

ALCS

The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society

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WHAT ARE WORDS WORTH NOW?

Further findings



Researchers:

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Supported by:



A survey of authors' earnings

What are words worth now?

Following the headline findings last year, the full research (*The Business of Being an Author*) has now been published by Queen Mary, University of London.

This research was commissioned by the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society and conducted by Queen Mary, University of London.

Any comparisons shown are against research carried out by the University of Bournemouth in 2005, details of which can be found on the ALCS website.

The majority of respondents were professional authors who spent most of their working lives writing.

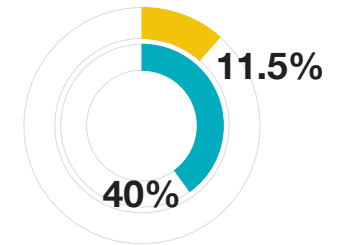
Overall the respondents represented a varied group, writing in different contexts and for diverse markets.

Respondents included:



The world of the professional author

In 2005, 40% of authors earned their income solely from writing.
By 2013 this had dropped to just 11.5%.



Earning a living solely from writing

- 2005 - 40% of professional authors earned their income solely from writing
- 2013 - 11.5% of professional authors earn their income solely from writing

The typical (median) incomes of professional authors

There has been a drop in the typical income from writing of professional authors of 29% in real terms since 2005.



Median income of professional authors

- Real terms earnings
- Actual earnings

Life of a writer

The career of a typical, professional author begins in late 20s/ early 30s. Earnings increase, with the optimum earning age for most in their mid-40s to 50s, the income then starts to decline.

Professional authors continue to earn after their 'retirement', either because they are still writing, or because their existing body of work continues to generate income.

Income: highs and lows

A small majority are doing very well - **The top 5% earned 42.3%** of all the money earned by professional authors in this survey.

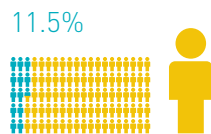


The larger majority aren't doing very well - **The bottom 50% (earning £10,432 or less) earn only 7%** of all the money earned by all writers cumulatively.



Nearly 90% need to earn money from sources other than writing.

Only 11.5% of professional authors relied solely on the income they receive from writing. 17% of all writers did not earn any money from writing in 2013.



Professional authors
who earn a living just from writing

A handful of highly successful authors make a very good living; for the majority, earnings from writing fall well below subsistence levels



Advances decline

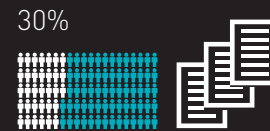
The value of advances has declined over the past 5 years

Advances

Advances are on the decline across the board

2/3rds of all respondents had received an advance at some point in their career. The number of authors receiving advances **is in decline since 2006**.

The size of advances is falling with 44% stating the value of their **advances had declined** over the past 5 years.



Buy-out contracts

Increase in Buy-out contracts over the past 5 years

Buy-out contracts

A Buy-out contract is one where there is a single payment for use of the work without the further payment of royalties.

46% of authors have signed a buy-out contract at some point in their career.

30% of authors had seen an increase in such contracts over the past 5 years.

Self-published authors' earnings

Top 10% earners
£7,000



Top 20% earners
£3,000



Bottom 20% earners
-£400



Loss

Self-Publishing

The **top 10% earners** among self-published authors made a profit of **£7,000 or more**.

The **top 20% earners** among self-published authors made a profit of **nearly £3,000**.

The **bottom 20% earners** among self-published authors made **losses of at least £400**.

Risk and reward: Self-publishing is an evolving market for authors