



Canadian Professional Writers Survey

*a profile of the freelance writing sector
in canada*

May 2006

Prepared by

Professional Writers Association of Canada (PWAC)

Quantum Communications

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acknowledgements

PWAC acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Magazine Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage toward our project costs.

The wordmark for 'Canada' is written in a large, black, serif font. A small red maple leaf is positioned above the letter 'a'.

PWAC also acknowledges with gratitude the support of:

Access Copyright
The Writers Union of Canada (TWUC)
The Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ)
The Canadian Media Guild
Magazines Canada
(UNEQ)
Ontario Arts Council

PWAC acknowledges the following members for their generous volunteer time and work:

Gordon Graham, Suzanne Boles, Liz Warwick, Sandy Crawley, Jodi DeLong, Katherine Gibson, Tanya Gulliver, Liz Katynski, Bruce Wilson, Heather Kent, Cynthia Dusseault, Nate Hendley, Chris Moore, Kathe Lieber, Robert Bott, Jane Mundy, Lisa Bendall, Ross Mavis, Andria Hill, Tracy Lyn Moland, Craig Silverman, Barb Cottrell, donalee Moulton

Special thanks to Clare Leporati for design, layout and general support.

PWAC Executive Director John Degen oversaw the Canadian Professional Writers Survey Project.

executive summary

The bottom line for the Canadian Professional Writers Survey results is... a shrinking bottom line.

Real earnings for freelance writers in Canada shrank in the decade between 1995 and 2005. In 1995, respondents to the PWAC survey indicated that their average annual income before taxes was approximately \$26,500. A decade later, that figure has dropped to \$24,035. Allowing for 10 years' worth of inflation, the effective purchasing power of the average freelancer writer's income has clearly dropped – and significantly.

Digging into these numbers more deeply, one finds interesting (and sometimes hopeful) trends:

“the bottom line is... a shrinking bottom line.”

A Full-Time Advantage:

While overall incomes have not increased, freelancers who write full-time tend to earn more from their writing than part-time writers. Full-time freelancers tend to charge higher rates per word and per hour. They also report an increase in income over time while part-time writers report a decrease.

Membership Benefits:

The data collected in the survey illustrate the long-term benefits of membership in professional associations such as PWAC, TWUC, UNEQ and CAJ. In fact, on average, PWAC members earned nearly \$5,000 more than non-members in 2005. And the longer a writer is a member of PWAC, the higher their pre-tax income.

Still, the data show an overall decrease in economic viability for the writing profession in Canada. If writers are to survive and grow in this harsh climate, one of their greatest tools will remain professional association membership.

A Gender Gap:

Women make up the majority of freelance writers in Canada. But do they make the highest incomes?

Most magazines and newspapers pay freelance writers by the word. In 2002, the average highest per-word rate earned by women was lower than men's, but it has increased steadily since. By 2005, women's highest rate is now higher than that for men. However, it appears that women are also willing to work for less than men. Although the average lowest rates per word earned by men and women have increased overall, the lowest rates are still consistently paid to women.

Regional Fluctuations:

In 2005, the highest average rate per word was charged by writers living in British Columbia (99 cents) while the highest average rate per word charged in Quebec in 2005 was 81 cents, the lowest rate in the country. This may be because Quebec hosts fewer national magazines, so most writers in this province tend to do more corporate and government work. Or fees in that province may be depressed by the low rates paid by Francophone publications, which have a smaller potential audience than English publications.

Copyright Concerns:

Clearly, further education and advocacy on the importance of copyright to writers is necessary both within the writing community and throughout the wider publishing industry, as well as among users of copyright-protected material.

Copyright remains important to freelance writers, yet a majority do, in fact, sign restrictive contracts that ask for additional rights. Those signatures may reflect concerns over losing contracts, which respondents indicate has happened. They may also be a reflection of the fact that most respondents are not actively reselling their work in any form.

They are certainly not the result of indifference. Respondents understood the value of retaining their copyright and were willing to support collective bargaining in this area. This finding may also represent changing attitudes about how this basic right can be used by independent freelance writers in a business context.



note from PWAC

No-one likes to hear bad news, and no industry likes to advertise its bad news to the world, but the key finding of our 2006 Canadian Professional Writers Survey is both indisputable and distressing.

Canadian freelance writers make less today than they did 10 years ago.

In my dual role as association executive and professional freelance writer, I feel the challenges of my profession every day. It's discouraging to witness an entire segment of our cultural industry slowly being squeezed out of existence. And it is a crucial sector. To paraphrase the great writer Gabrielle Roy, as quoted on the back of every Canadian \$20 bill, *Could we ever know each other in the slightest without our writers?*

When I ask myself why PWAC went through this extensive exercise of surveying the professional writing industry in this country, I find the answer to my question in the words of another excellent Canadian writer:

"It is human nature to look for patterns in the world, to create a story line, to impose order in the aid of pretending we can predict what might come next."

— Stephen Brunt, *The Globe & Mail*

Granted, Mr. Brunt was writing about the 2006 Stanley Cup playoffs, and not our own struggling industry, but the words still apply. We can't predict what will become of the business of writing in Canada as we move forward from this survey and seek to see these recommendations implemented. But we can recognize the patterns before us, and we can certainly try to do something about them.

Through my work with PWAC, I have met countless representatives of the great industry of Canadian culture – writers, editors, publishers, readers, teachers, philosophers, civil servants, and politicians. I am always impressed. This industry is facing significant challenges — our survey results show that clearly — but I believe we have the right people in place in all segments of our industry to meet the challenges, to grow, to prosper, and to become even better at what we do.

I believe we can move forward with confidence. And we should.

John Degen, Executive Director



introduction

In 2005, the Professional Writers Association of Canada (PWAC) conducted its second freelance writers survey in 10 years. This was the first comprehensive survey of the Canadian writing community and the first since the rise to prominence of the online marketplace. The purpose of the survey was to understand the reality in which freelance writers in this country work today and the challenges they face.

This report provides a snapshot of that reality and an overview of those challenges. It explores the economic reality of professional writers in this country and how that reality has changed in the last decade. It also looks at what writers had to say about working in an electronic age and how instantaneous access to information has affected their lives and their livelihood.

Many of the income- and market-related questions in the survey asked for data across a four-year spread from 2002 to 2005. This was intended to identify any growing trends we might like to continue to watch. Each data-specific section begins with an overview, highlighting the key findings for professional freelance writers in Canada. Detailed information from the survey is then presented with an analysis of the data.

Where appropriate, feedback from a detailed focus group discussion is included. The focus group participants were carefully chosen to represent a cross-section of survey respondents. They were women and men from all regions of Canada, all age ranges and all income ranges.

This survey – the first thorough survey of the Canadian freelance industry from within the industry – is a significant barometer. It lets us inside the lives of those who are the backbone of the periodical industry in Canada, and we are confident that what they have told us is going to help us reshape and improve the industry over time.

landscape

According to *Creators and Copyright*, a report prepared by John Lorinc for the Creators' Copyright Coalition, the Canadian writing community encompasses everyone from children's writers to novelists to journalists and is perhaps the most diverse of all the creator groups. That diversity is apparent within the freelance community where individuals earn their living writing everything from annual reports to magazine articles to speeches to website content.

For many, it is that eclectic nature that makes the profession both dynamic and engaging. The profession appeals to both full-time professionals and part-timers. For others, it is a stepping-stone to something else, often somewhere else within the writing and publishing industry.

Freelance writers are geographically scattered and often isolated within the larger industry. Many in the industry feel that freelance writers are seen as a threat by full-time staff writers or as an unnecessary cost on top of staff-writing positions.

Freelancers would certainly like to improve their conditions, and they look to the country's foremost association for their community, PWAC, to lead the charge.

“the direct impact of the arts and cultural sector in canada..is \$39 billion annually.”

But there is more at stake than the needs and ideals of those in the profession. The direct impact of the arts and cultural sector in Canada – as measured by its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) – is \$39 billion annually,¹ with total direct employment reaching an estimated 740,000 jobs (roughly the same as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas, and utilities combined).

According to a report from Statistics Canada, *Focus on Culture*, employment growth in the arts and cultural sector outpaced the growth of Canada's workforce during the 1980s and 1990s. Culture-sector employment grew twice as fast as the total workforce in the 1980s and strong growth was maintained through the 1990s. Since 2000, however, the cultural sector employment rate of growth has slowed.

Focus on Culture also notes that self-employment is a cornerstone of the arts and culture industry. “Self-employment is indeed a striking feature of the culture sector workforce. One-in-four workers in the culture sector were self-employed in 2002, notably higher than the 15% the self-employed made up of the entire workforce.”

“self-employment is a cornerstone of the arts and culture industry.”

But despite the vast swath of the economy filled by culture workers, real wages have fallen in the past 10 years. Between 2002 and 2005, the average freelance writer's income in PWAC's survey was \$23,229.50. The total average income for 2005 was \$24,035. In 1995, the average income for a freelance writer in Canada was \$26,500. There seems little financial incentive to remain in this field.

¹ The Canadian Arts Coalition website (<http://www.votearts2006.ca/en/resources/>)



combined voices: a profile of PWAC

The Professional Writers Association of Canada (formerly the Periodical Writers Association of Canada) represents professional freelancers writing for this country's magazines, newspapers, books, corporations, NGOs and governments.

PWAC has been a voice for the profession since 1976, when a group of freelance writers started meeting to share information and stories about writing for Canada's magazines and newspapers. They quickly realized that when writers worked together they could more effectively protect their interests and strengthen the writing community as a whole.

From those meetings emerged PWAC, an organization that today serves almost 600 professional freelance writers across Canada. Its goals are to:

- Develop and maintain professional standards in editor-writer relationships.
- Encourage higher industry standards and fees for all types of freelance writing.
- Promote high literary standards of writing in Canada.
- Offset the isolation so commonly felt among freelance writers by providing networking opportunities, regular meetings and the chance to share experiences.
- Provide professional development for members across the country.
- Provide information on issues, trends and new technology of interest to writers.
- Work actively for the survival of periodical writing in a highly competitive communications market.
- Lobby for freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Canada.

profile of survey respondents

The Canadian Professional Writers Survey collected detailed demographic and career data about respondents. In all, 858 professional writers responded to the online questionnaire. Of those, fully 70.5% responded that freelance writing was *not* their primary source of income. This result in itself is an important reality for those involved with the business of writing in Canada. Canada's freelance community is a mix of writers who do *only* writing as their primary income-generating activity and writers who freelance "on the side."

It is important to note that for the majority of these professional writers who have another source of income, their primary source of income is still "writing-related." Many of Canada's freelance writers are also doing other kinds of journalistic activities to make money, such as editing, television reporting, radio production, and photography.

Combining full-time writer respondents with those whose other work is writing-related, we conclude that a clear majority of the writers who responded to our survey work full-time in the business of generating Canadian content. From this data, we have constructed a profile of the typical Canadian writer:

Meet the Typical Canadian Writer: Jane Q. Scribe

The typical Canadian writer, it appears, is a woman. We'll call her Jane. She works full-time on her freelance writing or in a writing-related job while freelancing on the side.

