

Interview with literary agent Barbara Collins Rosenberg

by Dianna Love Snell, 2007

Bio:

Barbara Collins Rosenberg founded The Rosenberg Group in June 1998. Prior to becoming an agent Barbara spent nine years in college textbook publishing, first as a development editor and finally as a Senior Editor for the Fine and Performing Arts. Her editorial years provided Barbara with experience in negotiating contracts for books, supplements, Web sites, CD ROMs, electronic books and video packages.

Today Barbara represents college textbook authors, trade nonfiction authors, romance authors and authors of women's fiction. "What I love best about being an agent is that I'm not restricted to what I can or cannot take on. If I think a manuscript is worthy I can represent it, of course I don't take on things too far a field. I stick with the areas in which I have contacts and a certain expertise."

Your agency name and location:

Barbara Collins Rosenberg
The Rosenberg Group
A Literary Agency
23 Lincoln Avenue
Marblehead, MA 01945
781-990-1341
781-990-1344 (fax)

How long have you been an agent and what was your path to becoming one?

I've been an agent for nine years. I had been an acquisitions editor for college level textbooks and I saw a need for agents with an expertise in that arena, initially I planned to only represent college textbooks and scholarly and trade nonfiction. One of my college authors confided to me that she wrote romance and urged me to represent her work. Knowing nothing about romance other than it was something I read, I attended my first RWA meeting in 1998 (it was in Anaheim and my beloved New York Yankees were staying in the same hotel) and took my first romance client on in 1999.

How many authors do you represent and would you care to list a few? What is the majority sub-genre you represent?

I generally have about 25 active authors on my roster at any given time. The only genre I represent is romance/women's fiction. In nonfiction I run the gamut from sports, to wine, to infertility and more. My favorite nonfiction subject area is sports.

What genres are you acquiring and are there any specifics about those genres you'd like the writers to know.

I'm looking at most subgenres of romance, but do not represent inspirational. I'd like writers to know the market they're writing for and to meet the mores of that market – no 45K single titles, no 300K historicals.

What services do you offer an author?

I read all manuscripts, and while I'm not a copyeditor I do edit as I read. Before a writer sells I make editorial suggestions that I think may make the work more market ready. I conference with the writer regarding where he or she thinks they would like to see their work, where their career might be in three, five or even ten years, and, while I am certainly not a publicist, I offer a bit of guidance in how to garner publicity and how and when to hire a professional publicist.

What do you expect of your authors?

As I've already stated, I expect a knowledge of the market, while it rarely happens when submissions come from RWA members, I'm continually surprised at what writers think is acceptable. With authors whose work has been bought, I expect them to meet their deadlines and when they cannot I expect to be kept apprised of the situation so I can alert their editor. I expect authors to understand that publishing is a business and with each new manuscript they should learn about the editorial, production, marketing and sales aspects of the business. I expect authors to act in a professional manner with me, their agent, and with their editor. Of course I commiserate with them when their cover is not what they envision or when their editor's notes seem excessive, and when appropriate, I intervene on the author's behalf.

How do you prefer submissions based on a conference appointment request?

I accept everything via snail mail.

What is your pet peeve to do with submissions and/or working with writers?

Well, I've stated how I feel about market knowledge, but another pet peeve is what I like to call the Chinese menu query letter. Again, these almost never come from RWA members, because the RWA does a wonderful job of teaching writers the proper protocols, but I get query letters that pitch me five projects in three fiction genres, a screenplay and a memoir. Needless to say, I respond with a polite no thank you. Also, I automatically reject any query that has my name improperly spelled.

Is there anything you'd like to add that you were not asked?

I would like to say that I'm always happy to talk about the publishing business. I encourage writers to ask me about it – note I write the business, not their work or problems they're having with their agents, editors, or readers. I believe the more a writer knows about the business the more successful he or she will become. So please, do feel free to approach me, but not while I'm in the ladies' room!

© breakintofiction.com
2007

All rights reserved **First Published in GRW Galley in**

www.breakintofiction.com

~*~