

## Author Dan Brown kicks off Miami Book Fair International

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PEDRO PORTAL / EL NUEVO HERALD STAFF

Best selling author Dan Brown speaks at the opening presentation of the Miami Book Fair International at the Gusman Theater on Sunday, Nov. 17, 2013.

Bestselling author Dan Brown kicked off the 30th anniversary celebration of Miami Book Fair International by discussing science, religion, being dressed in a kilt by Tom Hanks, and his first not-very-bestselling book *The Giraffe, the Pig and the Pants on Fire*, written at age 5 (with a print run of one).

Not exactly a sign of *The Da Vinci Code* to come. But maybe a necessary step in getting him to Miami, a place he seemed quite happy to be, especially, he said, after book fair chairman Mitchell Kaplan introduced him to Joe's Stone Crab (thumbs-up on the stone crabs, if you were wondering).

"I don't speak professionally very often, but when the Miami Book Fair asks you to celebrate their 30th anniversary, you don't say no," he told the crowd at the Gusman Center's Olympia Theater.

Kaplan took the stage briefly first, thanking the crowd for being the driving force in keeping the fair, which runs through Sunday at Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus, on the literary map.

"We all know what the knock on Miami is," he said. "The Miami Book Fair has gone a long way toward changing that."

The boisterous crowd backed up that idea that Miami dwellers are passionate about books and those brave (or crazy) enough to write them. Under the hazy clouds drifting across the ceiling, they happily applauded Brown's arrival on stage.

Authors, take note: This is how you keep a big audience laughing and attentive. Be witty, smart and tell funny stories about being a kid. If you can throw in a cool story about finding yourself alone on a movie set with the Mona Lisa and an albino monk, even better.

Author of the recent bestseller *Inferno*, his fourth novel about the adventures of code-breaker and Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, Brown was funny and charming, talking about his childhood and introducing his parents to the appreciative crowd. His father, a math teacher, and his mother, a church organist, who were sitting in the front row, were his first introduction to the subjects that would preoccupy him as a writer (and earn the ire of some religious groups).

He spoke of church services attended as a child where his mother played hymns ("I liked the

donuts,” he confessed) and how he discussed space and the concept of infinity with his father.

“I was happy in their two worlds,” he said, adding that to him, science and religion are “two different languages attempting to tell the same story.”

Brown also talked about the making of The Da Vinci Code and the differences between writing a novel and filming one. The acts have little in common, but you do have to complete the first one before you ever get a chance at Tom Hanks helping you into a kilt for the wrap party.

The evening began with an inaugural ceremony that included performances by the Suite Hispania ensemble and an appearance by the prince and princess of Spain.