



2000 Freelance Rate Survey Results

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The results of the 2000 Freelance Rate Survey were first presented to BAEF members at the forum on June 21, 2001.

The Bay Area Editors' Forum is an association of freelance and in-house editors who work in a variety of publishing and publication settings. We help members strengthen their skills, make new contacts, and increase their awareness of professional opportunities. We also help employers find just the right editor.

For additional information about the Editors' Forum or to learn how to join BAEF, please visit us at www.editorsforum.org.

**Bay Area Editors' Forum
PMB 338
2040 Polk Street
San Francisco CA 94109**

We are happy to present the results of the second Bay Area Editors' Forum Freelance Rate Survey.

In February 2001, we mailed questionnaires to 280 members and received 104 replies. This is nearly 50 percent more than we received for our first survey in 1998. Since our membership includes both freelancers and full-time staffers and this survey targeted freelancers, we believe the response rate was good. The total responses for any particular question may not add up to 104 because not everyone chose to answer every question.

With a few exceptions, we have not attempted to interpret the results, preferring to let our members discover information and conclusions that are helpful to them. As your eyes roam through the results presented here, you might notice, for example, that forty-eight members billed on an hourly basis and five billed on a project basis—in both cases more than 91 percent of the time. Most members set their own rates.

Eight of our members never worked on a computer last year, fourteen always did, thirty-five usually did, and thirty-one sometimes did. Among respondents, fifty-five never received a different rate for editing on a computer rather than on paper, while a few sometimes did. When there was a difference, the rate for editing on a computer was higher in all cases but one.

Freelance work made up 100 percent of the income of forty-seven members. For average hourly rates, please turn to the table on page 8. For the breakdown on what colleagues charged for different kinds of editorial work and for different kinds of clients, turn to pages 14–21 for the answers in all their complexity.

Among the most revealing results are those describing how our members acquired new clients in 2000. See replies on page 11.

To appreciate the longevity of our freelancers' experiences, see the replies to question 18 on page 13, in which eighty-nine members reveal that they have been in the editing and writing business for more than six years. Sixty-seven have been doing this work for more than eleven years, and twenty-one have been working in the field for more than twenty-one years.

In light of the sample size, the diversity of experience of BAEF members and the wide spectrum of clients found in the Bay Area, it may be hard to draw definitive conclusions from this survey. We are confident, however, that you will find these results both intriguing and useful, especially at a time when the economy is in flux.

Rate Survey Committee

Bonnie Britt and David Featherstone, co-chairs

Geneviève Duboscq	Mary Heldman
Heidi Garfield	Aubrey McClellan
Sandra Gary	Zawadi Olatunji
Kristi Hein	Hilary Powers

Special thanks to Zawadi Olatunji for design and to Geneviève Duboscq for production and distribution. Jeannine Cook, Betsy Dilernia, Denise Fletcher, Pat Harris and Pam Nurse assisted with the mailings.

Billing rates _____

1. What is your billing basis, by percentage?

(Numbers indicate the responses received for each percentage range and billing type.)

	Hourly	Page	Per diem	Word count	Project	Other (specify)
10% or less	2	3	0	4	16	1
11 to 20%	2	3	0	0	6	2
21 to 30%	6	5	0	0	4	0
31 to 40%	1	1	0	0	4	0
41 to 50%	8	4	0	0	6	0
51 to 60%	0	0	0	0	0	0
61 to 70%	2	1	0	1	1	0
71 to 80%	14	3	0	0	1	0
81 to 90%	11	0	0	0	0	0
91 to 100%	48	1	0	1	5	0

Other: Royalty, profit from project management or by printed page.

2. Do you set your own rates?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
18	46	22	12	3

3. Do you ever work on-site?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	5	28	37	31

If you do work on-site, do you receive a different rate than for off-site work?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2	7	12	11	34

If your rate varies, does on-site work pay more or less? By what percentage?