Jane is between 36 and 55 years of age, lives in central Canada, is married and lives with another wage earner. Jane does not have dependents living in her household; she may have no children. Jane is a university graduate, and chances are pretty good that she has a post-graduate degree.

Jane is either already a member of PWAC, or is considering joining. If she is a member, she has been so for less than 10 years. In fact, she has been writing professionally for less than 15 years.

In 2005, Jane earned \$24,035 from her full-time writing career. Through her affiliation with PWAC, Jane knows other writers who make much more than that (some actually earn six figures), but she understands these high-wage earners are in the minority. Still, knowing a few success stories inspires Jane to continue in her chosen career. On the other hand, Jane has seen no significant increase in her writing income in the last four years, and she is aware that freelance earnings have decreased steadily over the last decade.

"jane knows other writers who make much more..."

Jane charges anywhere from 25 cents to \$1 per word when she writes for a magazine or a newspaper. The publisher sets the rate, and she doesn't have much room to negotiate. She tends to make more money when she charges by the hour, typically for corporate writing. On these jobs, Jane charges whatever she figures the market will bear, from as little as \$40 an hour to as much as \$100 an hour.



Jane wishes she could find more of the \$100-per-hour jobs, though her passion remains writing for magazines and newspapers, which typically pay per word. In fact, Jane writes primarily for publications, with occasional forays into corporate writing. Lately, she is more and more attracted to the non-fiction book market. Jane writes mostly for Canadian clients, though she does have non-Canadian clients; she finds, happily, that these folks tend to pay more than their Canadian counterparts.

Jane is in the process of building a website related to her writing business. This is because she's aware of the growing influence of the Internet on her business. Jane has affiliated herself with Access Copyright, Canada's copyright-licensing agency, and receives the standard share of the royalty fees collected, currently about \$500 a year. Jane is aware of the Public Lending Right for works in Canada's public library system though she doesn't qualify for PLR payments since she has never written a book.

In general, Jane does *not* sign written contracts in her writing work. Happily, when Jane is presented with a written contract, it generally does *not* ask for secondary or perpetual copyright licences without compensation. On the other hand, compensation for extra licences tends to be very low (less than 20% of the original fee). Jane has occasionally been presented with "all-rights" types of written contracts, and she has signed them to get the work. When she has refused to sign such a contract, she has usually either lost that work or worked without a contract.

Jane wishes these contract issues could be resolved once and for all, since she feels her ability to maintain copyright control of her work and to re-license her work whenever possible are important components of her earning potential. In fact, Jane has begun to consider the importance of collective action in generating fair contract terms. Jane would even go so far as to join an organized work-refusal campaign against a specific client with contract terms she considers unfair.

“jane wishes these contract issues could be resolved once and for all...”

Jane feels it is important to her career that she belong to a professional association like PWAC. She looks to PWAC to provide her with professional development, networking opportunities, some form of professional accreditation, markets information, and avenues for self-promotion.

Remember, Jane is a persona created as a composite from the most common answers to the survey questions and from our experience as the leading organization of freelancers in Canada. For a complete look at what those who responded to the survey had to say specifically, please see Appendix B.

show me the money: key findings

Real incomes for Canadian freelancers have fallen dramatically over the past 25 years. In 1979, the average annual income for a freelance writer in Canada was approximately \$25,000.² The 1996 PWAC survey found the average annual income was about \$26,000. The current survey shows that in 2005 the average annual income for PWAC members was \$24,035.

The statistical trends suggest that writing clients in Canada, for the most part represented by large media corporations, are demanding more work and more rights. And they are paying less. The \$26,000 that writers earned in 1996 was almost identical to average incomes more than 25 years ago. Factoring in inflation over the past 30 years, independent writers in Canada have watched their standard of living drop by more than 60% in one generation.

In a report entitled *The Economic Contribution of Copyright Industries to the Canadian Economy*, the Department of Canadian Heritage notes that freelance writers are a relatively small component of the periodical publishing industry's overall expenses, representing only about 20% of total labour costs, or just 5% of total costs. And this slice of the pie appears to be decreasing over time.

The report states that there is a view that increasing consolidation in the industry has depressed compensation for freelance writers and that any income growth will be hard to attain over the next few years. More than half of Canadian periodicals were in a loss position in the late 1990s and prospects have not significantly improved today.

“more than half of Canadian periodicals were in a loss position in the late 1990s...”

That prediction was borne out on March 22, 2006, when CBC Radio reported cutbacks at *Canadian Geographic*, one of Canada's most venerable and high-profile magazines. In the report, *Canadian Geographic* publisher John Thomson cited increased postal rates and cuts to the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) as the underlying causes for the magazine's restructuring. The bottom line, the report said, was that the magazine would no longer be using freelance writers for any of its editorial content.

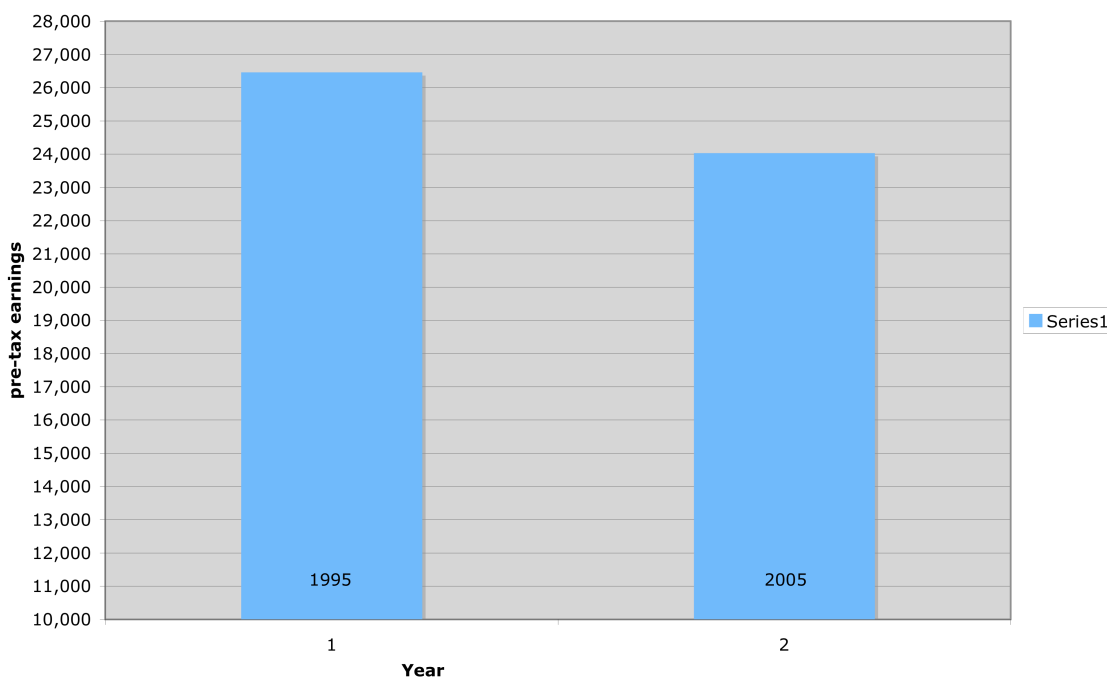
The loss of this one market alone means that tens of thousands of dollars a year will be removed from the freelance income pool in Canada. The writers who used to depend on this income will be forced to cast about to find another market. Many will likely look south of the border to find an American corporate client to fill the gap.

² PWAC Presentation to the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications and the 1996 PWAC Survey.

key rates finding: incomes falling

Annual Income

Figure 1: Pre-tax earnings 1995 vs. 2005 for PWAC members



In 1995, respondents to the PWAC survey indicated that their average annual income before taxes was approximately \$26,500. A decade later, that figured has declined to \$24,035. When all survey respondents are included, this figure drops even further to approximately \$21,000.

Other Statistics of Note:

- Regionally, British Columbia writers charge the highest average rate per word and Quebec the lowest, but Quebec writers are charging the highest average hourly rate and are earning the highest pre-tax incomes. Earnings in Atlantic Canada are dismally lagging behind, but in the past four years, there has been some improvement in the hourly rates of East Coast writers.
- People who write as their principal source of income charge higher average rates per word and per hour, and this has steadily increased over the years. Full-time writers also report an increase in income between 2002 and 2005 while part-time writers report a decrease.

- The data collected in the survey illustrate the long-term benefits of PWAC membership: the longer a writer is a member, the more they charge by word and the higher their pre-tax income, but by 2005, long-term members were charging slightly less per hour than more recent members.
- PWAC members' average highest rates per word and average annual income are higher than non-members, but there isn't a significant difference between the lowest rates charged. What is significant is that the average annual income for non-members has decreased since 2002. And in 2005, people charging the lowest rates per word were considering joining PWAC.
- The average highest rate per word charged by female respondents is slightly more than male respondents, but both charge similar highest rates per hour. At the other end of the scale, the average lowest rates per word are charged by women, and again, both men and women charge similar lowest average hourly rates. Overall, men's average pre-tax earnings are significantly higher than women's.

Focus group feedback on key income trends:

Question: Since entering this business, has your average annual income from writing increased or decreased? To what do you attribute this?

Despite a clear trend showing incomes dropping over the last decade, of the writers interviewed in the focus group session, most stated that their incomes had either remained the same or increased over time. Some noted that their incomes fluctuated but were "upward over the long term." The reasons given for this increase included gaining more experience and building a reputation.

As one writer said, "As I became a better established freelancer, I began getting more work. Through the clever tactic of agreeing to as many assignments as possible, I now have about as much work as I can possibly manage, which means my salary is far greater than when I first started in this industry." Another noted that as he was "offered more substantial work, I can decline low-paid work, and I can credibly ask for higher fees than I could earlier."

"since entering this business 13 years ago, my average annual income has gone up, but my average fee per hour has remained pretty constant and i'm working more hours."

There also seemed to be room for optimism that the income for some writers will continue to grow. According to one participant, "I have been steadily building my business and, in my humble opinion, it has not yet peaked or reached a plateau. I spent three or four years building my freelance business on a part-time basis, while employed full-time in a magazine job. I left my full-time job in mid-2005 in order to become a full-time freelance writer. So each year has brought me more income in freelance writing than the last."

In addition, some writers' incomes increased through related means such as book royalties and government contracts. One writer said she preferred writing books to writing for periodicals or

corporate markets because “the long-term financial possibilities are higher and the projects are reader-focused.” Two other writers stated that per hour and per-word rates are higher for corporate clients than for newspapers or magazines, which seems to be the main attraction of writing for corporations in the first place.

With increased income often comes increased work hours. This increase in work week may mean that a writer’s base rate has actually not gone up over time. As one writer noted, “Since entering this business 13 years ago, my average annual income has gone up, but my average fee per hour has remained pretty constant and I’m working more hours. I’m also signing away more rights. I have an almost fanatic obsession on determining how much I get paid per hour. I try to limit my time on a project to ensure a minimum \$50 per hour rate, but it’s getting harder and harder to do.”

