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Publishing Industry in México

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According to the CAMARA NACIONAL DE LA INDUSTRIA EDITORIAL MEXICANA's annual **Indicadores del Sector Editorial Privado** (indicators of the private publishing sector in Mexico) latest (2013) report, Mexico published 340 million units¹ (books). Compare this to the Association of American Publishers (AAP)'s figures of 2.6 billion units published in the United States in 2013.²

Of those 340 million units published in Mexico, 145.7 million units were published by what they term "private" sector publishers. Those would be commercial publishers, except for 43.7 million, which is 30% of the 145.7 million. That 30% include textbooks published by commercial publishers for governmental programs, including books for classroom and school libraries, along with free textbooks supplied for secondary education and free textbooks for the government's national basic English program in elementary education.³

The public sector published 195 million units (books) in 2013. The public sector is defined⁴ as books published by CONALITEG, which is the Comision Nacional de Libros de Texto Gratuito, which translates as the national commission for free textbooks. So, not only are those 195 million units published by the government, but the government also pays for 30% of the books published by the private sector. Knowing this makes what I am about to pass along to those of you who might have an interest make sense. According to Adan Griego, the Curator for Latin American, Iberian and Mexican-American Collections at Stanford University, the Mexican government sends free primary school textbooks from Mexico to every Mexican consulate in the United States for free distribution.

This is something some of you might want to be aware of. This actually proved helpful to me recently when a faculty member from the College of Education contacted the library to help him locate primary school textbooks from several Latin American countries, including Mexico, for a study he was conducting. We did eventually have to locate and purchase some primary school textbooks from other countries, but for Mexico, all we did was contact the Mexican consulate.

¹ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 4)

² (Publishers, Bookstats, 2013)

³ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 4)

⁴ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 4)

But let's get back to the publishing industry in Mexico. Those original 340 million units published in 2013 represents \$2,799 million pesos or 186 million US dollars in revenue. Again compared to the AAP 2013 figures their 2.6 billion units represents \$27 billion dollars in net revenue.⁵

So we can see that the industry appears smaller in Mexico. Keep in mind, the average cost of a book in the private sector was 73.7 pesos or a little **less than** \$5 US. According to the annual indicators, the book publishing industry grew overall by 4.6% from 2012.⁶

The private publishing sector exported 14.5 million units in 2013, representing \$72.1 million US dollars. That was an 8.3% increase in book exports from the previous year.⁷ In that same year they did import 10 million units, at a value of 48.9 million dollars. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, all these figures, except for the AAP (Association of American Publishers) comes from the annual report of the CAMARA NACIONAL DE LA INDUSTRIA EDITORIAL MEXICANA. If anyone would like a copy of the full report, feel free to contact me (gh14@txstate.edu), and I will be glad to send it to you.

What I have presented here I believe illustrates that the publishing industry is strong and important in Mexico. According to Javier G. Velazquez of the Benjamin Franklin Library in the U.S. Embassy of Mexico City, print books are still in great demand. He says they have observed a growth in the eBook sector, which represented 17.6% of all book publishing in Mexico in 2013.⁸ But he also believes that electronic books do not present any danger as yet for traditional book publishing in Mexico. He believes this is so because of the lack of electronic equipment in the majority of households in Mexico.

Now, what does this mean in relation to art book publishing in Mexico? Well, it is impossible to find current data by detailed book subject or genre. What I was told by Mr. Velazquez was the only numbers he could find were from 1997. But he also believes that these numbers have changed very little in the interim. In 1997 there were 71 different subject categories of books published, and art was very near the bottom by rank. What you might have already guessed is that first in the ranking by subject were textbooks, followed by academic books and children/youth books third.⁹

What I really want to tell you about are the book fairs in Mexico. In the annual report of the CAMARA NACIONAL DE LA INDUSTRIA EDITORIAL MEXICANA, they list private sector book sales by ranked (% of the market) outlets. They list 10 major book sale categories. Number one, you might guess, is sales to the government. Bookstores are number two, and third are sales directly to schools. Ranked number 8 however, are book fairs.¹⁰ And unlike any of the other venues, this report dedicates a whole page to the breakdown of revenue obtained from book sales at the country's book fairs. They state, "Book fairs are a channel of great importance, because through these, publishers can sell and make known the quality of their products." They go on to mention that there are nine major fairs in the country where as many publishers as distributors participate and were responsible for the increased sales for the industry in 2013.¹¹

⁵ (Publishers, Bookstats, 2013)

⁶ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 10)

⁷ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 14)

⁸ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 15)

⁹ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 12)

¹⁰ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 12)

¹¹ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 17)

The fair generating the most revenue is the Feria Internacional del Libro Palacio de Minería, held in Mexico City every year in February. In total, those 9 book fairs generated 58.4 million pesos (almost 4 million dollars) in what represented 62 working days.¹²

I want to talk to you about the Guadalajara book fair. Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico. They have had an annual, international book fair for more than 20 years, which they say is the second largest book fair in the world. I have attended the fair 10 of the past 11 years. I have purchased art books, with the advantage of actually seeing them and perusing them before purchase.

