



# S&B Handbook



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## Introduction

In 1998 Paul Sebes founded the agency not only out of a passion for reading and books, but also because of a deep interest in the publisher's trade and the people behind the books, the writers and their stories. He began with a modest representation list of Dutch authors, which quickly grew. In 2010 he expanded further with a large number of American, British and Australian clients after taking over the agency from Caroline van Gelderen, and then spread out into Scandinavia and the rest of Europe. In 2016 Willem Bisseling, who has been working with Paul since 2005, became co-director and Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency as we know it was born. The goal, however, remained the same: to bring the best and finest stories from authors to readers, wherever in the world they may be, and not just literary prose and literary narrative nonfiction, but also commercial fiction and nonfiction, YA, poetry, memoirs, cookbooks and thrillers.

What once started with a short list of domestic authors has since grown into one of the European mainland's biggest internationally operating agencies, with a large number of Dutch, Scandinavian and English-language authors, three branches (Amsterdam, London, Stockholm), twenty employees in four countries and more than 1700 deals a year. We represent thousands of authors from around the world in all genres, from debuts to established authors, including many prize-winning and bestselling authors, with a significant number of #1 bestsellers. We are one of the few truly 'full service' agencies which represents books from every language in every other language territory, as well as digital, theater, television and film rights.



## Our agents

### Paul Sebes

'I am Paul Sebes, founder of Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency. In my early twenties, I was working as an editorial assistant at Uitgeverij Prometheus, when I had the opportunity to go to the Frankfurt Bookfair. At some point, my former boss asked me to pick up a manuscript in the Agent Centre, a hall at the Fair where the literary agents were working, and when I walked in and saw them all negotiating at small tables, I knew right away: this is me. I'm not a publisher or an editor, I am a literary agent.

Eight years later, I left Prometheus and opened the agency. Every day I still think that I have the best job in the world: assessing and selecting manuscripts, working together with authors and submitting new manuscripts to publishers. Talking with different people from around the world about writers and books, to generate excitement about that book and subsequently make a deal – I still find it one of the most beautiful things there is. These days I no longer do it alone, but with a dedicated team of international colleagues.

The largest deal that I've ever negotiated (and the largest one ever in the Netherlands) was for Michelle and Barack Obama's memoirs. I've also made deals in the Netherlands and Scandinavia for authors such as Paul Auster, Bill Clinton, Bono, Michael Cunningham, Jonathan Franzen, Rachel Kushner, Prince Harry, the J.D. Salinger estate, the John Steinbeck estate and many more. Globally, I represent dozens of Danish, British, Finnish, Dutch and Swedish authors. Most notably for LAST STOP AUSCHWITZ by Holocaust-survivor Eddy de Wind, which has been sold in 35 countries and has gone on to become a bestseller in many of them. I am looking for good literary novels, exceptional thrillers or serious nonfiction in Dutch, English or one of the Scandinavian languages. Ideally with a lot of international potential.'





## **Willem Bisseling**

'My name is Willem Bisseling, co-owner of Sebes & Bisseling since 2016. After my Dutch language studies in Leiden, I wanted to learn more about publishing. I started the master program Editor at the UvA and met Paul through a mutual friend. In 2005, I started co-reading manuscripts and soon after that I joined Paul's team. Together with Paul, I developed the Dutch branch of the agency and within a few years we took on many new authors. We now represent over a hundred Dutch authors and thousands of Americans, Brits and Scandinavians.

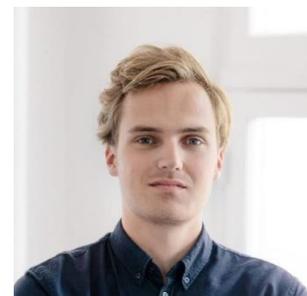
I am proud to have created a high-quality and industry-leading agency at which I work passionately every day. My love for stories and the people who write them is still as great as it was 15 years ago. Whether it is literary fiction, a commercial thriller, a cookbook, narrative fiction, popular science or celebrity memoirs - as long as the manuscript is a gem within its genre.'





## **Rik Kleuver**

'My name is Rik Kleuver. I have been working at Sebes & Bisseling since 2016, where I started as an intern and assistant and now focus as a literary agent on the worldwide sales of Dutch, Scandinavian and English-speaking authors. I no longer only do this for the Amsterdam office, but together with Paul I also run the offices in London and Stockholm. When taking on new authors, my preference is high-quality non-fiction in the field of (popular) science, history, nature, health, philosophy, psychology and sports. On the narrative side, I occasionally represent a literary novel or memoir.'





## **Lester Hekking**

'I'm Lester Hekking, vice president of Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency, specializing in children's books and YA. I also oversee the agency's contract department.

