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BOOKS, AUTHORS AND ALL THINGS BOOKISH

LeaLA aims high and wide in 2013 Spanish book festival

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Author Carlos Fuentes is one of the writers who will be celebrated at LeaLA, the Spanish-language book fair. (Dalkey Archive Press / May 17, 2012)

LeaLA aims high and wide in 2013 Spanish book festival

By Hector Tobar

2:13 PM PDT, April 30, 2013The organizers of the [LeaLA Spanish-language book fair](#) want to make the annual event in Los Angeles one of the biggest book gatherings in the United States. The schedule announced Tuesday for this year's event makes the organizers' ambitions clear: They want it to be a literary event with gravitas, but also one that draws the Spanish-speaking masses.

There will be rock and rollers, writers in English, publishing houses from as far away as Buenos Aires and Madrid, and lots of events for kids, said LeaLA director [Marisol Schulz](#). A former book editor whose writers included the late Carlos Fuentes, Schulz said the fair expects to draw 100,000 people to the three-day event at the Los Angeles Convention Center from May 17-19.

Some 317 publishers from the United States, Latin American and Spain will participate in the event, including Random House and the Penguin group, Schulz said. Nicholas Sparks, the bestselling author of 17 novels, will speak in a panel discussion (in English) about the importance to his work of translation.

Jorge Labastida, the director of Mexico's leading institution of letters, the Mexican Academy of Language, will preside over a plenary session. But for popular star power, there will be Beto Cuevas, lead singer for the Chilean rock group La Ley, who will present his book, "The Art of Being Beto Cuevas."

Last year, more than 40% of the attendees brought children. For many Spanish-speaking parents, [as I wrote in The Times after attending last year's LéaLA](#), Spanish literacy and books in Spanish are a bridge to literacy in English. This year, the events for children include activities and staged events about folk legends such as the Pachamama, the goddess revered in the Andes, and the plumed serpent of Mesoamerica, Quetzalcoatl.

The guest of honor at the event will be the city of Tijuana, and several stands at the event will celebrate the cuisine of northern Mexico. And the "La Tacopedia: The Encyclopedia of the Taco" of Mexico's Trilce Editions will be among the books presented.

And finally, Schulz herself will sit on a panel celebrating the late Carlos Fuentes, along with Silvia Lemus, the writer's widow.