

Amazing Sales

Publisher Voicu Bojan tells how *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* unlocked the secular market for Aqua Forte (www.aquaforte.com), a Romanian Christian publishing house.

God works in mysterious ways," says Voicu Bojan, of Aqua Forte Publishing, located in Cluj-Napoca, a university town that is the capital of Transylvania, Romania. "We started in 1992 as a joint venture with OM Greater Europe based in Vienna. Our aim is to produce interesting, relevant, affordable books with a deep Christian message,"

"For 10 years, our books were rejected by major distributors because they

sounded "too Christian." We needed a Trojan horse to penetrate the market," adds Bojan, "and we found it in a book unveiling Dan Brown's false statements in *The Da Vinci Code* bestseller."

In February 2005, Aqua Forte obtained the rights to translate Cook's bestselling title, *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*, by James Garlow and Peter Jones, into Romanian. Within two months, the book was ready for launching in April 2005, along with titles from other

authors and publishers including Phillip Yancey, John Eldredge, David Jeremiah and Josh McDowell.

"We printed a great flyer advertising our new books," says Bojan. "As usual, we sent it out to our past customers while the books were

being printed. We included an order form with the flyer, hoping we would sell the first print run quickly."

The normal print run for evangelical titles in Romania, 2,000 copies, is usually sold over a two-year period. This is considered to be an average to good book. Aqua Forte had to reprint *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* within two weeks.

"We thought our figures were wrong," says Bojan, "yet the orders kept pouring in. The second print run sold out before we got the books from the printer, so we ordered another."

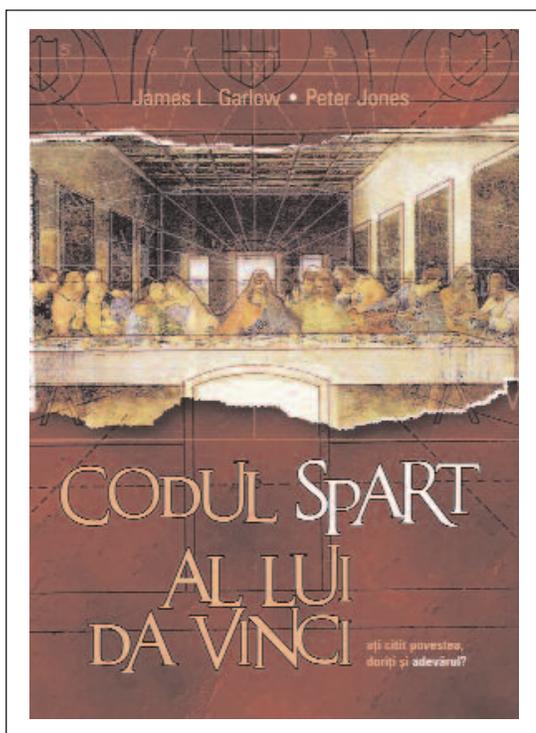
"We launched the book in Cluj at a mobile secular book fair," says Bojan. "We had never done this before. It was great to watch people speak about the book, curious as to what was inside the covers. Suddenly the big secular distributors from Bucharest, Romania's capital, were interested in our books. They bought *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* and some of our other titles. We were thrilled."

In late June, just before traveling to the July 2005 CBA International Christian Retail Show in Denver, Colorado, U.S.A., Bojan got a surprise.

"Because I am a curious person, I decided to see if the book had done well by secular standards," says Bojan. "I logged onto www.dol.ro, the site of the biggest chain retailer in the country. It lists the top titles selling in Romania. I could not believe my eyes. I had to take my glasses off, clean them, and check to see if what I had first seen was correct. Our book was second in the country. Not only that, it was one place above Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*."

"We had never hit the top ten before. To be so far up the scale was mind-boggling," says Bojan. "We always dreamed of having a bestseller, and the Lord chose this title to touch our nation. It is hard to believe that most of the copies of this title have actually been sold on the secular market. Of course, our prayer is that this book would give the readers a new perspective of Christianity that would challenge them and draw them into a relationship with God."