Twelve years ago, after my studies, I was well on my way to becoming an English teacher at a secondary school in Amsterdam, until by chance an internship came my way at a literary agency – at that time I hardly knew what that was. After my internship, a place became available as an assistant. I slowly grew into my role here, and didn't leave. Firstly, because the vibrant international publishing world fascinates me. I like the contact with agents and publishers from all kinds of countries the best there is. But I also stayed because Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency has developed a large and close-knit team over the years with which I like to go to drinks, book presentations and fairs.

I prefer to work on children's books in the broadest sense of the word (from picture books for the youngest to exciting young adult novels) and on cookbooks. Finding the right publisher for a book and negotiating the right conditions from the author makes it an exciting and challenging profession that I enjoy every day.'





## **Jeanine Langenberg**

“My name is Jeanine Langenberg and I joined Sebes & Bisseling in 2008. I represent American, Australian, British, Irish and Canadian clients in The Netherlands and Scandinavia. I also help sell translation rights to Sebes & Bisseling titles all over the world.

I was born in Washington D.C. and raised in The Netherlands, Australia, Ireland and Belgium before moving back to The Netherlands. I hold a master’s degree in English Language and Culture from the University of Leiden and a master’s degree in Editing from University of Amsterdam.

I’m interested in a wide range of nonfiction books including cooking, health, popular science, psychology, philosophy, travel, business, history, nature, politics, gift, humor and parenting. In fiction, I love to read all kinds of novels including literary fiction, upmarket women’s fiction, romance, suspense, historical fiction, crossover and fantasy.’





## **Christiaan Boesenach**

'I am Christiaan Boesenach, literary agent at Sebes & Bisseling. After my studies in Dutch and Philosophy and finally the master Editor/editor at the UvA, I started working at the agency in 2017 as an assistant, where I have been working as an agent for a number of years now. When I'm not working with books or reading them, there's always a movie I want to see, which I regularly write about.

At Sebes & Bisseling I represent various British, American and Scandinavian clients. I also represent several Dutch authors and I am always looking for new talent. I prefer reading and representing literary fiction and narrative non-fiction; stories that show you the world a little differently or in a distinctive style.'





## What we do

1. You are welcome to submit 50 pages of your manuscript along with a short synopsis and brief CV via the website. All manuscripts will be read and assessed. If we are interested, we will contact you and ask for more material. Naturally, all submitted material will be treated with confidentiality.
2. If we see potential in your manuscript, you will be contacted to set up a meeting to discuss the book, our approach and the way we work.
3. If we feel we are a good match, we can enter into a representation agreement that defines our working method and our commission. In theory, this agreement is for all future books and exclusively with us.
4. We will then work with you on the manuscript and a corresponding book proposal until we are both satisfied. Upon completion, these will be submitted to publishers, usually several at once, starting in the language in which the manuscript is written.
5. Those publishers will then read it and let us know if they are interested in meeting you. If this is the case, we will set up a meeting and talk with the interested publisher(s).
6. If a publisher is still interested after this conversation, they will make an offer which includes an advance payment and royalty rates. If many publishers are interested, we may receive multiple bids, and in that case we will set up an auction. The winner will be the publisher who makes the best or most convincing offer, not necessarily the highest bidder. You decide. We often try to keep translation and film rights, to sell separately.



7. We will then negotiate the book contract with the winning publisher on your behalf. This can be signed as soon as we agree to the terms. We will invoice the advance and pay you after our commission has been deducted (on which, if you live in the Netherlands, 21% VAT is charged, then paid out to you).

8. The publishing house will then edit as well, design and eventually publish your book. As your literary agents we will remain involved throughout publication – and we can assist you with PR and marketing.

9. Further, if we also see sufficient international potential, we may start working on a sample translation of your book and submit this to publishers around the world, repeating the previous steps.

10. Once your book is out in the world, we can then proceed on to your next one.

11. You will receive annual royalty statements from the year after your book was published. Once the advance has been earned out you will begin earning royalties on your book. We will deduct commission and VAT, and then transfer these to you.



## What to send

Please send us the first 50 pages of your manuscript, along with a short synopsis. The synopsis should contain the following information:

### **FICTION**

- the genre
- the most important themes in 3-5 nouns (e.g. love, guilt, innocence, betrayal, jealousy, revenge, power etc.)
- the tone and style in 3-5 adjectives (e.g. light, entertaining, thrilling, serious, matter of fact, engrossing etc)
- 2-3 sentences about the main characters
- 1-2 sentences about the setting
- 1-2 sentences about the time period
- the plot, the story in 4-5 sentences
- total word count of the complete manuscript in Word

### **NONFICTION**

- the type of nonfiction (e.g. journalistic, scientific, academic, pop culture etc.)
- the field or area of expertise (e.g. history, social sciences, natural science, entertainment etc)
- the subject in 2-3 sentences
- the most important themes in 3-5 nouns
- the tone and style in 3-5 adjectives
- total word count of the complete manuscript in Word

Thank you for your trust in our agency and good luck. We look forward to receiving your submission.