One focus group participant believes that although his income fluctuates from year to year, “allowing for inflation, the rolling average hasn’t actually changed that much over 29 years of freelancing.” This writer has maintained his income by “changing media and clients, going where the money is, and by developing expertise in some specialized fields, what I call ‘niche digging.’”

Only one writer stated that his income had decreased over the past 25 years, and this was because he was now writing less, but for “better publications.”

Question: What is your preferred writing market? And by this we mean two things: Which market do you write for most (magazines, newspapers, corporations, government, books, web, etc.)? Which market would you like to write for the most (whether or not you actually write for that particular market primarily)?

The focus group respondents write for magazines, newspapers, books, corporations, and government. Some writers both pitch to magazine editors and receive assignments from them. As one writer noted, “I now write primarily for magazines. I prefer this, as they also want photography with the article I submit. I still believe the adage that a picture is worth 1,000 words, although payment doesn’t support this theory.”

The theory is also rejected by at least one writer discouraged from freelancing for periodicals by the low rate of pay. “I loved writing for magazines, but even before the Internet, I suspected that the traditional magazine was a slowly dying medium. I still do a lot of magazine-style essay writing, but it seldom appears in magazines. I sometimes yearn to write for magazines such as *The New Yorker* or *The Atlantic* or *The Walrus* in Canada but it doesn’t seem worth the effort, when so much interesting and lucrative work arrives at my door with minimal marketing.”

“i still do a lot of magazine-style essay writing, but it seldom appears in magazines.”

Others share the yearning. “I’m on a contract to a government agency,” noted one participant. “However, my preference would be to work on research for books because I enjoy writing non-fiction. I would also like more time to work on freelance pieces for magazines and newspapers.” Given a choice, three respondents would write articles for U.S. magazines, and non-fiction books.

Question: Have you changed markets significantly since starting your writing career? Please elaborate and explain.

Most participants have changed markets since starting their writing careers. Only one focus group member said that his markets had not really changed. One writer said she has become a “generalist” writing about more topics with more markets to choose from.

Some writers are consciously trying to change markets while others simply do what they are asked to do. One person stated that, “At this point in time, I am trying to reduce my corporate work and increase my publication and begin writing books.” Another said she couldn’t say that “my career has been the result of any conscious planning. I have basically done what people called me up and asked me to do!”

Market forces often determine the work, as this writer revealed: “I used to do regular (almost daily) freelance work for a national newspaper. Alas, this work came to a blunt end, shortly after 9-11, when the paper decimated their editorial staff and dramatically pared back how much freelance they used.”

Rates of pay also influence market choices. One writer started out doing magazine pieces in the 1980s, “but soon became disgusted with the low rates and the way freelance writers were treated. I soon realized that editing and translation would make excellent sidelines that could be combined with writing.” Another is writing less frequently for newspapers because they “generally pay less per word than magazines.”

“i soon realized that editing and translation would make excellent sidelines that could be combined with writing.”

Finally, experience has also directed market choices. One writer became a freelancer in 1977, working for an array of magazines and doing radio commentaries and documentaries; television writing and interviews; industrial film writing; magazine editing; writing for encyclopedias; annual reports; and communications consulting and media training. Over the years, “multi-stakeholder-reviewed educational writing (building on my encyclopedia experience) has grown into a very lucrative field for me. My big new area since the early 1990s has been writing and editing corporate environmental reports.”

Question: What strategies, if any, do you employ in your business to counteract low per-word rates?

Everybody wants a bargain. Not everyone has to be a bargain. “Decline work that doesn’t pay adequately” and “negotiate with editors” were the most common strategies for counteracting low per-word rates. Recalculating per-word rates as hourly rates sometimes reveals hidden value in lower-paid work that takes little time to complete. One writer said that she does accept such jobs “but only if there are no interviews and very little research involved. This way, maybe I can write an article in an hour that pays me \$200, which is a very satisfying hourly rate.” However, she cautioned that she does not take on a low-paying job with a tight deadline, because “then I run the risk of having to turn down other (better-paying) jobs to meet this deadline.”

Another writer noted that while she doesn't take low per-word rate jobs, she would if she had a full-time job elsewhere and fees were not her primary concern.

Implications:

Money matters. Writers clearly assess the value of a market in terms of dollars and cents. It is discouraging to see that average annual income has dropped over the past 10 years. This may reflect actual conditions, or it may reflect a different mix of respondents. For example, there may be more part-time writers in the 2005 survey than there were a decade ago. But regardless of any sample anomalies, incomes for professional writers are clearly not increasing in any noteworthy way. This has significant implications both on an individual level and across the profession. To deal with this reality, some writers may seek to return to the workforce as an employee or else give up freelancing or writing altogether. For those who remain in the profession, such low incomes raise serious issues regarding retirement.

“incomes for professional writers are clearly not increasing in any noteworthy way.”

Low rates still thrive in the freelance industry. Countering those rates, as opposed to accepting them, seems to be the preferred position. To do this, writers need two tools in their kits: market information and negotiating skills. PWAC can help with both.

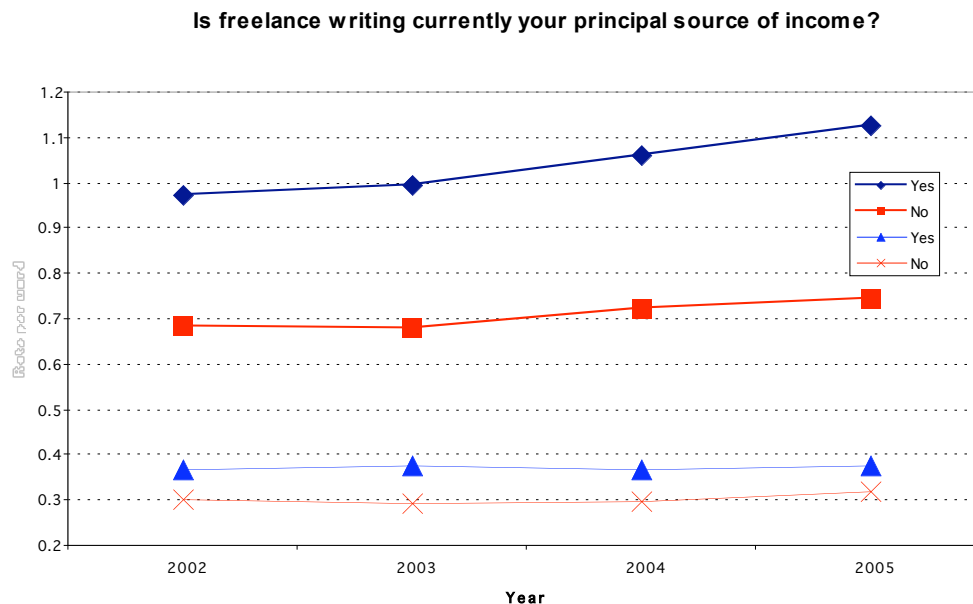
Clearly becoming and remaining a member of a professional association such as PWAC pays off in long-term per-word rates. Still, the data show an overall decrease in economic viability for the writing profession. If writers are to survive and grow in this harsh climate, one of their greatest tools will likely be their membership in a professional association.

“pwac recognizes the excellent work being done by magazines canada and the canada magazine fund (through the department of canadian heritage).”

PWAC's various industry and government partnerships are actively working to increase freelance rates. PWAC recognizes the excellent work being done by Magazines Canada and the Canada Magazine Fund (through the Department of Canadian Heritage) in encouraging an overall increase in spending on editorial content in Canadian magazines. Magazines Canada is currently leading campaigns against increased postal rates for subscription magazines and decreased funding for the Publications Assistance Program; if unchecked, both these issues will further depress freelance incomes in Canada.

the full-time advantage: part-timers make lower rates

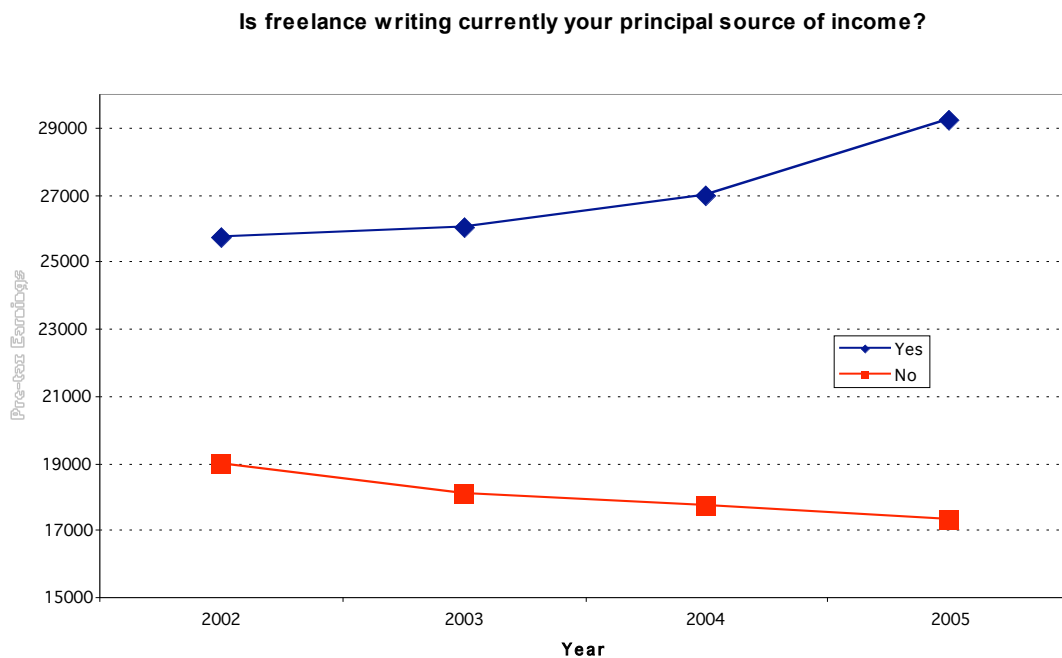
Figure 2: Average rate per word for principal and non-principal source of income



For respondents who write as their principal source of income, the average rates per word are higher than for others. In addition, these rates have increased more steadily for respondents for whom writing is their principal source of income, from 97 cents in 2002 to \$1.12 in 2005. For those for whom writing is not their principal source of income, the average highest per-word rate increased from 68 cents in 2002 to 74 cents in 2005.

While the average lowest rates charged are higher for respondents for whom writing is their principal source of income than for those for whom writing is not their principal source of income, the difference and the increase is slight: respondents for whom writing is their principal source of income reported charging an average of 37 cents per word in 2002 and 38 cents in 2005; respondents for whom writing is not their principal source of income reported charging an average of 30 cents per word in 2002, rising to 32 cents per word in 2005.

