish speakers within the U.S.?**

Alexis answered the question by referencing *This Too Shall Pass* by Milena Busquets, which was released first in Spanish in 2015 in the United States by Vintage Español and will be released in English by Hogarth in 2016.

Johanna added that Atria Español publishes about 10-15 fiction books a year in the United States in both Spanish and English. However, in terms of non-fiction, they focus on the U.S. Spanish reader with self-help and practical non-fiction books, and have a few celebrity memoirs as well. For example, *El secreto* was published in Spanish in the U.S. and sold over 700,000 copies, which she considers extremely successful.

Laura spoke of Penguin's Celebra, a group dedicated to celebrity books that target a Spanish speaking audience. At Riverhead, they have published a few books in Spanish, especially by bilingual authors like Mark Kurlansky. However, she commented on the struggle they have had recreating this success with fiction, although she hopes to work towards publishing fiction in Spanish in the U.S. in the future.

Alexis posed a question for the other panelists:

***What is it that makes these books sell?**

Johanna credited some of the books' success to the promotional events that encompass the release of books. She stated that while bilingual authors may have the benefit of participating in promotional events in English, Spanish-speaking authors like Maria Dueñas were able to attract bilingual audiences within the United States, and her books, published in English, were popular especially for US born Latinos.

Sarah also mentioned the academic market and how valuable it can be for an author to speak at universities and schools to promote his or her work.

Laura praised NPR for bringing success to a lot of novels. She also mentioned Juan Gabriel Vásquez, the author of *The Sound of Things Falling*, and told of his amazing voice in both English and Spanish and how he developed a cult of personality through his many promotional events in the United States. By developing this presence, his books became wildly popular and **Laura** said they hope to recreate this triumph with many authors, but noted that sometimes it can take an author several publications to achieve a similar reputation.



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