



Sebes & Bisseling Handbook

Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency is Northern Europe's largest full-service literary agency with offices in Amsterdam, London and Stockholm. Our experienced team of passionate agents represent and guide authors and their books from all over the world, selling book rights in all languages and editions. We serve authors across genres and negotiate the best possible deals for them based on our core values of quality, innovation, professionalism, diligence and ambition.

Introduction

In 1998 Paul Sebes founded the agency not only out of a passion for reading and books, but also a deep interest in the publisher's trade and the people behind the books, the writers and their stories. He began with a modest list of Dutch authors, which quickly grew. In 2010 he expanded with a large number of American, British and Australian clients after taking over the agency from Caroline van Gelderen, and then extended into Scandinavia and further into 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 today, was born. The goal, however, remained the same: to bring the best and finest stories from authors to readers, all over the world. Sebes & Bisseling represents literary prose and serious nonfiction, as well as commercial fiction and nonfiction, YA, poetry, memoirs, cookbooks and thrillers.

What once began with a short list of local authors has since grown into one of Europe's largest international agencies with numerous Dutch, Scandinavian and English-language authors, three branches (Amsterdam, London, Stockholm), more than 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. We are one of the few truly full-service agencies which represent books from every language into every other language territory, including theater, television and film rights.

Literary agent

Paul Sebes

‘I am the founder of Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency. In my early twenties I was working as an editorial assistant at publishing house Prometheus, when I had the opportunity to go to the Frankfurt Book Fair. At some point, my then boss asked me to pick up a manuscript in the Literary Agents & Scouts Centre and when I walked in and saw them negotiating at small tables, I knew right away: this is me. I’m not a publisher or an editor, I am a literary agent. Talking with different people from around the world about writers and books, to generate excitement about that book to then make a deal – I still find it one of the most beautiful things there is.

Eight years later, I left Prometheus and started the agency. Every day I still think I have the best job in the world: assessing and selecting manuscripts, working together with authors, submitting new manuscripts to publishers and closing deals. These days I no longer do it alone, but with twenty colleagues in four countries.

The biggest deal I have 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, Finish, Dutch and Swedish authors. One of my largest deals was for LAST STOP AUSCHWITZ by Holocaust-survivor Eddy de Wind, which has been sold to 25+ countries and has gone on to become a bestseller in many of them.

I prefer to represent good literary novels, an exceptional thriller and serious non-fiction (with an emphasis on memoir, (auto)biography, history, philosophy, linguistic and social sciences) in Dutch, English or one of the Scandinavian languages, and ideally with a lot of international potential.’

Literary agent
Willem Bisseling

‘My name is Willem Bisseling, and I have been co-owner of Sebes & Bisseling since 2016. After my Dutch language studies in Leiden, I wanted to learn more about publishing. I started the editing master’s programme at the University of Amsterdam and met Paul through a mutual friend. In 2005 I started co-reading manuscripts and soon afterwards 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 where I work passionately every day. My love for stories and the people who write them is just as great as it was years ago. I’m always looking for literary fiction, a commercial thriller, a cookbook, narrative fiction, popular science or celebrity memoirs – as long as the manuscript is a gem in its genre.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Literary agent **Vere Bank**

‘I am Vere Bank and have been working at S&B as a literary agent. During my bachelor’s degree in English Language and Culture, I did an internship at the agency and knew I wanted to go into the book trade. After my master’s degree in editing at the University of Amsterdam, I worked at the Dutch publishing house Ambo | Anthos and as a consultant, before returning to the agency.

Together with Lester Hekking, I now deal mainly with children’s and youth books, from colourful picture books to cool YA fantasy. I’m also part of the contracts department – I enjoy the combination of business and creative work.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Literary agent
Christiaan Boesenach

‘I am Christiaan Boesenach, literary agent at Sebes & Bisseling. After my studies in Dutch and Philosophy and a master’s degree in editing at the University of Amsterdam, I started working at the agency as an assistant. I have now been working as an agent for a number of years. When not working with books or reading them, I’ve always got a movie playing, which I regularly write about for Cineville’s website.

At Sebes & Bisseling I represent various British, American and Scandinavian clients. I also represent several Dutch authors and am always looking for new talent. I prefer to read literary fiction and narrative nonfiction; stories that show the world a little differently, or a style of writing that builds a new world.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Literary agent
Lester Hekking

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

Twelve years ago, after my studies, I was well on track to becoming an English teacher at a secondary school in Amsterdam, until by chance an internship at a literary agency came my way – at the time I hardly knew what that was. After my internship, a position as an assistant became available. I slowly grew into my role here and never left. Firstly, because the vibrant international publishing world fascinates me. I enjoy the contact with agents and publishers from all kinds of countries. But I also stayed because Sebes & Bisseling Literary Agency has over the years developed a large and close-knit team I enjoy going out with, such as to book presentations and fairs.

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

Literary agent
Haico Kaashoek

‘I joined Sebes & Bisseling UK after working for a number of years in foreign rights at the De Bezige Bij Publishing House in Amsterdam and as a literary translator. Before that I grew up in California, where I studied English and Philosophy. I am actively building a list of fiction and non-fiction writers working in English.

Both in fiction and non-fiction my tastes are wide-ranging. Having lived in various countries and coming from a mixed background, I am drawn to novels with a strong sense of place, as well as those about immigration, community, identity and memory. I am always interested to read voices that are under-represented or from (historical) worlds I have yet to encounter. I admire works that make me think critically and reconsider moral questions of everyday life, be it through a moving storyline or biting satire, though always with a certain elegance of style. This can include more radical experimentations with form.