Figure 3: Average pre-tax earnings for principal and non-principal source of income



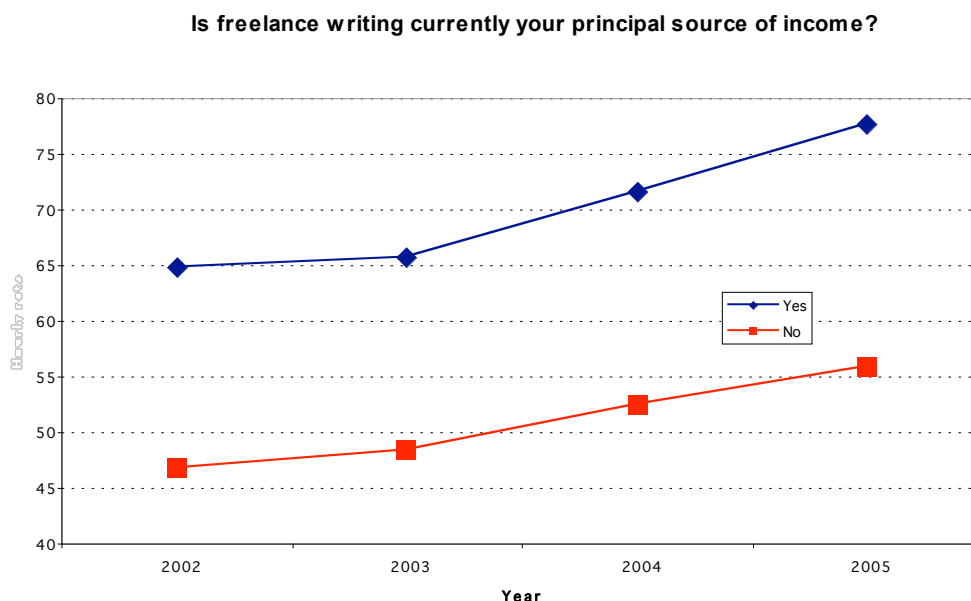
“the difference in dollar terms is very striking: on average, full-time writers earned nearly \$12,000 more than part-time writers in 2005.”

Average pre-tax earnings for respondents for whom writing is their principal source of income have steadily increased since 2002 when their average income was \$25,724. The biggest increase was from 2004 (\$26,983) to 2005 (\$29,235).

During the same period, part-time writers reported a decline in income from a high of \$18,985 in 2002 to a low of \$17,310 in 2005. This is roughly equivalent to Statistics Canada’s low-income cut-off point for a single person living in a big city — commonly regarded as the poverty line — which was \$17,219 in 2005.

The difference in dollar terms is very striking: on average, full-time writers earned nearly \$12,000 more than part-time writers in 2005.

Figure 4: Average hourly rate for principal and non-principal source of income



“the bottom line on hourly rates is that in 2005, full-time writers earned on average \$22 an hour more than part-time writers.”

Writers often charge by the hour when they can avoid giving a flat estimate or being paid a set rate per word. This pay structure normally applies to corporate jobs only. However, some enterprising freelancers do set a target hourly rate, and then sink only a certain number of hours into any assignment to earn that rate. In other words, for a job paying a fixed fee of \$800, a writer seeking to earn \$78 an hour would in theory work only 10 hours. In practice, of course, if a job is not done to the client’s satisfaction in 10 hours, the freelancer generally puts in additional time that erodes the hourly rate.

Just like the average annual income, the average hourly rate is higher for full-time writers than for part-timers. The hourly rate for both has steadily increased from an average of \$65 per hour in 2002 to \$78 in 2005 for full-time writers, and from an average of \$47 per hour in 2002 to \$56 in 2005 for part-timers.

The bottom line on hourly rates is that in 2005, full-time writers earned on average \$22 an hour more than part-time writers.

Implications

The numbers indicate that to be most successful in this difficult profession, writers need to pursue their writing on a full-time basis. Full-time writing exposes writers to the ongoing improvement of both their skill and their business acumen, and avoids the distractions that part-time writers often experience.

Focus Group Feedback on the Full-Time Advantage:

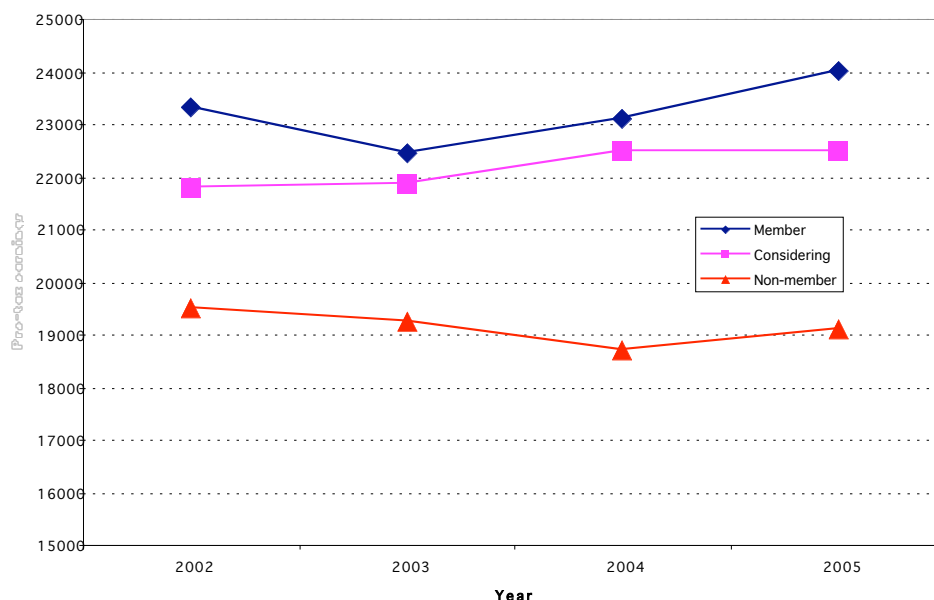
Question: Is writing your principal source of income? In your personal experience, what accounts for the trend of full-time writers managing to collect higher average per-word and hourly rates?

Many of the respondents, 37%, said that writing was their principal source of income. They felt this was directly linked to their higher rates. As one person noted, “I think that if you write full time, you’re more likely to think of writing as a professional business. If it’s just a sideline or hobby, you won’t take yourself seriously and neither will anyone else. If you expect your writing business to cover your mortgage/rent and put food on the table, it will. If you are apologetic about what you do, you won’t get respect and you won’t make real money.”

In addition, participants noted that as this was their principal source of income, they had more time to market themselves and possibly more confidence. It was also pointed out that full-time writers need to get paid adequately because writing is their only source of income.

sense of belonging: income benefits of association membership

Figure 5: Average pre-tax earnings for PWAC members and non-members



“incomes for non-members dropped during the period covered by the survey, while incomes for members and those considering membership increased in the same period.”

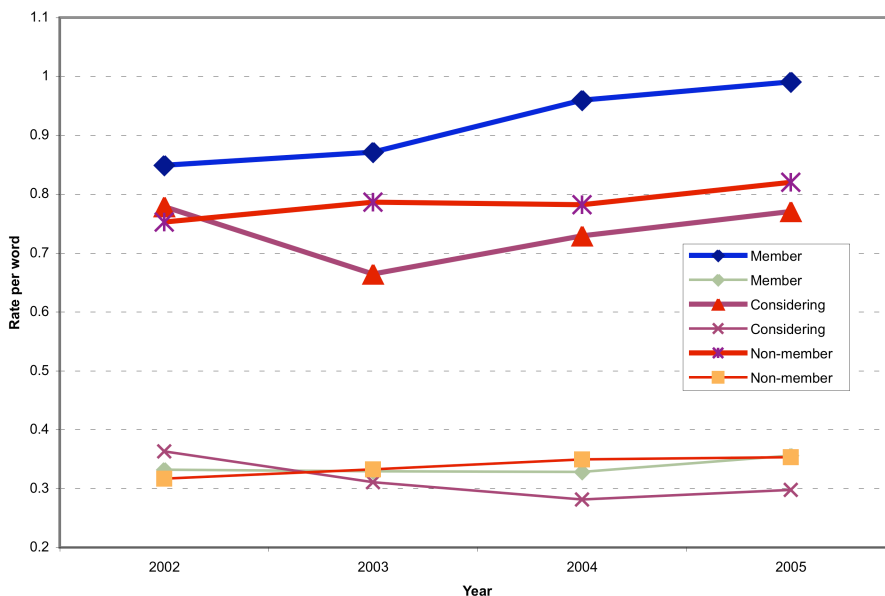
The difference in average annual income between PWAC members (\$24,053 in 2005) and those considering membership (\$22,500 in 2005) was not as great as the difference between members and non-members (\$19,091 in 2005). In fact, in 2005 PWAC members earned an average of nearly \$5,000 a year more than non-members.

The average income dropped slightly for PWAC members from \$23,317 in 2002 to \$22,462 in 2003. In 2004, members moved back up to \$23,102. By 2005, average incomes were up again to \$24,053.

The average rate for writers who were considering membership increased slightly from 2002 (\$21,794) to 2003 (\$21,861) and again to \$22,475 in 2004. This leveled off in 2005 at \$22,500.

We feel it is significant to note that the average income for non-members slowly decreased from \$19,495 in 2002 to \$19,255 in 2003, and decreased again in 2004 to \$18,723. In 2004, there was a slight increase to \$19,091, but this did not bring earnings back up to 2002 levels. This means incomes for non-members dropped during the period covered by the survey, while incomes for members and those considering membership increased in the same period.

Figure 6: Average rate per word for PWAC members and non-members



“we believe it is safe to infer from this data that membership in PWAC brings with it an important overall increase in income.”

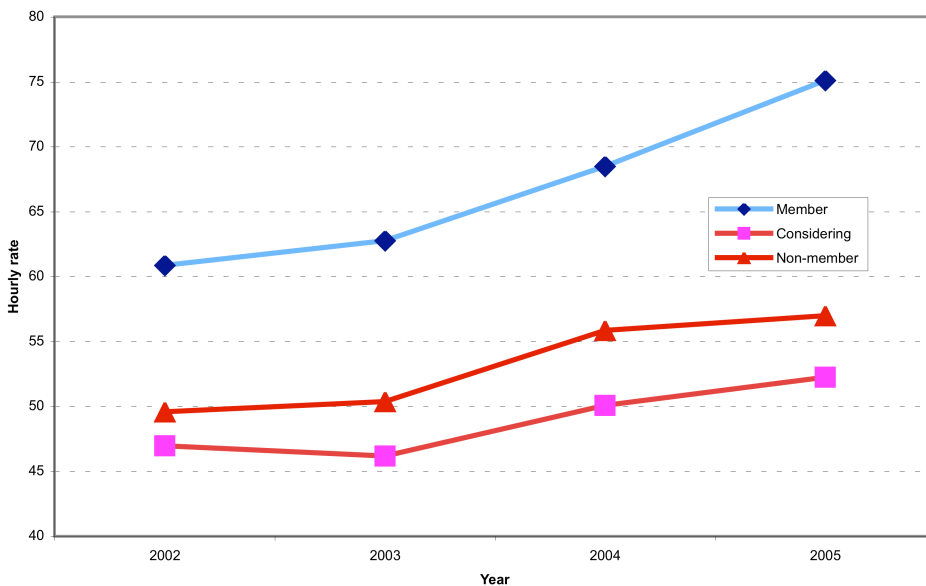
Magazine and newspaper publishers commonly pay writers at a fixed rate of some pennies per word. Since the early 1980s, the most prestigious magazines in Canada have paid the top rate of \$1 a word, while lesser markets paid as little as 10 cents a word.

