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INDUSTRY NEWS

NEWS

Sam Hiyate: loner no more

March 31, 2009 | 6:41 PM | By Eric Emin Wood

For years, the Toronto-based literary agency The Rights Factory has been a one-man show. The man in charge, Sam Hiyate, handled every author on the company roster, from the most established to the humblest unknown. This week, however, he takes on his first full-time associate: former intern Alisha Sevigny.

"I have about 40 clients," Hiyate says. "[And] I feel that I'm almost at the point where I'm not going to be able to return [their] phone calls."

Strictly speaking, this isn't Hiyate's first partnership. Last year, he announced – then quietly rescinded – a partnership with U.K. book packager Silvia Langford, who even went as far as to buy a minority share in the Rights Factory. "We were very close to doing it, we announced it, and then we decided not to [proceed]," is all Hiyate will say on the matter. He adds, however, that Langford no longer owns shares in the agency.

Hiyate met Sevigny when she was a student in his publishing class at Ryerson, which led him to hire her as an intern last year. One of the things that convinced him to take her on full-time was her initiative. "One of our [clients] passed on a manuscript that a friend had written, and she spent about six months working with the writer on it," he says. That book, Bruce Geddes' novel *The Opposite of Winning*, is now her first project. "She's having meetings with publishers this week."

Going forward, Sevigny says she's open to all kinds of material. "I don't like people who say, 'I'm only going to do this,'" she says. "I'm open. I love literary fiction, I love non-fiction. I did a lot of creative non-fiction in university, and I like women's fiction. Basically, if the writing is good, if the story is good, it does not have to fall into any kind of specific category." To date, Sevigny has signed eight clients, and is actively looking for more.

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