



## Is There a Niche for a Latin American Publisher?

By Beatriz Buono

*Beatriz Buono is the publisher for Certeza Argentina*

Right now we are importing 7,259 kilograms of books! Every six weeks we at Certeza Argentina <http://www.certezaargentina.com.ar/> import a similar quantity of books to replace stock sold and to introduce new titles. The books come from most of the Christian Spanish-language publishers based in the United States. This shipment includes 42 new books, 10 percent of which were written in Spanish by Latin Americans.

Most of these books were conceived and designed for the North American market. They were launched at international book fairs and promoted with authors' tours, television appearances, full-color magazine advertisements and gifts of promotional copies to pastors and church leaders. Without a doubt, publishers such as B&H <http://www.bhpublishinggroup.com/>, Casa Creación

<http://www.casacreacion.com/> CLIE

<http://www.clie.es/>, Cook

<http://www.davidccook.com/>, Mundo

Hispano <http://www.editorialmh.org/>,

Patmos <http://www.editorialpatmos.com/>, Portavoz

[http://shop6.gospelcom.net/epages/Kregel\\_Portavoz.storefront/en/](http://shop6.gospelcom.net/epages/Kregel_Portavoz.storefront/en/), Thomas

Nelson <http://www.gruponelson.com/>,

Tyndale Español

<http://www.tyndale.com/products/espanol/>,

Unilit <http://www.editorialunilit.com/>, Vida

<http://www.zondervan.com/cultures/en-US/Product/Vida> and others are making an vital contribution to the Hispanic church with quality literature.

### Can we do anything from Latin America?

With this avalanche of books from the United States and Spain supplying the needs of the Latin American church, we inevitably ask ourselves whether there is a need to establish a publisher based in Latin America. How would such a publishing house position itself nationally and globally? Why add to the range of books that already exist, and to those that are being published daily?

We could respond in the following ways:

- *We could be crushed* beneath the 100 tons of evangelical books that arrive in Argentina each year from the United States. Nothing can be done. There is no place for an under-resourced Latin American publisher.
- *We could consider ourselves victims.* If the North has the resources, ideas and money to contract their authors—and ours—to serve the pastors and leaders of the churches of the entire world, how can we possibly compete? There is no

opening by which we might enter the marketplace.

- *We could deny reality and respond with blind optimism.* We know the Latin American church and its needs. Of course, God and his church will support us.

None of these reactions is adequate. First, we need to reconsider the reality we confront.

### **Finding a niche**

Several years ago, during a training event organized by InterVarsity Press <http://www.ivpress.com/> in the United States, publishers linked to the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students <http://www.ifesworld.org/home/> met to compose a declaration of mission. Mindful of Peru's economic instability, social disintegration and ceaseless violence, all that Ian Darke, then director of Puma email: [puma@cenip.org](mailto:puma@cenip.org), could contribute was the word "*survive*." Of all that we learned at that event, this word stayed with me. The best way to overcome discouragement and avoid being a victim is simply to have a clear understanding of the reality we confront. I John Harrower, a former director of Certeza Argentina, used to employ humorous illustrations while training our team. One we appreciated most was a drawing of Jonah standing in the belly of a huge fish reading a sign with a candle in his hand. On the sign an "x" indicated the belly of a huge fish, and a caption read "You are here." We already know we are in the fish's belly. The question is what do we do now. How do we get out and live the abundant life that Jesus Christ wants to give us?

I want to share some responses and thoughts that have helped us as an evangelical publishing house based in Latin America.

### **Vision as a beacon**

While we must analyze and understand our reality, we are, above all, called to see it through God's eyes. If God decided to adopt a people in Latin America, then without doubt he expects us, as part of his people, to contribute to the written word. While we rejoice in the number of Latin American authors recognized by United States-based publishers, and give thanks to God for their opportunity to serve, there is still much that can and should be done in our corner of God's kingdom. Our vision (to communicate the lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of life) should be like a lighthouse, illuminating our path, a beacon that encourages us to pursue our goal without faltering.