At the top end of this commoditized scale, the highest rate charged, PWAC members averaged more per word in 2005 (99 cents in 2005) than non-members (82 cents) or those considering joining (77 cents). From 2002 through 2005, PWAC members consistently earned at the top of this scale.

At the bottom end, the lowest rate charged where no one really wants to be, PWAC members earn about the same as non-members, averaging 35 cents a word in 2005. Meanwhile, those considering joining averaged 29 cents a word in 2005. From 2002 to 2005, there was some jockeying for position here. Members and non-members earned within a few pennies of one another throughout, while those considering joining slid from an average of 36 cents a word in 2002 to 30 cents a word in 2005.

We believe it is safe to infer from this data that membership in PWAC brings with it an important overall increase in income. Certainly, that is what our members have told us.

Figure 7: Average hourly rate for PWAC members and non-members

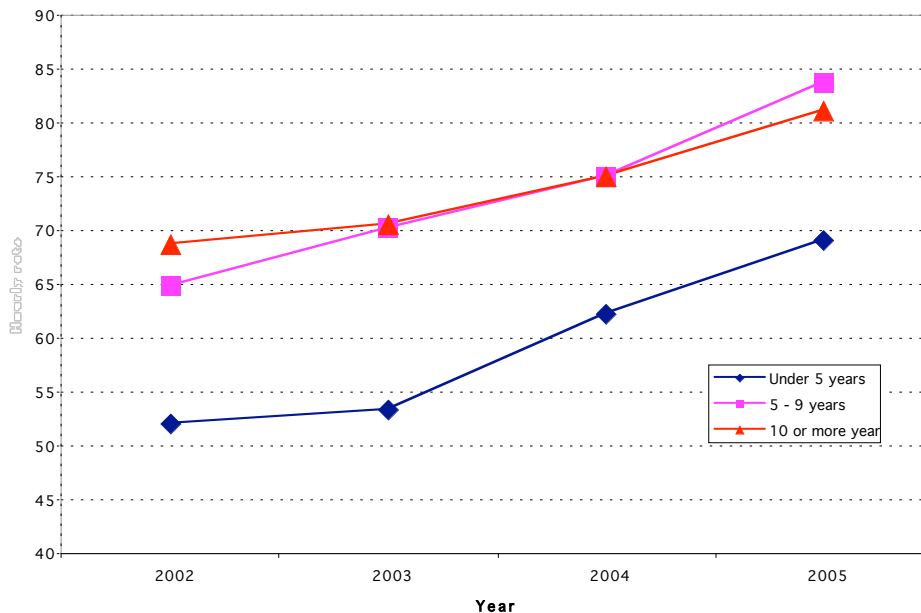


PWAC members earn a substantially higher rate per hour than non-members, including those considering membership. On average, PWAC members earned \$18 an hour more than non-members in 2005, and \$23 an hour more than those considering joining.

The average rate per hour charged by PWAC members increased 23% from \$61 an hour in 2002 to \$75 per hour in 2005. Meanwhile, the average rate for non-members increased 14% from \$50 per hour in 2002 to \$57 in 2005. For those considering joining PWAC, the average rate increased by just over 10% from \$47 in 2002 to \$52 in 2005.

While these are all significant increases, PWAC members began from a higher starting point and outstripped the gains of both the other segments.

Figure 8: Average hourly rate compared with years of PWAC membership



“writers who have been members of pwac less than five years earn less than those who have been members longer.”

The average hourly rate for PWAC members has shown a steady increase over the years. Length of time as PWAC members continues to have an impact: writers who have been members of PWAC less than five years earn less than those who have been members longer. However, by 2005, writers who have been members of PWAC for five to nine years are earning slightly more per hour than those who have been members 10 years or longer. See also the Table below.

Figure 9: Average hourly rate compared with years of PWAC membership

	Under 5 years	5 - 9 years	10+ years
2002	52.12	64.90	68.62
2003	53.30	70.10	70.64
2004	62.25	74.95	74.92
2005	68.99	83.78	81.04

Focus Group Feedback on Association Membership Income Findings:

Question: Do you think membership in PWAC has helped to increase your average annual income? Other than impact on your income, why is association membership, and specifically PWAC, important to your business as a writer?

All focus group participants believe that PWAC membership has helped to increase their average annual income on a scale from “somewhat” to “considerably”. One member offered this example: “I first heard of Altitude Publishing and Jackfruit Press (the two book publishers I write for) through the PWAC list serve. If I wasn’t a member of PWAC, I probably would have never heard of these companies and I wouldn’t be a published author.”

Another respondent thinks that the impact on his income has been indirect, but “I believe the work of PWAC and other writers’ organizations has been good for writers, including me. All those efforts to improve conditions for writers in Canada have been good for the writing community.”

“if i wasn’t a member of pwac... i wouldn’t be a published author.”

Another said that although she doesn’t think her membership in PWAC “got me my current contract with the government.... I know that the membership in PWAC did not go unnoticed!”

The exchange of information among peers through newsletters, workshops, meetings and list serves was cited by many as a major benefit of PWAC membership. One person noted that his membership meant he is “more in touch with other writers and have learned from them.” Others cited professional development, getting advice, new markets and inspiration from other PWACers as key benefits. Attending the annual general meeting and serving on the national executive contributed to one member’s understanding of the “big-picture view of how regions across Canada differ, the issues facing writers, and the importance of governance to running a small business.”

In another case, PWAC membership helped a writer to define herself as a professional: “Joining PWAC in the early 1980s, when I first became a freelancer, had the immediate effect of making me realize that I was running a small business with an exciting product to sell, namely me.”

PWAC’s role in communicating to governments, publishers, media and the public on behalf of writers’ interests is also important to some members. On a more personal note, socializing and meeting new friends, the sense of community and shared experience, and simply “knowing there are others engaged in the same lonely vocation, sharing the trials and tribulations” were also named as PWAC benefits.



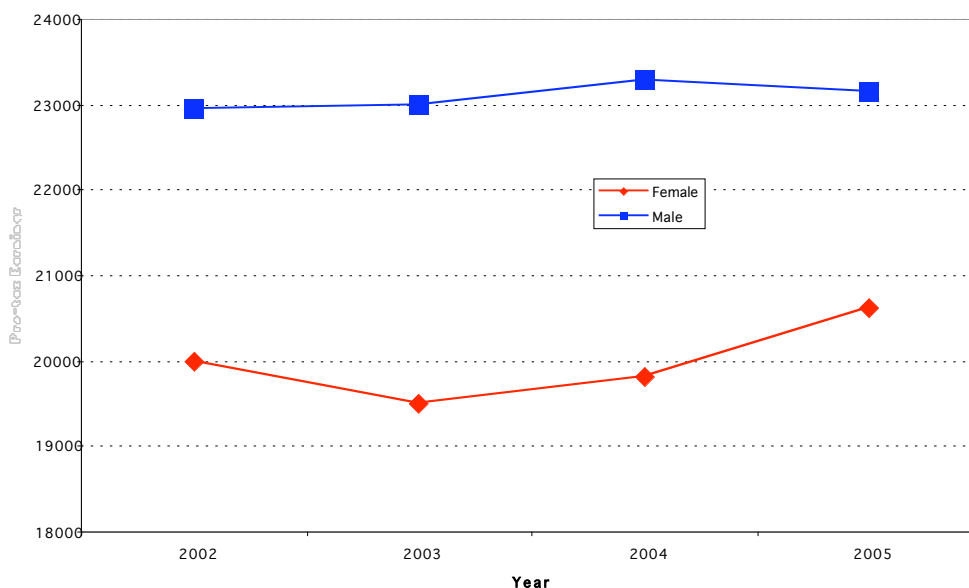
Implications:

On average, the PWAC members who answered this survey make a higher annual income than non-members. Interestingly, even writers considering membership in PWAC earn a higher annual income than non-members who were not considering joining. Clearly this has significant marketing implications for PWAC as an organization and for all writer organizations. In fact, it highlights a key benefit of membership and identifies a prime target audience for new membership.

It is not surprising that PWAC members are the higher wage earners. The benefits of joining the organization have been designed by members to support the profession and to help members support themselves. As one association executive commented, "Professionals belong to professional associations." Perhaps the more professional the writer, the more they are attracted to PWAC, or perhaps once a writer belongs to a writers' group like PWAC, their professionalism increases. In the end, it may not matter. PWAC still plays a central role.

gender gap: income differences between men & women writers

Figure 10: Average pre-tax earnings by gender and year



“the average highest per word earned by women was lower than men’s in 2002, but has increased steadily so that by 2005, their highest rate is higher than that for men.”

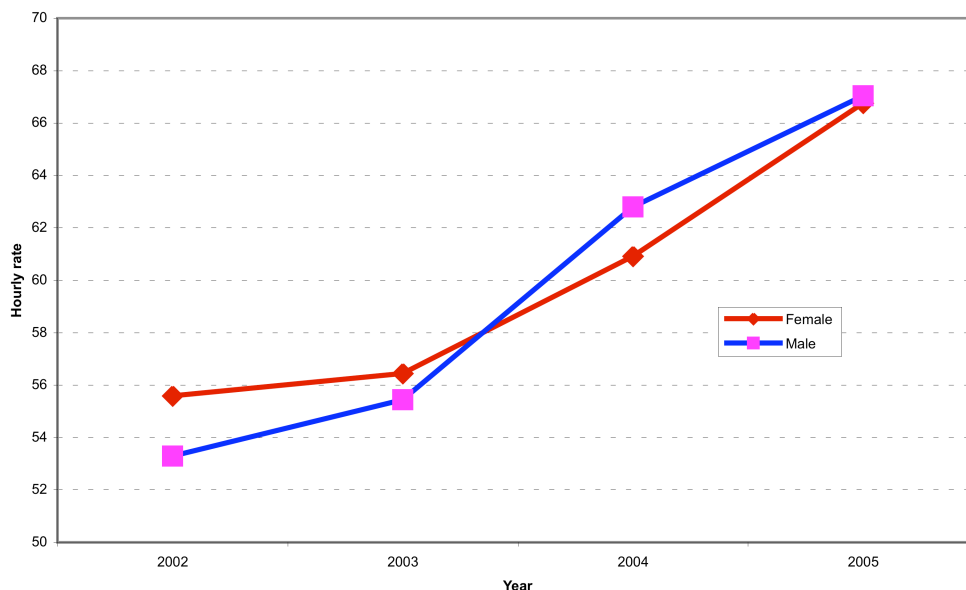
Men’s average pre-tax earnings are significantly higher than women’s and are relatively stable. However, the increase in women’s average pre-tax earnings from 2002 to 2005 has been slightly sharper than for men. This has not consistently been the case: between 2002 and 2003, there was a slight increase in average annual pre-tax income for men, while, in the same period, women’s income decreased from \$19,992 in 2002 to \$19,511 in 2003. There was a slight decrease for men in a different period: from \$23,283 in 2004 to \$23,150 in 2005. By 2005, both men’s and women’s average incomes were higher than in 2002: men’s increased from \$22,941 in 2002 to \$23,150 in 2005, while women’s increased from \$19,992 in 2002 to \$20,620 in 2005.