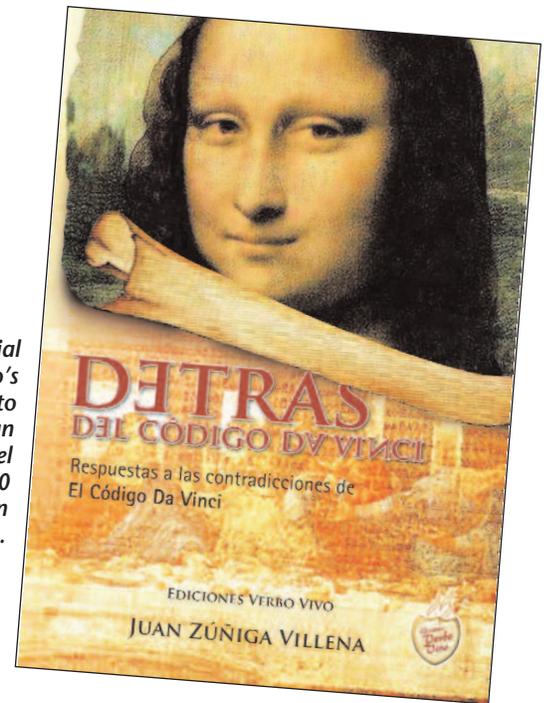
Cracking Da Vinci's Code success continues. "The top ten have changed," says Bojan, "but we are still doing well. We finished



Cracking Da Vinci's Code coauthor Peter Jones follow-up book, *Stolen Identity*, released in March 2006.

Amazing Sales x 2!

"I am very pleased," says Patty Vergara of Editorial Verbo Vivo in Lima, Peru.



Editorial Verbo Vivo's response to the Dan Brown novel sold 1,000 copies in four days.

just finished editing *Detrás del Código Da Vinci* (*Behind the Da Vinci Code*), by Juan Zúñiga Villena, a Peruvian author presently living in Spain," writes Patty Vergara, of Editorial Verbo Vivo in Lima, Peru. "We completely sold out our first print run of 1,000 titles in four days." "Detrás del Código Da Vinci is an apologetics book, responding to the confusion and doubt generated by Dan Brown's novel and upcoming movie. We worked hard on

our marketing, and have a lot more to learn, but are very pleased," adds Vergara, "especially because this is the work of a Peruvian author."

Verbo Vivo has been in business for almost a decade. Vergara says, "We are just beginning to experience success. We have had many challenges, including the economic situation in our country," she adds, "but our publishing house has achieved a good position in the market." ▽

third in the 2005 top ten list for the biggest retailer in the country." In just 10 months, Aqua Forte sold more than 35,000 copies of the book.

Bojan and his team are forging ahead.

"We printed a nice catalog and spread it all over the place, without counting every penny," says Bojan. "Orders by email started to increase. Titles we published in November already require a reprint. We also translated Cook's *Stolen Identity: The*

"We want to have a lasting impact on the market," says Bojan. "We are still focused on producing good books with a high Christian content, but are changing our strategy a bit, looking for more crossover titles. We love that more authors are contacting us with their proposals and manuscripts."

Aqua Forte published three titles by Romanian Christians in the past, but without great success. "We

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Conspiracy to Reinvent Jesus, the sequel by Peter Jones, one of the authors of *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*. We plan to launch it on March 1, 2006."

With the May 19, 2006, release of *The Da Vinci Code* movie, starring Tom Hanks, Aqua Forte hopes to "catch the same trend."

"This bestseller opened up so many opportunities for us," says Bojan. "Secular distributors are much more open to considering other titles from our stock as appropriate for their markets. After years of rejection, we finally managed to break through. Now our books sell in malls, supermarkets, and other hot places. This is very unusual."

still trust that one day the market will mature," says Bojan, "and will read more of our Romanian Christian authors. For now, we have a market that has started to enjoy our titles. This is very refreshing. Please pray for us to continually be inspired to choose the right books for our nation's soul."

"We never dreamed about the doors God would open for us as a publishing house here in Romania," says Bojan. "Our Lord taught us once again that for Him there are no secret codes, no locked doors, no human barriers. When He pours His grace upon His followers, it is amazing." ▽