The FIL (Feria Internacional del Libro) happens every year at the end of November, beginning of December. Each year they honor one country from around the world. Last year was Argentina, and this year it will be the UK. But make no mistake, it is the single best venue for books from Mexico, and a lot of Latin America. There are three "professional days" where only librarians and book vendors are allowed in between 8am and 5pm. At 5pm the doors open to the public, and believe me when I tell you that book buying is very popular and possible for the general population of the city. It is well attended, and that is why they have the professional days. The fair goes on for the entire week, from Monday to Friday. In addition, there are concerts, events, panel discussions and author readings and presentations throughout the week and into the weekends.

There is a booth for Banamex that has large, glossy, beautiful, high quality books covering Mexican traditional and contemporary art, architecture, social life, culture and history. There is the Fondo de Cultura Economica, which has an enormous and varied selection of academic books and has a wonderful children's book section. You might be familiar with Artes de Mexico as a publisher. They have a large set up, right in the middle of the Mexican book publishers section of the fair. They carry multiple copies of their books, and they have lovely, reasonably priced "fair trade" handicrafts, from small, inexpensive tin and reed Christmas ornaments to beautiful handwoven wearable art, indigenous crafts and toys. Of note too is Editorial RM, who specializes in art and photography and special limited run books. There is also a smattering of small presses that issue beautiful, limited run editions.

There are several university presses with large selections of books in all subject areas including art, literature and culture. Just two years ago while browsing through the UNAM (Universidad Autonoma de Mexico) a colleague of mine ran into Elena Poniatowski (French born Mexican journalist and author). She had participated in a panel discussion earlier in the day at the fair, and was just walking through the UNAM section looking for books to buy. She stopped and talked to my colleague, and even posed for a picture!

The fair goes on in two enormous pavilion spaces. One is for publishers from Mexico and the other for publishers from around the world. Most all carry enough copies to purchase then and there. This reminds me of something Adan Griego from Stanford told me. Most Mexican publishers only publish runs of 1000 to 5000, and seldom do they reprint, so if you find something at the fair, there is a good chance that you will never get another copy later on or anywhere else.

Knowing this and having been in the position of having to find out-of-print books from Mexico and Latin America, anecdotally I can tell you that this is probably true.

¹² (Mexicana, 2014, p. 17)

Recently, over the past two or three years, there have appeared a couple of vendor booths that specialize in out-of-print Mexican books. They specialize in more enduring tomes, and thus have quite a few art books. I have found rare published Codices that were unfortunately too expensive for me. For example, year before last, I saw an old, rare copy of a commercially published facsimile of the Codex Borgia.

The international publishers are from around the world. Spain, because of the language has a very prominent presence, though they do not bring copies of their books to sell. They only bring examples, and you have to order from the different publisher representatives that huddle together around the center of the international section. You will also see publishers from Cuba, and all of Central America and some Caribbean. Sometimes there will be two or three publisher booths from any one country. There are bookstores (Ghandi and Zafra) with large set ups at the fair who sell CDs and DVDs, along with books and local handicrafts. Of particular note in the international pavilion is Taller Leñateros. I mention them because they are indigenous people from San Cristobal de Las Casas in Chiapas Mexico. They consider themselves sovereign people and thus have placed themselves in the international pavilion rather than in the Mexican pavilion. They sell beautiful, handmade books out of recycled paper and cardboard.

I have the language and the previous experience so that these days going to Guadalajara is easy for me. But what about you, if you have never traveled to an international book fair? It is easier than you think. ALA, the American Library Association has a grant for librarians to attend the Guadalajara book fair. They call it the ALA/FIL Free Pass program. You do have to be a member or join ALA. If you apply for the grant, ALA accepts 100+ applicants every year, usually more. The grant gives you a free hotel room for the three professional days. If you share a room with another attendee, you can stay up to 6 days. They also give you a free breakfast for the three professional days, AND \$100 cash. Most years, if you apply early enough, they give you another \$100. So basically, you (or your institution) only have to pay for your flight and the rest of your food. Cab fare from the airport is a set regulated price. They will take you from the airport to the ALA designated hotel for about \$30. Often you'll meet up with other attendees and can share the ride to the hotel.

I hope I have encouraged some of you to take the trip to Guadalajara. But almost every major city in Mexico has an annual book fair. As I mentioned they are a venue of great importance to the publishing industry of Mexico.¹³ If anyone who has never been and is encouraged to go to Guadalajara to see what the Mexican book industry has to offer, feel free to contact me. I will be glad to pass along more information. You can also visit the ALA website and search for FIL Free Pass program.

¹³ (Mexicana, 2014, p. 17)

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