The average highest rate per word earned by men has increased from 83 cents in 2002 to 90 cents in 2005; for women the rate has increased from 78 cents in 2002 to 92 cents in 2005. That is, the average highest per word earned by women was lower than men’s in 2002, but has increased steadily so that by 2005, their highest rate is higher than that for men.

However, it appears that women are also willing to work for less pay than men. Although the average lowest rates per word earned by men and women have increased overall, the lowest rates are still consistently paid to women. In 2002, the lowest per word rate earned by women was 30 cents and by

men 36 cents. In 2005, women were earning 31 cents per word and men 40 cents at the lowest end of the scale. It is also interesting to note that in both 2003 and 2004, men earned 38 cents per word and this rate increased again in 2005, while the rate for women actually dropped slightly from 2002 levels to 29 cents in 2003 and 2004.

Figure 11: Average hourly rate by gender and year



Although in 2002 women’s maximum hourly rates on average were slightly higher than men (\$56 for women, \$53 for men), the hourly rate for men increased more quickly than for women, and by 2005, they were both earning an average of \$67 an hour. There is almost no difference between lowest average hourly rates for men and women; therefore, no chart is given.

Focus group response to gender focused statistics:

The sexual divide came as no surprise to focus group participants, although some found its continued existence discouraging.

Question: Care to comment on the gender discrepancy in writing incomes?

“Sigh. I’m afraid that in 2006, many women are still diffident about their talents, don’t know what they’re worth and are afraid to ask for more money. I’m not, but I’m 55 and as you get older you care less and less what other people think. Someone who thinks I’m too pushy because I want more money and insist on being treated as a professional probably wouldn’t be an ideal client anyway.”

“I think women aren’t as aggressive as men when it comes to marketing themselves, even though more markets, such as magazine markets, cater to women.”

“personally, i think that writing is the one domain where there is no gender bias. skilled women and men who care about fees generally obtain high rates.”

“The short answer is sexism. Women have been offered even less than men because it has been men making the offers. But strategies for responding to sexism can also become strategies for dealing with a low-income industry like writing.... Men have probably always needed to see writing as a source of income as well as a vocation. They have probably been more likely than women to see their inability to make a living as a personal failure, so they leave the field instead of tolerating low pay. Women writers may have been more able to accept low incomes because women have been badly paid in most fields.”

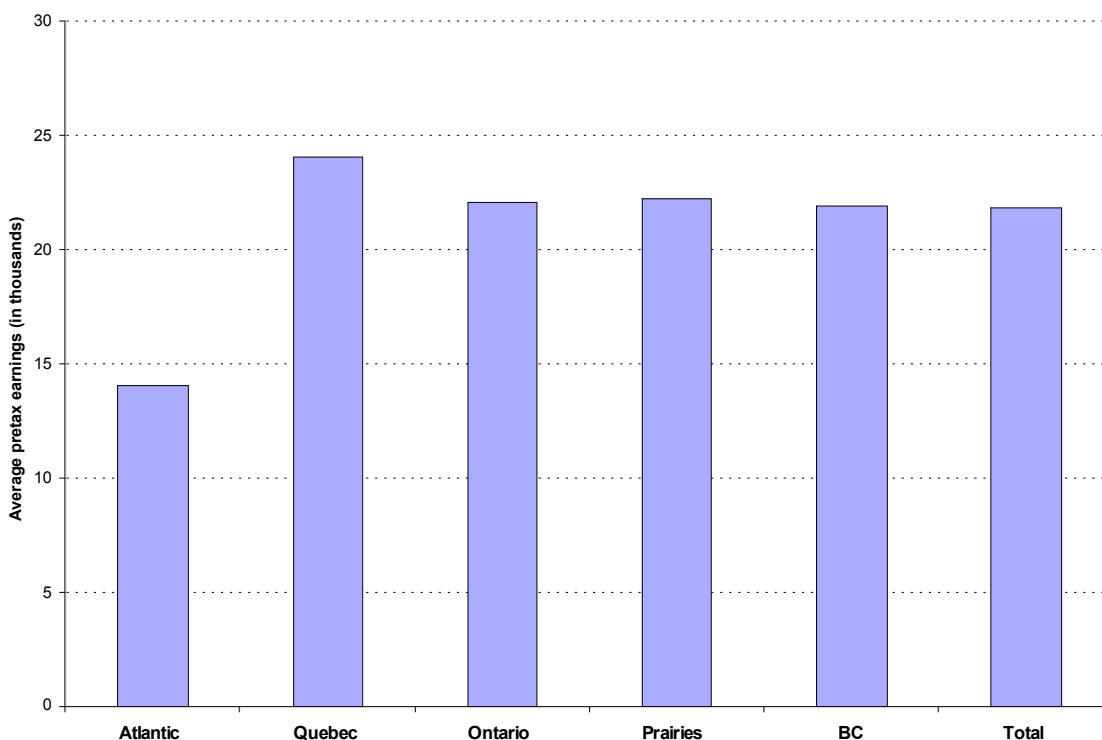
“Personally, I think that writing is the one domain where there is no gender bias. Skilled women and men who care about fees generally obtain high rates. Those with other priorities – such as raising children – are willing to accept lower rates to ensure that they continue honing their skills. There are more women in the field and more of them are raising children, so the general data gets skewed.”

“On a per-hour basis, I am not sure if the gender discrepancy exists. I know of one freelancer doing similar work to mine in Calgary who charges \$100/hour, and she’s a woman.”

“The most likely theory is that women writers are less likely to be the primary income earners in their families and, therefore, can afford to settle for a lower rate while their male counterparts cannot.”

the earnings picture across the country: regional income differences

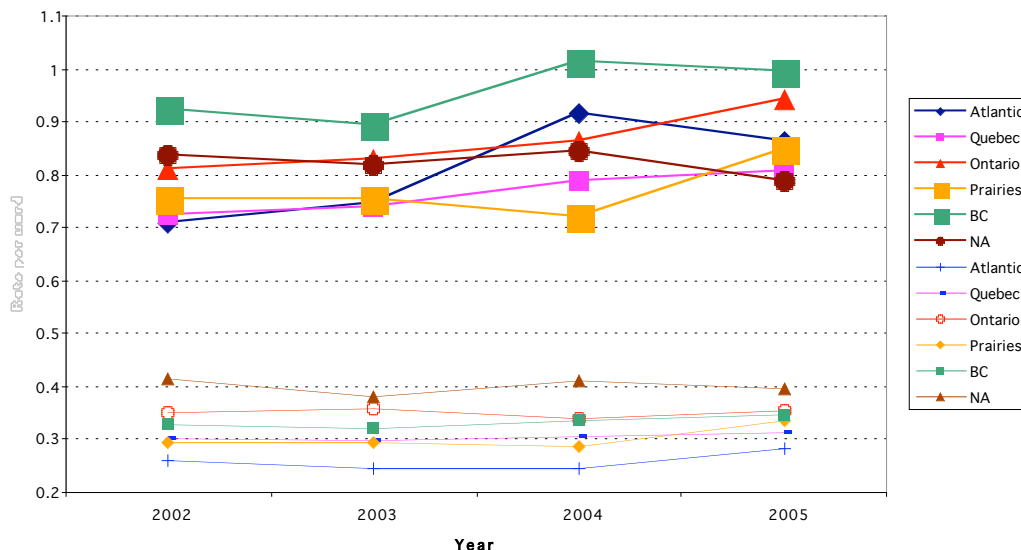
Figure 12: Average pre-tax income by region



	Atlantic Canada	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia
2005	\$14,050	\$24,082	\$22,134	\$22,284	\$21,983
2002	\$13,550	\$20,580	\$23,863	\$20,580	\$20,000

In 2005, the highest average annual pre-tax income was reported by Quebec respondents: \$24,082. This was a sharp increase from their 2002 rate of \$20,580. Ontario respondents reported a steady decrease in their average annual pre-tax income from \$23,863 in 2002 to \$22,100 in 2004. They showed a slight increase in 2005 to \$22,134, but this is still below their 2002 level. Atlantic Canada has consistently lagged behind the rest of Canada: in 2002, writers in this region reported an average annual pre-tax income of \$13,550. This increased to \$15,294 in 2004, but decreased in 2005 to \$14,050.

Figure 13: Average rate per word by region

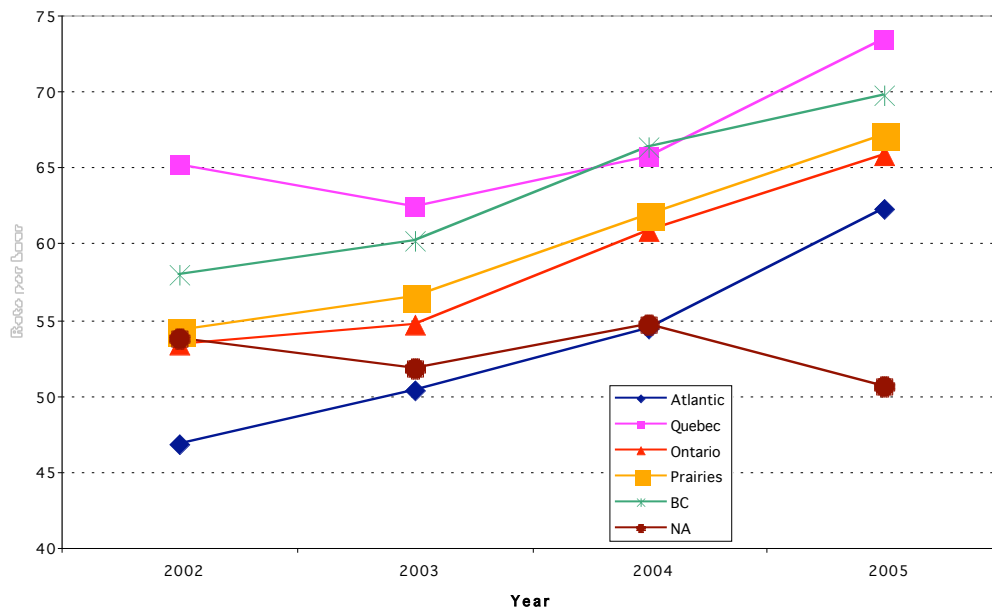


“the highest average rate per word was charged by writers living in british columbia (99 cents).”