	More	Less
10% or less	4	2
11 to 20%	9	6
21 to 30%	1	1
31 to 40%	1	0
41 to 50%	0	0
More than 50%	1	0
No % given	4	1

4. Do you receive more for rush jobs?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
7	10	23	21	32

If you receive more for rush jobs, what percentage more?

	No. of responses
10% or less	9
11 to 20%	9
21 to 30%	8
31 to 40%	1
41 to 50%	6
More than 50%	2

5. Do you edit on a computer rather than on paper?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
14	35	31	5	8

If you edit on a computer, do you receive different rates than for editing on paper?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
0	8	7	12	55

If you receive different rates, does editing on a computer pay more or less than on paper? By what percentage?

	More	Less
10% or less	6	0
11 to 20%	5	1
21 to 30%	5	0
31 to 40%	0	0
41 to 50%	1	0
More than 50%	1	0

Freelance income ---

6. What percentage of your 2000 income was from freelance editorial work?

Under 20%	21–40%	41–60%	61–80%	81–99%	100%
22	8	8	6	12	47

What percentage of your 2000 total household income was from freelance editorial work?

Under 20%	21–40%	41–60%	61–80%	81–99%	100%
31	21	21	10	3	14

7. In 2000, what was your hourly rate earned for freelance editorial work? (Respondents were asked to give average, highest and lowest rates.)

Hourly rate	Average	Highest	Lowest
\$20 or less	10	2	29
\$21 to \$30	22	10	33
\$31 to \$35	10	5	6
\$36 to \$40	14	13	6
\$41 to \$45	8	11	7
\$46 to \$50	12	14	2
\$51 to \$60	10	12	6
\$61 to \$80	7	16	5
\$81 to \$99	3	7	1
\$100 +	3	7	2

8. This question asked for typical rates by freelance activity and type of client. Because of the length of the results, responses to this question are reported after the other questions, on pages 14 to 21.

9. Indicate your occupation for most (more than half) of 2000. (Respondents could mark two possibilities on the questionnaire. Those who did are reflected in lines three and four of the table.)

Status	No. of responses
Full-time self-employed	48
Part-time self-employed	35
Part-time self-employed/full-time staff	1
Part-time self-employed/part-time staff	5
Full-time staff	9
Part-time staff	2

10. Of the time devoted to freelancing or contracting in an average work week, approximately how many hours do you spend on the following activities?

Hours	Billable work
1 to 5	5
6 to 10	15
11 to 15	4
16 to 20	18
21 to 25	11
26 to 30	11
31 to 35	6
36 to 40	13
41 +	2

Hours	Activity	
	Marketing	Work-related nonbillable
0	24	7
1 to 2	34	25
3 to 5	13	21
6 to 10	2	15
11 to 15	1	1
16 to 20	0	2
21 to 25	0	2
26 to 30	0	0

11. Which category best describes your gross income for 2000 from freelance editing/writing, before deducting expenses and before taxes? (Do not include nonfreelance income.)

Gross freelance income	No. of responses
Less than \$5,000	12
\$5,001 to \$10,000	10
\$10,001 to \$15,000	12
\$15,001 to \$20,000	7
\$20,001 to \$25,000	3
\$25,001 to \$30,000	9
\$30,001 to \$40,000	14
\$40,001 to \$50,000	9
\$50,001 to \$60,000	9
\$60,001 to \$80,000	9
\$80,001 to \$100,000	3
\$100,000 +	3

12. Which category best describes your net income for 2000 from freelance editing/writing, after deducting expenses and after taxes? (Do not include nonfreelance income.)

