

180 Years Later, Book of Mormon Nears 150 Million Copies

By Ryan Kunz

Church Magazines

As the 180th anniversary of the publication of the Book of Mormon approaches in March, the sacred volume of scripture approaches another milestone: the printing of its 150 millionth copy.

The first copies of the Book of Mormon appeared on the shelves of E. B. Grandin's bookstore on March 26, 1830. The initial printing totaled 5,000 copies. Between 1830 and 1987, more than 39 million copies were printed.

In 1988 President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said, "The time is long overdue for a massive flooding of the earth with the Book of Mormon" ("Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 4).

By 1990 the 50 millionth copy had been printed for distribution by members and missionaries. That number doubled by 2000, with the Church printing an average of one copy every seven seconds over the decade—a rate the Church has sustained to reach the projected 150 million by the end of 2010. The majority of the printing is done in Salt Lake City, USA, but presses in Brazil, Germany, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan are also used.

A Powerful Influence

One of the many reasons President Benson gave for filling the earth with the Book of Mormon was its influence. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught early Church leaders that "a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

Since that time the book's influence has been recognized by many. In 2003 *Book* magazine named the Book of Mormon one of the "20 Books

That Changed America," ranking it with such titles as Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

In August 2005 President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) promised members who read the Book of Mormon that "there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution

to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God" ("A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Liahona*, Aug. 2005, 2).

In October 2007 he said of the book: "Through all of these years critics have tried to explain it. They

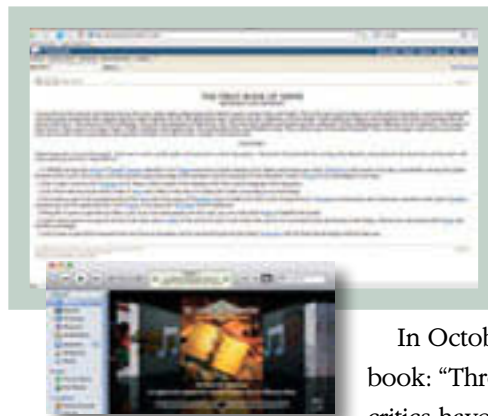
have spoken against it. They have ridiculed it. But it has outlived them all, and its influence today is greater than at any time in its history" ("The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain," *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 83).

The Work of Translation

That influence is due in part to the number of languages in which the book is flooding the earth.

The Book of Mormon has been published in its entirety in 82 languages, with selections of the book available in an additional 25. The first edition of the Book of Mormon after English was Danish in 1851, followed by French, Italian, Welsh, and German in 1852.

Additional languages are currently being



In addition to the print edition, the Book of Mormon is available in multiple digital formats.

produced. Translations completed in recent years include Guarani, a language spoken in Paraguay; Sinhala, spoken in Sri Lanka; Yoruba, a West African language; and Serbian, spoken throughout southeastern Europe.

Mojca Zeleznikar joined the Church before the Book of Mormon was available in her native language of Slovenian. Her testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel came by listening to the missionaries and studying the Book of Mormon in Croatian and English.

A few years after Sister Zeleznikar was baptized, the Book of Mormon was translated into Slovenian. When she read the translated text, she felt the full power of the words. “I felt the truth expand before me in clear simplicity and profound purity,” she recalled. “The voice of my Creator [spoke] to me in my own language—the language that my mother spoke to me.”

Flooding the Earth

In addition to the increasing number of translations available, the Church is also making use of advancing technologies to flood the earth with the Book of Mormon in different formats.

President Benson said, “In this age of electronic media and mass distribution of the printed word, God will hold us accountable if we do not now move the Book of Mormon in a monumental way” (“Flooding the Earth,” 4).

Audio recordings of the Book of Mormon in English, Portuguese, and Spanish are available at www.audio.lds.org, with other languages to come in 2010. The electronic text of the Book of Mormon is currently available in 16 languages at www.scripures.lds.org (click on **English** for a list of languages); more than 600,000 people use the online edition of the scriptures each month.



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The entire standard works and study helps can also be found in multiple languages on the CD-ROM *The Scriptures: Electronic Study Edition*, available through local distribution centers. A new DVD-ROM edition with another 20 languages will be released late this year.

The Church is also producing official scripture applications for mobile devices that will be available in 2010 in English, with other languages to follow.

The results of sharing the Book of Mormon are unmistakable. This keystone and additional testament of Jesus Christ helps hundreds of thousands of new converts each year come to know and accept the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. With more copies of the Book of Mormon available in more languages and more formats and with more missionaries and members to distribute it, the Book of Mormon and its influence continue to spread.

However, with billions of people yet to reach, the urgency President Benson felt to publish and distribute the book in 1988 remains today.

“We have the Book of Mormon,” he said. “We have the members, we have the missionaries, and the world has the need. The time is now!” (“Flooding the Earth,” 4). ■