



A Conversation With... Pam Ahearn

By OCC/RWA Member Sandy Chvostal

Part of a series of editor and agent profiles from the 2004 RWA National Conference in Dallas.

At a glance

Agent Pam Ahearn spent eight years as an editor before opening her own agency in 1992. She wants authors who “stay true to your vision and voice.”

What is the most important characteristic a successful writer needs in today’s market?

“Flexibility,” says literary agent Pam Ahearn. “Flexibility — combined with persistence — is something I respect. A writer who can change, try something different, will be able to survive no matter how the market fluctuates.”

Ahearn, who describes herself as a “hands-on” agent, has been in the publishing business for over twenty years. She has a masters degree in Comparative Literature and worked as an editorial assistant at Bantam before moving to New Orleans. There, she joined a small agency before creating her own agency in 1992.

Although based in Louisiana, Ahearn travels to New York six to eight times a year to meet with

editors.

Since being on her own, she has sold over two hundred books to various houses including Warner, St. Martin’s, Berkley, NAL, Leisure, Kensington, Ballantine, Pocket, Silhouette, and most recently, to one of Harlequin’s newest lines, Bombshell.

She doesn’t charge a reading fee, and works with subagents to handle foreign rights when necessary.

What she’s looking for

Ahearn’s current author list includes thirty-four authors. Of these, roughly 70 percent are romance (contemporary, historical and chick lit). The remaining percentage are suspense.

She doesn’t represent hard science fiction, westerns, children’s literature or inspirational.

She is always in the market for new writers, but is very selective.

“Most books these days have to be so strong in order to sell,” she says. “A distinctive, individual voice will catch my attention as well as something I haven’t seen before, something that goes beyond the ordinary.”

Her ideal client

The writer Ahearn is seeking is, “Someone who’s proud of their work, but not fanatical. Someone who wants an agent they can bounce ideas off of, not an agent who’s a servant. Someone who’s looking for a long-term relationship with an agent.”

And, although she encourages flexibility, Ahearn also warns authors to, “Be yourself. Don’t try to be someone you aren’t. Stay true to your vision and your voice. It’s very apparent when a writer is just making noises, not writing something they care about.”

How to Submit

The Ahearn Agency, Inc. is seeking new and established authors.

What to send:

One-page query with SASE

Snail mail:

2021 Pine St., New Orleans, LA 70118-5456

E-mail:

pahearn@aol.com

Note: Attachments will not be opened.