

9-16-2015

## Press release : 2015 : 09 : 16 : Professor's Book to Be Presented to Spain's King, Queen

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### Recommended Citation

University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Office of University Advancement., "Press release : 2015 : 09 : 16 : Professor's Book to Be Presented to Spain's King, Queen" (2015). *USFSP News and Press Releases*. 953.  
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# USFSP News

## Professor's Book to Be Presented to Spain's King, Queen



*Dr. J. Michael Francis, Hough Family Chair of Florida*

*Studies at USF St. Petersburg.*

In May, USFSP Professor J. Michael Francis released a commemorative book “St. Augustine: America’s First City, a Story of Unbroken History & Enduring Spirit.” What he did not expect was the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that would result from its publication: an opportunity to meet the King and Queen of Spain.

Francis, Hough Family Chair of Florida Studies at USF St. Petersburg, is one of the nation’s leading experts on 16th century Florida history. He wrote the book as part of the City of St. Augustine’s 450th year commemoration. Dana Ste. Claire, director of the City of St. Augustine’s 450<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Commission invited him to discuss the opportunity.

“After some lengthy discussions with Dana and with the publishers, we agreed that we wanted a richly illustrated book with contemporary photographs of St. Augustine, as well as rare images of colonial-era maps and documents,” Francis said. He described the book as unique in its scope, images, and thematic coverage. “It draws on original primary documents from Spain as well as a long tradition of outstanding and ongoing research carried out by generations of Florida scholars.”

Since its publication in May, the book has been widely featured throughout the city's celebration. Francis said copies of the book were presented to city officials and special guests, including Ramon Gil-Casares, Spain's ambassador to the United States, and Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley.

Shortly after the book was published, Spain's Foreign Ministry commissioned a Spanish translation, which will be given to King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia of Spain during their visit to St. Augustine on Sept. 18. Francis said he will be present at a luncheon with politicians and members of the city's 450th Anniversary Commemoration Commission to meet the king and queen.

"To have written the official 450<sup>th</sup> book was a real honor, and it's a unique privilege to give a copy to the king and queen of Spain," he said. "It's certainly a privilege. I hope they have a chance to look at it and read it."

Francis said his work relating to Spanish paleography and early colonial Florida history, along with a vast amount of time spent in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Spain, has been invaluable in helping him write the book.

"All of these research projects helped me write the history of St. Augustine and continue to provide valuable new material and insights that I can incorporate into my classes and my writing," he said.