On the non-fiction side of things I am seeking ambitious or playful takes on gentrification, ecology, politics, (deep) history, philosophy, technology and science. I have a soft spot for essays and cultural histories of food. I am also always happy to hear from writers who may have an idea for a book, but have yet to start writing.

Some of my favourite authors are: Fernanda Melchor, Percival Everett, Svetlana Alexievich, Jessica Au, Selva Almada, Claudia Rankine, Paulo Scott, Olga Tokarczuk, Antonio di Benedetto, Dan Saladino, Rachel Cusk, Maxim Februari, David Graeber, Jacques Ranciere and Barry Lopez.’

Literary agent
Rik Kleuver

‘My name is Rik Kleuver. I have been working at Sebes & Bisseling as a literary agent. 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. Together with Paul I also run the offices in London and Stockholm. When considering new authors, my preference is for high-quality non-fiction in the fields of (popular) science, history, nature, health, philosophy, psychology and sports. Regarding more narrative works, I occasionally represent a literary novel or memoir.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Literary agent
Jeanine Langenberg

‘My name is Jeanine Langenberg and I joined Sebes & Bisseling in 2008. I represent American, Australian, British, Canadian clients in The Netherlands and Scandinavia. I also help sell translation rights for S&B Amsterdam 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 non-fiction books including cooking, health, popular science, psychology, philosophy, travel, business, history, nature, politics, self-help, humor and parenting. When it comes to fiction, I love to read all kinds of novels including literary fiction, upmarket women’s fiction, romance, suspense, historical fiction, crossover and fantasy.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Literary agent
Fatiha Panjwani

‘My name is Fatiha Panjwani and, after obtaining a BA in Literary and Cultural Analysis and an MA in Publishing at the University of Amsterdam, I started at Sebes & Bisseling as an intern. I now work as a junior literary agent, as well as support the contracts administration department. Personally, I enjoy reading fiction, memoirs, and essays, but I prefer to look beyond my own taste when I’m at work. I find it important to highlight new voices, unique perspectives and anything that is innovative or special within its genre, regardless of what that genre may be.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Literary agent
Marit Versantvoort

‘My name is Marit Versantvoort, I started as an intern at Sebes & Bisseling after studying European Studies and finishing a master’s in editing, both at the University of Amsterdam. I am now a literary agent and represent Dutch authors as well as American and British clients. When I’m not reading you can usually find me trying out new recipe’s or at a new restaurant.

I have special interest in cookery and romance, while also enjoying literary and commercial fiction, health and lifestyle books, music, art, politics and true crime.

Any book that’s refreshing, new and beautiful will attract my attention and I look forward to working on many types of projects. The books that I love the most are ones that really take you into their world and make you feel like you belong there.’

LITERARY AGENCY

Jan Douwe Westhoeve

‘My name is Jan Douwe Westhoeve and I work as an assistant agent at Sebes & Bisseling. I help Paul, Rik, Jeanine with everything they need to find and sell the best books. I love meeting writers and editors from all over the world.

I’m a true everything-reader, but I’m particularly drawn to literary fiction and narrative nonfiction. I enjoy reading stories that broaden my horizons and expose me to authors from different countries and cultures. I’m always on the lookout for new voices and perspectives, and for books that move me, surprise me, or get me thinking.’

LITERARY AGENCY

What we do:

1. You are welcome to submit 50 pages of your manuscript along with a short synopsis and your CV via our [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 confidentially.
2. If we see sufficient potential you will be contacted and we can set up a meeting to discuss the manuscript, our approach and the way we work.
3. After meeting you, we will decide whether you are a good match. If so, we can enter into a representation agreement that describes our working method and our commission. In theory, this agreement is for any future books and exclusively with us.
4. We will then get started on your manuscript and work on a book proposal together until we are both satisfied. On completion these will be submitted to multiple publishers 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 with the interested publisher(s).
6. If a publisher is still interested, they will make an offer which includes an advance payment and royalty rates. If more than one publisher is 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 offer, not necessarily the highest bidder. You decide.

What we do:

7. We will then negotiate the book contract on your behalf. As soon as we agree to the terms, the agreement can be signed. Then we will invoice the advance and pay you after our commission has been deducted. In the Netherlands 21% VAT is to be paid on our commission.
8. The publishing house will edit your book, design and eventually publish it. As your literary agent, we will remain involved throughout the publication process – and we can help you with the promotion and marketing of your book.
9. If there is sufficient international potential, we will also start working on a sample translation of your book and submit it to international publishers, repeating the previous steps.
10. Following the publication of your book, we will also represent your next book(s).
11. Starting the year after your book is published, you will receive annual royalty statements. Once the advance has been earned out, you will begin earning royalties. S&B will transfer these to you after deducting commission and VAT.

LITERARY AGENCY

What to send:

You can send us your manuscript via: <https://sebesbisseling.nl/en/contact-english/>

Please send the first 50 pages of your manuscript, along with a short synopsis containing:

For fiction:

- the genre
- most important themes in 3-5 nouns (love, guilt, innocence, betrayal, jealousy, revenge, power etc.)
- tone and style in 3-5 adjectives (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 or story in 4-5 sentences
- the total word count of the complete manuscript in Word

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What to send:

For non-fiction:

- the type of non-fiction (journalistic, scientific, academic, pop culture etc.)
- the field or area of expertise (history, social sciences, beta science, entertainment etc.)
- the subject in 2-3 sentences
- 1-2 sentences about the time period
- the most important themes in 3-5 nouns
- the tone and style in 3-5 adjectives
- the total word count of the complete manuscript in Word

To find out more about our authors and recent deals, please click [here](#).



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