

## **Spanish Evangelical Products Association (SEPA)**

PRESS RELEASE

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### **For Immediate Release**

## **6<sup>th</sup> Annual SEPA Summit Looks to Build Industry Amid Difficult Economy**

Buoyed by a surprisingly strong Spanish Christian products industry amid today's difficult economic climate, publishers, distributors and booksellers from across the U.S. and Latin America will meet for the sixth annual SEPA Summit in Miami Nov. 16-20.

Hosted this year by Editorial Unilit, Editorial Patmos and Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas (United Bible Societies), the Spanish Evangelical Products Association (SEPA) will hold the event on a cruise ship for the first time, gathering key people from all aspects of the industry. The event will feature four training sessions and six presentations along with daily devotionals and committee reports.

"There are many events in which publishers and distributors are able to interact, but usually on a purely commercial level," said Vern Peterson, general manager of Patmos. "This summit is about business, but more about the industry as a whole. Even more important, however, is the opportunity for social interaction because it allows the participants to get to know each other on a personal level."

Based on his conversations with publishers, SEPA President Peter Cerra said the "industry seems to be holding its own. Many countries have become accustomed to being in economic crisis, so they can do things to stabilize their business. We've heard many positive reports from the Spanish publishers. In the U.S., most are being hit with many of the same issues that the English publishers are facing—fewer bookstores and a shrinking market—but the International market is covering some of the shortfall."

Jim Cook, SEPA's vice president and vice president of international sales at B&H Publishing Group, said the summits have served to unite the industry. "I believe they've helped publishers, bookstores and distributors understand each other better, demonstrating how we're working together."

Cerra agrees, calling the summits "incredibly beneficial to the industry. For years we tended to be isolated and fragmented, and now we as publishers, distributors and suppliers have come together with a common goal of increasing impact to the market. We've been able to develop training materials to help booksellers succeed, deal with issues like piracy and technology, and

most recently we've launched a reading campaign geared specifically to our Spanish audience globally."

The SEPA reading campaign, launched at Expolit 2009, is called "Si no leo me aburro" (if I don't read I get bored), a play on the word "burro"—the campaign's mascot.

Ebett Rivera-Kading, co-owner of Pan de Vida, said the economy has forced her to consolidate three Chicago bookstores into two. But she's excited about how the summit can encourage booksellers to improve their businesses and expand sales.

"We're trying to survive," she said. "A lot of my customers are out of a job. I hear that on a daily basis. People are being very careful with their purchases. However, the summits have always been a blessing—learning from peers and the publishers themselves and other people within the industry. I always come out refreshed, renewed and restored—almost overwhelmed with all the new ideas and information."

Peterson added that the summits have helped open doors for Spanish publishers in the Anglo market. "In the bookstores that I visit—and I visit them all—I can see that Spanish sections are gradually increasing in size," he explained.

"Many adjustments have been necessary," Peterson continued. "For example, certain publishers have changed how they distribute. On the other hand, some distributors have become publishers. When the change was made for SEPA to include distributors with publishers a few years ago, in essence it was probably to reflect the reality of the changes that were already taking place."

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