Net freelance income	No. of responses
Less than \$5,000	19
\$ 5,001 to \$10,000	10
\$10,001 to \$15,000	12
\$15,001 to \$20,000	6
\$20,001 to \$25,000	4
\$25,001 to \$30,000	9
\$30,001 to \$40,000	14
\$40,001 to \$50,000	11
\$50,001 to \$60,000	8
\$60,001 to \$80,000	4
\$80,001 to \$100,000	1
\$100,000 +	0

Freelancing

13. How many separate clients did you work for in 2000?

Clients	No. of responses
1 to 2	16
3 to 5	37
6 to 10	37
More than 10	13

14. What percentage of your new clients in 2000 came from each of the following sources?

Respondents were asked to assign a percentage indicating which methods of getting new clients were most successful. The 2000 Freelance Rate Survey Committee ranked the sources for new clients in a meaningful way by calculating a "success factor," which was determined by totaling the percentages named in each method and dividing it by the number of responses in that method. The second column shows the total number of responses for each method. The third column shows how successful those using that method were, relative to other methods.

Methods of acquiring new clients in 2000 (ranked according to effectiveness)	No. of responses	Success factor (average %)
Former employers/colleagues	48	52.08
Referrals—clients	41	43.41
Networking	35	40.57
Referrals—other freelancers	35	38.85
BAEF e-mail postings	19	36.31
BAEF Web site directory listings	15	22.67
Cover letters/resumes	12	35.00
Internet sources	11	49.09
Agencies/recruiters	10	38.00
Other (Editcetera and Editorial Freelance Assoc.)	5	46.00
Advertising	3	30.00
Personal Web site	3	16.67
Cold calls	3	26.67
Mentoring relationships	1	20.00
Media Alliance listings	0	0.

15. How many inquiries did you receive from your listing in BAEF's membership directory on the Web?

Inquiries	No. of responses
0	9
1	16
2	12
3	16
4	2
5	5
6	1
7	0
8	1
9	0
10 +	1

16. How often do you work under each of the following:

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Your standard contract or letter of agreement?	3	11	12	19	37
Your client's contract or letter of agreement?	6	20	32	18	14
Informal oral or written agreement?	12	39	20	13	12

17. Did you raise your rates in 2000?

	No. of responses
Yes	49
No	42

By what percentage did you raise your rates in 2000?

	No. of responses
1 to 10%	18
11 to 20%	17
21 to 30%	7
31 to 40%	2
41 to 50%	3
51% +	2

18. How many years of experience do you have in editing/writing?
(Include self-employment, staff and volunteer experience.)

	No. of responses
1 year	0
2 years	2
3 to 5 years	3
6 to 10 years	22
11 to 20 years	46
21 to 30 years	21
31 + years	7

19. How many years have you freelanced?

	No. of responses
1 year	11
2 years	7
3 to 5 years	22
6 to 10 years	28
11 to 20 years	23
21 to 30 years	4
31 + years	1

Rates based on client type and service

8. For each applicable freelance activity, what average hourly rate did you receive from each type of client?

Proofreading

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less	1		1			2	6	6				1	2	3a
\$21 to \$30	5	2	2	5		3	7	6	4	3	2	2	4	2b
\$31 to \$35	3	2					1	1				1		
\$36 to \$40	5	3	1	1		1	2	2		1	1		1	
\$41 to \$45		2												
\$46 to \$50	2	2												
\$51 to \$60		2	1											
\$61 to \$80	2	3	2											
\$81 to \$99		1	1											
\$100 +	1													

a = travel guides, craft books and calendar/b = Web and museum

Copyediting

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less			2			2	5	1	2	1			6	1a
\$21 to \$30	10	5	2	7		9	8	12	4	4	1	3	3	3b
\$31 to \$35	1			2		1	3	1	1	1		3	1	
\$36 to \$40	4	5	2	1		3	6	4	1	1	1	2	2	
\$41 to \$45	3	4	3			1		1				1		
\$46 to \$50	3	4	1			2		2						
\$51 to \$60	2	8	1	1			1							
\$61 to \$80	1	2	2	1										
\$81 to \$99		2	1											
\$100 +	2													

a = craft books/b = travel guides, Web and museum

Developmental editing

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers						Other
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books	Academic Books	
\$20 or less							2							
\$21 to \$30	1					4		1	2					
\$31 to \$35						2	2	3						
\$36 to \$40	1		1	3		4	5	2	5			1	3	
\$41 to \$45			1				1	5	3	1			2	
\$46 to \$50	1	1		1		2	1	1						
\$51 to \$60	1	5	1			2								
\$61 to \$80		1	1	2				1						
\$81 to \$99	1	1												
\$100 +	1													

