

More Information About Literary Agents

By Holly Lisle

ABOUT AGENTS IN GENERAL

Please realize that finding good representation requires a major effort on your part, professional and courteous conduct, and a top-quality product. About using the term “product” to describe your work: do remember that your book is your product; not your baby. You’ll probably have to give it a nose job and whack off at least one of its arms before it reaches publication, so start thinking of it as your product now. The surgery hurts a lot less that way.

Don’t query any agent before you’ve completed your manuscript—no reputable agent is interested in an unfinished first novel. The exception to this would be if you have a hot topical idea and impeccable access to an otherwise inaccessible subject, and time is of the essence. Think celebrity tell-all (non-fiction) in this category. Otherwise, finish the book. I can think of no instance where fiction would be better served by that sort of hurry-up high-pressure sales pitch. Even if you’ve published a few short stories in professional publications, you’ll be better served to have a completed novel in hand when you start querying. That way if you generate interest, you can immediately ship the whole thing off to the interested agent.

The majority of queries any agent receives—probably around 99%—are rejected because they lack whatever spark that agent is looking for. This doesn’t mean they’re hopeless—what is wrong for one agent might be right for another. Remember that the agent you want will love the genre you work in and know

the publishers and editors who publish it, **and** will love the work you do. Make sure the work you send out is your best, that it is professionally formatted, free of errors, and entirely yours. (Which means don't query about anything to which you do not own clear copyright. Books that contain Star Trek and Star Wars and Dragonlance characters are examples of this). Also, don't query every agent in Writer's Market regarding your novel. Read their descriptions of what they're looking for and believe them—an agent who doesn't like science fiction won't like your science fiction, and won't appreciate having his time wasted by yet another beginner who has proved by querying him that he is a beginner, and worse yet, can't follow instructions.

When contacting any agent, have a career plan in mind. Know what the next book you want to write is, and have an idea about the next three or four. Know what you want to accomplish in five years, and in ten. The odds are that your first published book isn't going to set the world on fire, but if you have a plan to offer that shows you know how to build on what you're doing already, (instead of coming to the table with one book and no idea of what you'll do for an encore) you'll have a better chance of finding representation.

SPECIFICS ABOUT MY AGENT

Lots of people have asked. Here's the information on my agent.

Robin Rue of Writers House, represents me. She will be a tough market to hit – she represents about 35 writers, and notes that she is in a position to be selective. Robin is a member of the Association of Authors' Representatives. She was an editor before becoming an agent, she represents literary and adult fiction, and she has a special love for YA literature. Among her clients are Linda Howard, Richard Lederer, SL Viehl, and the estate of VC Andrews.

If you would like to query Robin regarding representation of your own work, send a single-page query letter that includes your previous publications, if any, along with a brief description of your completed book, including its genre, word count, and subject matter. You may also include a single-page, single-spaced synopsis of the book. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Do not send the manuscript itself unless requested, and if requested, remember to enclose a manuscript envelope or box with return postage sufficient to cover the cost of returning your manuscript. Unsolicited manuscripts are returned unopened. Query first.

You can mention that you saw the recommendation for Ms. Rue on my site; please do not say that I recommended your work or that you and I are close personal friends. She will check, and you will damage your credibility and ruin your chances.

If your work shows merit but does not strike her fancy, she may recommend you to one of the other agents in the agency.

You may contact her at the following address:

Robin Rue

Writers House

21 W. 26th Street

New York, NY 10010

n_faqs

Contents © Holly Lisle. <https://hollylisle.com> All Rights Reserved