There has been a significant fluctuation of rates in the last four years. In 2005, the highest average rate per word was charged by writers living in British Columbia (99 cents) while the highest average rate per word charged in Quebec in 2005 was 81 cents per word, the lowest rate in the country. In 2002, Atlantic Canadian writers were charging an average high of 71 cents per word, and this increased significantly by 2004 when they were charging an average of 92 cents, which dropped to 86 cents per word in 2005.

There has been little change in the average lowest rates charged in Canada since 2002. Atlantic Canadians charge the overall lowest rates in Canada: 24 cents per word in 2004 and 28 cents per word in 2005, compared with Ontario where the lowest rate charged was 10 cents per word higher: 34 cents per word in 2004 and 36 cents per word in 2005. All other provinces fall in between these two. The basement on rates has remained, by comparison, relatively stable.

Figure 14: Average rate per hour by region



The average hourly rate shows a somewhat similar pattern, with Quebec writers reporting the highest rate in Canada: \$73 an hour in 2005. Atlantic Canada continues to lag behind, but a sharp increase in rate is noted: from \$47 per hour in 2002 to \$62 per hour in 2005.

Focus Group Feedback on Regionally Focused Results:

Question: Do you feel your location in Canada has a positive or negative impact on your business?

Geography is destiny. Writers in Vancouver and Toronto stated that they assume their location has a positive impact on their business as they are “close to publishers and other potential markets” and they “can meet editors in person, for example, or even help out at editorial offices (the bulk of which are located in Toronto).”

“the density of my community offers me a better network and more story ideas.”

Another Torontonionian noted:

“Conceivably, I can lunch with editors and attend newsworthy events much more frequently than someone who doesn't live here. Having said that, though, I rarely do either! I do benefit from much of my phone time being spent on local calls, but in reality people living anywhere in the country can get flat long-distance plans. So when I think about it objectively, I could do this job effectively from any province. But I still think that many editors consider me to be well positioned to do stories because of



my location, and that I probably have an advantage simply because editors know I'm close by. And the density of my community offers me a better network and more story ideas.”

Interestingly, Quebecers, Atlantic Canadians and Albertans also think their location has a positive effect on their writing for different reasons. One participant noted that Quebec, for example, offers a tax deduction of up to \$20,000 to writers for the first \$60,000 in copyright income and also has a status of the artist act in place.

Given that, some were surprised to learn the lowest per-word rate is in Quebec. One writer surmised that may be because Francophone colleagues are included “who earn even less working by the page.”

a fundamental right: writers & copyright in canada

Copyright is the foundation on which a freelancer's livelihood is built. In an electronic age, that foundation has been shaken. As well, new opportunities for the sale and distribution of copyright protected material have arisen, and new business models have emerged.

“we believe media concentration is a major factor in the decline of freelance rates and the growing demand for rights.”

Indeed, as this survey shows, while rates for freelancers have dropped, rights demands from publishers have increased. Some contracts demand “all rights, in perpetuity, throughout the universe.”³ There is usually little – literally – by way of compensation for granting these additional rights. On the other hand, the copyright industries in Canada were estimated to contribute \$65.9 billion (7.4 %) to GDP in 2000 and to be growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy.⁴

As PWAC noted in our submission to the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications in 2004, we believe media concentration is a major factor in the decline of freelance rates and the growing demand for rights. It is having a direct and measurable impact on Canada's independent writers:

“They are being strangled out of the business. Some would say this is all just simple market economics at work – let the market decide. But this assumes we are dealing with a freely operating market. This is not the case. With each merger, with each buy-out, with each step along the path of media concentration, these corporate publishers and broadcasters are able to distort the market more and more to their own benefit. From where we sit, this is a monopoly.”

As always, there is room for optimism. Excellent Canadian magazines such as *The Walrus* and *Reader's Digest* consult with PWAC when developing new contracts. But clearly, there is significant need for ongoing discussion and broader consultation both with the industry and with government.

PWAC and Copyright in Canada

PWAC has been central to the ongoing copyright reform process in Canada. We were one of the founding organizations behind Access Copyright (originally known as CanCopy), the Canadian copyright licensing agency, and are still active participants in the organization. We have provided feedback in the form of an official submission to government as it tables legislation designed to bring the Canadian Copyright Act into the digital age. Through ongoing discussion with groups such as the Creators' Copyright Coalition, the Creators Rights Alliance, Access Copyright, publishers and user group representatives, PWAC has developed four core principles⁵ essential for the ongoing copyright

³ From an actual freelance contract circulated to PWAC and CAJ members over email discussion groups in 2005.

⁴ S. Charles, G. McDougall & J. Tran, Industry Canada, 'The Importance of Intellectual Property Industries in the Canadian Economy'.

⁵ Thanks to Ottawa software designer Russell McOrmond for helping PWAC define these core principles.

reform (the first two are from the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights*, and the second two arose out of ongoing PWAC discussion with the broader industry). They are:

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.
- (3) All creators must be respected in the copyright reform process.
- (4) There are myriad models for the production, distribution and remuneration of creative works. We need to create a copyright paradigm in which all models and choices are respected. Imposing a single-model solution is undemocratic and absolutely not in the interests of the creative community.

Avoiding exceptions to copyright is of paramount importance, including the granting of wide-ranging exceptions for educational use of copyright material. PWAC feels that educational use of written material is an important market for freelance writers and writers should therefore retain the basic right of protection of the moral and material interests in their work within the educational context.

PWAC further feels that simple, inexpensive and readily accessible licensing models already exist to make educational access to copyright protected materials seamless and affordable within the limits of educational budgets throughout Canada.

Former PWAC President Liz Warwick said in the 2004 PWAC submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, “As professional content providers, we support the principle of unfettered educational access to our content. We simply ask that you do not expect us to provide that access for free.”

Synopsis of Survey Results on Copyright Questions

Copyright remains important to freelance writers, yet a majority sign restrictive contracts that ask for additional rights. Those signatures may be the result of concerns over losing contracts, which respondents indicate has happened. They may also be a reflection of the fact that most respondents are not actively reselling their work. They are not the result of indifference. Respondents understood the value of retaining their copyright and were willing to support collective bargaining. This finding may also represent changing attitudes to how this basic right can be used by independent freelance writers in a business context.

“pwac strongly recommends that all freelancers sign a written contract to protect their rights.”

The significance of an effective contract cannot be over-emphasized. PWAC strongly recommends that all freelancers sign a written contract to protect their rights. To assist writers in understanding the important components of a fair contract, PWAC developed a Standard Freelance Agreement that is available online at www.writers.ca.

key findings on copyright questions

Seventy-six percent of survey respondents said they were aware of Access Copyright, the Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency. However, only 57.3% were aware of the Public Lending Right Commission, which administers a program of remuneration to Canadian authors for their eligible books catalogued in libraries across the country. Even fewer, 35.4%, receive payment from the Commission.

The number of writers signing contracts varies widely, and this variance has remained relatively consistent for the last four years. For example, 16% of respondents said that less than 10% of their writing assignments required signing a contract. A full 20% said none of their assignments involved contracts.

On the other end of the scale, 13% of respondents said that all of their writing assignments involved signing a contract, a figure up slightly from 11% in 2002. Seventeen percent of respondents fell in the next highest category, with 75 to 99% of assignments requiring a contract, a jump from 12% in 2002.

42. In the past four years, what percentage of your writing assignments has required you to sign a written contract?

	N/A	0 %	1-9%	10-24 %	25-49 %	50-74 %	75-99 %	100 %	Response Total
2005 (estimate)	6% (40)	20% (124)	16% (98)	9% (53)	8% (52)	10% (64)	17% (104)	13% (81)	616
2004	9% (53)	21% (131)	16% (100)	9% (54)	7% (41)	11% (65)	15% (91)	13% (81)	616
2003	13% (82)	22% (137)	17% (103)	7% (46)	6% (36)	9% (54)	14% (88)	11% (70)	616
2002	18% (109)	20% (126)	16% (97)	8% (47)	6% (38)	9% (58)	12% (75)	11% (66)	616
Total Respondents									616

The bulk of those contracts do not appear to stipulate unpaid secondary or perpetual copyright licenses. Thirty-eight per cent of respondents said none of the assignments they do are linked to contracts that required this. At the other end, only 9% of respondents said all of the contracts they signed asked for additional rights. However, it should be noted that a large number of respondents, 25% did not know if their contracts asked for additional rights. Interestingly, at both ends of the scale – from no such




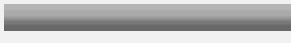


contracts to every such contract – there was growth. On the lower end, the increase grew from 33% in 2002; at the higher end, it rose from 6% that same year.

Of those contracts, what percentage has asked for UNPAID secondary or perpetual copyright licenses?

	N/A	0 %	1-9%	10-24 %	25-49 %	50-74 %	75-99 %	100 %	Response Total
2005 (estimate)	25% (157)	38% (233)	8% (50)	5% (30)	3% (21)	5% (31)	7% (41)	9% (53)	616
2004	29% (178)	37% (227)	8% (47)	5% (29)	3% (21)	5% (33)	5% (33)	8% (48)	616
2003	32% (200)	36% (222)	8% (49)	4% (22)	4% (23)	4% (26)	5% (33)	7% (41)	616
2002	36% (222)	33% (203)	9% (54)	4% (23)	3% (20)	4% (25)	5% (30)	6% (39)	616
Total Respondent									616

The majority of respondents (62.7%) stated that they did not resist signing a contract asking for additional rights. There are two likely explanations for this lack of resistance: a lack of concern over the issue or a sense that the job would be lost if a writer argued with clauses in a contract.

47. If you answered yes to the last question, what was the result of your attempt to resist?
Check all that apply.

		Response Percent
Client agreed to drop demand.		36.5%
Client refused to drop demand and I signed contract.		35.9%
Client refused to drop demand, I refused to sign but worked without a contract.		10.4%
Client refused to drop demand, I refused to sign and lost the job.		18.2%
Client refused to drop the demand, I refused to sign and lost the client.		17.2%
Other (please specify)		24.5%

With respect to the first possibility, of those who said they did resist signing (and the outcome of this resistance), there is an almost even number of respondents in the top two categories: Client agreed to drop the demand (36.5%) and Client refused to drop the demand and I signed the contract (35.9%). Slightly more than 17% noted that they refused to sign and lost the client. For clients who agreed to pay an additional fee, most increases were under 10%.

Focus Group Feedback on Copyright Questions:

Question: Please comment on the importance of copyright protection for your writing work. How do you see this right under the law impacting your work, livelihood and/or career?

There is no apparent consensus on copyright. Responses to this question ranged from copyright not being an issue at all to it being a fundamental issue.

One writer said that he did not believe he could “make a living” without copyright protection: “All my income comes from licensing rights to my work, and I continue to receive royalty income from past

work on a regular basis. If copyright is eroded by ever-expanding exemptions, and I cannot assert my copyrights, I do not see how I can be rewarded for the value my work provides.”

“all my income comes from licensing rights to my work.”