Project management

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers						Other
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books	Academic Books	
\$20 or less														
\$21 to \$30	1						2	1						
\$31 to \$35														
\$36 to \$40								2	1			1		
\$41 to \$45	1						1		1					
\$46 to \$50						1	2							
\$51 to \$60						1		1					1	
\$61 to \$80				1										
\$81 to \$99		1												
\$100 +	2		1											

Editing (nonspecific)

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less	1					1		1						
\$21 to \$30	4	1	2	1		4	1						1	
\$31 to \$35	1					1	1	1						
\$36 to \$40	2	1		1		1	2					1		
\$41 to \$45			1					1						
\$46 to \$50	3	1				3	1			1				
\$51 to \$60		2				1								
\$61 to \$80	2	2	1											
\$81 to \$99	1													
\$100 +	2	1	1											

Page composition

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less							1		1					
\$21 to \$30						1	1	1						
\$31 to \$35														
\$36 to \$40	1					2								
\$41 to \$45														
\$46 to \$50							1							
\$51 to \$60		1												
\$61 to \$80				1										
\$81 to \$99														
\$100 +														

Research/fact checking

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less	1					1								
\$21 to \$30	2	1				1	1	2						
\$31 to \$35				1		1	1							
\$36 to \$40	2	1	1			1			1				1	
\$41 to \$45			1				1	2						
\$46 to \$50	1					1								
\$51 to \$60							1	1						
\$61 to \$80	1	1		1										
\$81 to \$99														
\$100 +	1													

Writing for print

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less				1	1		2	1						
\$21 to \$30	1			1	1	2	1		1					
\$31 to \$35	1						1							
\$36 to \$40			1		1			1	1					1
\$41 to \$45	1		1	1		1		1	1				1	
\$46 to \$50	1						2							
\$51 to \$60	1			1				1	2					
\$61 to \$80	1					1		1						
\$81 to \$99	1	1	3		1									
\$100 +	3	1	1	1										

Writing for digital

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less														
\$21 to \$30	1							1						
\$31 to \$35							1							
\$36 to \$40	1		1	1										
\$41 to \$45	1													
\$46 to \$50														
\$51 to \$60		3					1							
\$61 to \$80	1					1			1					
\$81 to \$99	4	3	2	1	1	1								
\$100 +	2	1	2	1										

Editing for digital

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less		2				1								
\$21 to \$30	3		1				2	1	2					
\$31 to \$35		1		1			1							
\$36 to \$40	1		3											
\$41 to \$45			2					1						
\$46 to \$50	2			1			1	1						
\$51 to \$60	1	4												
\$61 to \$80	3		1											
\$81 to \$99		1	1											
\$100 +	2	1	1											

Technical writing

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books	
\$20 or less			3										
\$21 to \$30													
\$31 to \$35													
\$36 to \$40													
\$41 to \$45													
\$46 to \$50		1											
\$51 to \$60		2											
\$61 to \$80		2					1						
\$81 to \$99			3										
\$100 +													

Technical editing

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books	
\$20 or less			1										
\$21 to \$30													
\$31 to \$35													
\$36 to \$40	1	2	1								1		
\$41 to \$45		1	2										
\$46 to \$50		2											
\$51 to \$60		5	1										
\$61 to \$80	1	3											
\$81 to \$99			1										
\$100 +													

Indexing

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less								2						
\$21 to \$30							1	1	1				1	
\$31 to \$35														
\$36 to \$40								2						
\$41 to \$45							1							
\$46 to \$50		1										1		
\$51 to \$60		1												
\$61 to \$80														
\$81 to \$99														
\$100 +														

