

## Making a name for Bahá'í books

"Some people view the world's religions as opposing groups competing for supporters," read the large violet display board. "Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), founder of the Bahá'í Faith, did not see it that way. ... Neither do our authors."

That statement struck a chord with a number of potential business contacts at the Bahá'í Publishing booth at BookExpo America on June 2-5, staff members said.

This year's BookExpo, the second with a Bahá'í Publishing presence, drew an estimated 27,400 publishing industry professionals to New York City's Javits Center.

Bahá'í Publishing Trust staffers Lee Minnerly, Gini Adamo and Tim Moore took the opportunity to solidify connections within the business.

Bahá'í Publishing author Gary Matthews signing his book at the Expo

They met with three of the Trust's sales representatives, two weekly book review writers, a magazine editor-in-chief and a well-known bookstore owner to work on sales kits and upcoming articles.

But in addition, the booth drew a large number of Expo-goers into enthusiastic conversations on Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. "It was really encouraging," said Adamo, senior administrative assistant.

On June 4, authors Dru Cederquist (*The Story of Bahá'u'lláh*) and Gary Matthews (*The Challenge of Bahá'u'lláh*) signed roughly 100 copies each. That number was only a few less than at last year's BookExpo in Chicago -- even though the religion section got less foot traffic because it was moved off the show's main floor.

"Both our lead spring titles contain the name Bahá'u'lláh," said Minnerly, the general manager. "Although the name is difficult to pronounce for some, its presence in the title helps to blazon His Name on bookstore shelves."

The BookExpo itself was a "glimpse of how massive the publishing industry is," Adamo said.

Moore, the sales and marketing manager, noted, "Last year there were 194,000 new titles ... and 2.4 billion net books shipped in the U.S. alone. ... There's huge competition!"

Moore cited a passage from the Universal House of Justice's recent booklet *One Common Faith*: "Bookstores, magazine stands, Web sites and libraries struggle to satisfy an apparently inexhaustible public appetite for information on religious and spiritual subjects."

Statistics quoted at the BookExpo support this, especially in light of the fact that the religion category of the publishing industry is the only segment that grew in the past year.

"The National Assembly's trade publishing initiative has a spiritual foundation," Minnerly said. "We're producing new titles to meet the needs of the expanding base of spiritual seekers in this country.

"We've been learning how to do trade publishing well over the past three years. We want a wide range of books available in the market not only to interest and inform seekers, but also to support Bahá'í teaching and core activities."

In addition to the interest in religion as a trade segment, staff members were "impressed with the amount and different levels of teaching [of the Faith] that took place," reported Minnerly.

Many attendees asked about the Faith directly, taking copies of The Bahá'ís magazine.

"A number of retailers came up asking about the Faith and many [attendees] gave really positive feedback, like, 'Great to see the Bahá'í Faith represented!'" Adamo said.

Staff members recalled a Muslim publisher in a neighboring booth passing out copies of the Qur'án. After they began discussing Bahá'u'lláh's teachings on the oneness of humanity and the oneness of religion, members of the family at the booth responded, "We believe that, too!"

Bahá'í Publishing books can be purchased through local retail bookstores. Additional information can be found at <http://www.bahaibooksusa.com> .