The limits of current copyright law were identified as problematic for writers who had experienced the “theft” of their work. “If there isn’t good law to enshrine my rights and fair contracts to respect them, there is no point in trying to make a living at this. If I owned a store and people were free to walk in and take things off the shelves without the clear consequence of being arrested and charged, then I wouldn’t be able to run that business either.”

Equally threatening to some writers were all-right contracts – but not to all. When compensation rises, concern for retaining copyright can fall:

“Copyright was tremendously important in the pre-Internet world, and I personally benefited, receiving more than \$10,000 for one infringement in the early days of the Internet. Now I have moved almost entirely to write-for-hire commissioned works in which I retain no rights (except certain moral rights), and it does not seem so bad.”

Writers want their material to be available for use. On the issue of access and availability of copyright protected material, one respondent noted:

“As a researcher, and citizen, I benefit enormously from free availability of other people’s work in libraries and on-line.”

Implications

While “all-rights” contracts have not appeared as a significant trend in the data, copyright issues are still paramount to many writers and to the industry. PWAC continues public and government lobbying based on the principle that “everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.”

But that right is apparently up for negotiation. The intriguing question is why writers appear less passionate, and less concerned, about copyright. It may be that over time they have learned to negotiate contracts; it may be that they are not aware of what they are losing by ceding copyright. It may also be that writers have become complacent; with the establishment of Access Copyright and an annual cheque in the mail, the need for diligence may have waned.

There is certainly an educational role that needs to be assumed, and PWAC is a frontrunner for the job. There is also a need for a watchdog. It may be that addressing copyright questions and identifying infringements need to play a more central and visible role.

Resale and Re-licensing

Seventy-one percent of respondents said that the ability to re-license work is an important component of their income potential, and most (84.3%) said they would support efforts by PWAC and other organizations to improve their bargaining position. More than half (54.8%) said they were willing to take part in some form of collective bargaining.

Focus group feedback on re-licensing questions:

Question: In your business, are the days of frequent re-licensing over? Do you even try to re-license or resell work?

Most of the 10 participants who answered this question said they did not put energy into reselling their work. One person said that by the time he finished a story, he felt he had “exhausted the subject.” This sentiment was echoed by a second writer who noted, “I’m having enough of a challenge trying to sell new stuff, and so rarely think about re-selling pieces I’ve already done.”

Only one respondent said that he had had “good success in reselling” his work. He believes this is mainly due to the fact that he doesn’t agree to an all-rights contract.

The issue of markets was also critical. Are there any markets for resale? One writer pointed out that most publications she deals with have no interest in buying work that is not original, and most markets that will buy reprints are quite low-paying, which means that by the time “I hunt them down, make an offer and close a deal, the compensation is almost not worth my time.”

“in the 1980s, a writer could self-syndicate to different markets...”

When asked to theorize about the causes for the decrease in re-licensing, the increasing use of the Internet, media concentration, and the slow demise of hard-copy print media were among the reasons offered.

The Internet has led to “much more overlap among readership communities – so if a publication uses a reprint instead of an original, there is more risk its readers will have seen the article elsewhere already,” one writer said.

In addition, the Internet makes it easier for work to be reproduced, with or without attribution and/or additional payment, as another writer discovered: “While Googling myself, I found an article I had written for a literacy newsletter in 1990 reproduced in a current issue of the newsletter. I contacted the editor and explained that the rights remained with the author, and that as a matter of professional courtesy I should have been asked for permission to reprint the article. As it was a non-profit publication and a cause I strongly support, I did not insist on a fee, but I did manage to do some consciousness-raising.”

Another writer linked the declining interest in resale to the growing media concentration in the country. “Relicensing was frequently done by freelancers in the 1980s but had already diminished by 1993. The main reason for this is media concentration in the newspaper field. In the 1980s, a writer could self-

syndicate to different markets throughout the country. Now, large media corporations use the same story in all of these markets and pay much less for the right to do so.”

Still, as an additional source of revenue, re-licensing is appealing and several participants held out the option of doing this in the future. “It is something I continually keep my eye on and do see limited potential for it with my work,” said one writer. Another added, “It’s quite possible I haven’t been going about this in the most effective manner. Perhaps if I attended a workshop on this topic or received some pointers, it would help me explore this source of revenue more fully.”

Implications

One thing is clear: Resale does not appear to be a lucrative area for freelancers. On average, survey respondents re-licensed or resold less than two works per year over the last four years. On the other hand, the data do not show a significant increase in the number of writing contracts demanding all rights (such contracts would restrict re-licensing opportunities). Something else is causing the decrease in re-licensing, which used to be an important revenue stream for writers.

“resale does not appear to be a lucrative area for freelancers.”

Is this an issue of significance? Perhaps resale is not generally as lucrative as first-rights work and its decline is not noteworthy. Or perhaps the media concentration occurring in Canada is diminishing opportunity for resale. Despite the small number of writers actually reselling their work, there is interest in this potential revenue stream, and writers are looking for guidance in terms of finding markets, approaching markets and successfully selling to those markets.

In the 1996 survey:

- 13% of freelance writers benefited from the re-use of their work.
- Those in the higher-income bracket (or roughly \$31,000 from freelancing a year) refused to sign restrictive contracts 55% of the time.
- Those who regularly resold their work earned an annual average of \$3,200 from resale.
- Active licensors estimated the number of copyright infringements at 100; those who did not resell their work estimated this number to be 30.

In the 2005 survey:

- 40% of those whose primary income was freelancing received a yearly cheque from the Public Lending Right Commission.
- Among freelancers who earned \$30,000 or more from their writing, 47% attempted to resist signing contracts that ask for UNPAID secondary or perpetual copyright licences.
- Those whose primary income is from freelancing have successfully re-licensed or resold an average of 2.94 of their works in 2005. The table below shows the increase from 2002:

2002	2003	2004	2005
1.85	2.24	2.51	2.94

The last two questions in the 1996 piece weren’t asked in 2005 so we have inserted this table in-lieu.

conclusions and recommendations

Since the 1996 PWAC member survey, there has been no significant improvement in the livelihood of freelance writers in Canada. In fact, real earnings have declined.

While some income levels have risen, for most writers the bottom line – their take-home income – has dropped, and control of their copyright has never been on shakier ground.

Freelance incomes are still unacceptable, and they are still shrinking. Few freelancers earn enough to approach the pay scale of a full-time employee in any corporate or government office. Most freelancers lack any income security, any benefits, and any retirement plan. Some told us they have even foregone having children because they could not imagine how to cope with the extra expenses of raising a child.

“writers want to tell canada’s stories, to create canadian content, and to take an active part in canada’s evolving culture. but with the ongoing downward pressure on our livelihoods, they can scarcely afford to do it.”

At the same time, the copyright landscape is shifting. Copyright issues, while a source of confusion and varying concern among freelancers, are significant. Concerns about control and remuneration of copyright-protected material are evolving as technology evolves. The business and legal communities scramble to catch up even as new legislation is being formulated.

Canadian freelance writers have the education, the skills and the motivation to play a central role in revitalizing the Canadian magazine and book publishing industries, including helping these industries migrate to digital content. While magazine publishers like to present writers as their allies, they seem to ignore them at budget time. Despite everything freelance writers have to offer, they are not yet full partners in the publishing industry in this country.

Many respondents to this survey make a considerable portion of their income working for Canadian magazines or writing Canadian non-fiction books. And the survey results suggest that Canadian magazines and non-fiction books are the *preferred markets* for Canadian freelance writers.

Writers *want* to tell Canada’s stories, to create Canadian content, and to take an active part in Canada’s evolving culture. But with the ongoing downward pressure on our livelihoods, they can scarcely afford to do it.

Recommendations:

1. **PWAC encourages** focused consultation between publishing markets (the magazine industry specifically) and writers (through their associations) to discuss and plan cooperative responses to:
 - The overall decline in freelance incomes
 - The impact of media concentration on the sustainable creation of Canadian written content
 - The centrality of copyright retention and control to writers' careers
2. **PWAC encourages** the continuation of, and increase in, federal government support (specifically through the Canada Magazine Fund) for the creation of Canadian written content with the following key components attached:
 - Recognition of freelance writers as central to Canadian written content creation
 - Recognition of copyright retention and control as a basic writer's right
3. **PWAC requests** federal government encouragement and support in the development of new, lucrative business models for the sale of writing in Canada's new digital reality. This recommendation includes:
 - Ongoing reform of copyright legislation, designed to respect and encourage the work of all creators in Canada, while providing seamless licensed access to copyright protected material in the digital realm
 - Discussion with writer groups concerning tax incentives for continued work in the creation of high-quality Canadian written content (specifically income averaging and a total exemption for income tax on all royalties related to telling Canadian stories)
4. **PWAC requests** that publishing industry leaders cooperate with representative writer groups to create standard contract terms, which recognize the financial challenges of both sides of the industry while respecting copyright as the writer's right.
5. **PWAC calls on** the federal government to reverse the ongoing increases in postal rates, which are enriching Canada Post but impoverishing the magazine publishing industry and the freelance writing profession in this country, and will ultimately lead to the death of many magazines and the further encroachment of foreign content on our newsstands and in our schools and libraries.
6. **PWAC requests** that the Public Lending Right Commission's mandate and budget be expanded to cover popular non-fiction books purchased by libraries, of the sort most likely to be written by our professional members, including travel, cooking, self-help and reference books.

appendices

a. methodology

The survey was distributed to every PWAC member and to approximately 6,000 other non-member writers through an e-mailed newsletter link in the Access Copyright creator affiliate newsletter on November 11, 2005. It was also sent to all members of The Writers Union of Canada (about 1,500 writers) through their newsletter. It was sent to all members of the Canadian Association of Journalists in a bulletin, and offered to Francophone writers through Union des écrivaines et écrivains québécois, PWAC's French-language equivalent in Quebec.

In all, 858 responses were received from across the country.

The survey questions were designed by the PWAC Executive Director in consultation with select members of the PWAC Executive, based on the 1996 survey questions. The Canadian Media Guild was consulted for specific wording related to collective action, and a survey consultant, Viewpoints Research Ltd. in Winnipeg, was consulted to ensure that relevant data were being gathered.

For the purposes of analyzing the data, financial information (such as rates charged per word and per hour, and pre-tax earnings) was recoded to the midpoint of the range of each response category. For example, if the response category was \$10,000 to \$15,000, the code for that category was replaced with a value of \$12,500. Not only does such recoding convert the information to natural units such as dollars or cents per word, it permits graphic displays of estimated trends over time.

This survey – the first comprehensive survey of the freelance writing industry from within the industry – is a significant barometer. It lets us inside the lives of those who are the backbone of the magazine industry in Canada, and we are confident that what they have told us is going to help us reshape and improve the industry over time.

In addition to the survey, a web-based focus group was conducted with a sample of PWAC writers from across the country. Their comments and insight are included in this report to provide context and to speak to issues indicated by the survey findings.

b. PWAC Professional Writers Survey 2006 - Overall summary results by question - following pages