### **Clear positioning and focus**

Publishers located in economically unstable countries like ours need to define very carefully what to publish and what not to publish and the appropriate style of the books in their catalogue. They need to persevere and pursue their vision despite the difficulties. What will be our distinctive contribution to the kingdom?

Together with Cook consultants, our team decided that we wanted to be known as a publisher of books that are biblical, practical, simple, interactive and anointed. Our distinctive focus is serving adolescents and youth with books in the style of 'Rebels with a Cause', 'God also chooses donkeys' and 'The love of my life: Who will it be?'. We also contribute with Bible studies and discipling and pastoral aids such as the 'Certeza devotional bible studies' and 'Healing in family relationships'.

### **Teamwork, networks and strategic alliances**

In accordance with our guiding values, we are committed to working

as a team with the participation of all its members and to complementing rather than duplicating the efforts of other publishers. Internally we consider all opinions, ideas and contributions as valuable. Externally we consult pastors, leaders, theologians, Christian booksellers as well as fellow publishers, including members of the LetraViva network <http://www.letraviva.com/indexgeneral.asp>, the Certeza Unida cooperative <http://www.ifesworld.org/news/item.php?newsID=138> and participants in the LetraViva Books dispatch centre.

### **Invest in our authors, issues, language and culture**

We are uniquely qualified to see, know and value the people who are making distinctive contributions for the good of the church and society in our countries. Our challenge is to encourage them to write about their experience and make it more widely known.

In our mission statement we propose to offer quality books based on a serious reading of the Bible and of the Latin American reality. While our catalog features classics translated from English by authors such as John Stott and John White, most of our best-selling books are written by Latin American authors such as Lucas Leys, German and Daniela Ortiz, Adrian Intrieri, Elba Somoza, Silvia Chaves, Bernardo Stamateas, Daniel Gonzalez, Fernando Mora, Pablo Deiros, Howard Andrujol and Pablo Borda.

### **An unexpected opportunity**

Each year at this time, the Buenos Aires Book Fair <http://www.el-libro.org.ar/> is visited by more than a million people from all over Argentina. Our team and board of directors continue to consider that the time is not yet right for Certeza Argentina to participate with our own stand because of

the cost and effort that this would represent. Nevertheless, we use the book fair in two ways. First, we use the fair as a training event, touring the exhibits to observe and compare prices, covers, logos and trends. Second, as members of the Religious Book Commission of the Argentine Book Chamber <http://www.editores.org.ar/>, we are involved in the organization of conferences that reflect the theme of each book fair from a Christian perspective.

This year something wonderful happened. It seems that our years of collaboration have been rewarded. This year the Argentine Religious Book Commission accepted our proposal to conduct an event for adolescents and youth within the book fair. They agreed to give the conference the title of one of our books: "Addictions: Don't envelop yourself in silence." The book's author, Pablo Borda, was a key speaker together with a priest specializing in the pastoral care of youth.

The 2,000 invitations distributed by the Commission included free entry to both the fair and the conference and were designed by our artists using the book's cover.

The activity was a success, but not just because we filled the auditorium with an audience of 500 youth, parents and teachers seeking answers and encouragement. For Certeza Argentina, this was an opportunity to make a unique contribution and connect with a public still unknown by us. It was an opportunity to work alongside Roman Catholic publishers to deal with critical problems in our country. And all for a cost of zero dollars!

Is there a niche for a Latin American publisher? Yes, of course! The key is seeing the reality, not denying it. Seeing it with the eyes of God. Maintaining a guiding vision, clear positioning and sharp focus. Addressing key issues and concerns. Building a team. Nurturing networks. Forging strategic alliances. Investing in our authors, language and culture.

*Certeza Argentina is one of Latin America's  
largest independent Christian publishing  
companies.*

© 2008 [David C. Cook Global Mission](#). First printed in *Cook Partners*, May, 2008.

**ChristianTrade Association International**

PO Box 62187 • Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2187 USA

TEL +1 719 432 8428 • FAX +1 719 325 7001 • [info@ChristianTrade.com](mailto:info@ChristianTrade.com) • [www.ChristianTrade.com](http://www.ChristianTrade.com)