Production editing

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers					Other	
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books		Academic Books
\$20 or less														
\$21 to \$30	1													
\$31 to \$35								1						
\$36 to \$40												1		
\$41 to \$45		2					1	1						
\$46 to \$50				1			1	1						
\$51 to \$60		2												
\$61 to \$80		1		1										
\$81 to \$99														
\$100 +														

Style-guide development

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers						Other
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books	Academic Books	
\$20 or less			1											
\$21 to \$30	2					1		1						
\$31 to \$35			1				1							
\$36 to \$40	1						1	1						
\$41 to \$45														
\$46 to \$50	2	1												1
\$51 to \$60	1			1										
\$61 to \$80		4	2	1										
\$81 to \$99		1	1											
\$100 +	2	1	1											

Other: Web

Other

Rate	Corporate/Business			Magazine/ Journal	Newspaper	Individual	Nonprofit	Book Publishers						Other
	Nontechnical	Technical (computer)	Technical (noncomputer)					Trade Books	Text Books	Medical Books	Legal Books	Computer Books	Academic Books	
\$20 or less	1 a	1 a	1 a			1 b		1 a	1 a	1 a				
\$21 to \$30									2 e, h					
\$31 to \$35														1 i
\$36 to \$40						2 c, d	1 e	1 e	2 e, j					
\$41 to \$45														
\$46 to \$50														1 e
\$51 to \$60		1 f						2 d, k						
\$61 to \$80		1 d	1 g											
\$81 to \$99														
\$100 +														

a = word processing/b = teaching/c = writing coach/d = business consulting/e = permissions editing/f = creating database
g = managing editor/h = reviewing and consulting/i = public agency /j = content consulting/k = cleanup editing

Comparing results

To show the income range of freelance members who worked full time during 2000, the survey committee compared the responses to questions 9 and 11, separating the full-time responses from all the others.

Gross annual freelance income	Full-time	Part-time and others
Less than \$5,000	1	11
\$5,001 to \$10,000	0	11
\$10,001 to \$15,000	2	9
\$15,001 to \$20,000	1	6
\$20,001 to \$25,000	1	2
\$25,001 to \$30,000	6	4
\$30,001 to \$40,000	12	2
\$40,001 to \$50,000	5	4
\$50,001 to \$60,000	7	2
\$60,001 to \$80,000	7	2
\$80,001 to \$100,000	2	1
\$100,001 +	3	0

The table below shows a similar comparison of the average hourly earning rate for freelance work reported in question 7, again separating full-time, self-employed members from all others.

Hourly earning rate	Full-time	Percent	Part-time and others	Percent
\$20 or less	2	4.2	7	13.0
\$21 to \$30	13	27.0	15	27.8
\$31 to \$35	6	12.5	4	7.4
\$36 to \$40	5	10.4	8	14.6
\$41 to \$45	6	12.5	2	3.7
\$46 to \$50	2	4.1	8	14.8
\$51 to \$60	5	10.4	6	11.1
\$61 to \$80	4	8.3	3	5.6
\$81 to \$99	2	4.2	1	1.9
\$100 +	3	6.3		

Looking only at the responses of our full-time freelance members (determined by their answers to question 9), the survey committee compared their gross annual income (replies to question 11) to their average hourly earning rates (replies to question 7).

Gross annual freelance income	Hourly rate									
	\$20 or less	\$21 to \$30	\$31 to \$35	\$36 to \$40	\$41 to \$45	\$46 to \$50	\$51 to \$60	\$61 to \$80	\$81 to \$99	\$100 +
Less than \$5,000										
\$5,001 to \$10,000										
\$10,001 to \$15,000		1	1	1						
\$15,001 to \$20,000	1									
\$20,001 to \$25,000				1						
\$25,001 to \$30,000	1	2		1	1			1		
\$30,001 to \$40,000		8	3	2	1					
\$40,001 to \$50,000					1		3			
\$50,001 to \$60,000			2		2	1	1	1		
\$60,001 to \$80,000					1	1	1	2		2
\$80,001 to \$100,000									1	
\$100,001 +									1	1