



INTERNATIONAL  
AUTHORS FORUM

# Creating a Living

Challenges for authors' incomes

## Introduction: the global context

**Authors** — a term by which we mean both writers and artists — are central to the creation of culture around the world.

They write the books we immerse ourselves in; create the plays, and the film, TV and radio scripts that entertain us; the texts that educate us; the poems that move us; the paintings on which we feast our eyes, and much more besides.

**“The artists’ royalties, just like writers’ royalties keep the art world and art market going. Without that, the artist will completely disappear, and a world without artists is a very poor world.”**

Susan Stockwell, Artist

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Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that ‘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.’

Therefore, the ability of professional authors everywhere to make a living is vital if this participation in culture is to proliferate across the world.

Article 27 further states 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 [or she] is the author’**

while the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which enshrines ‘sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth’ and ‘full and productive employment and decent work for all’, also underlines the necessity

of a supportive working environment for authors. This notion is also supported by a 2015 study which found that the creative industries drive the digital economy, contribute to youth employment and have huge potential to do so in every world region.<sup>1</sup>

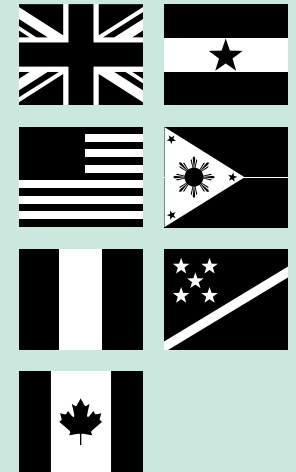
In short, authors across the world have an essential role to play in ensuring the prosperity of their societies. This makes it imperative that they have a conducive environment in which to work, are valued for their diverse creations, and retain the right to make a decent living from their work, supported by a robust copyright framework.

And yet, numerous studies and surveys from developed countries across the world have found that the earnings of authors are in significant decline, despite international growth in the creative industries that make use of their works. Pressure on incomes has reached a point where it could prevent authors in these countries from continuing to write in future. While further research is needed, this same pressure is also in danger of preventing the growth of the creative

industries and consequent economic benefit in developing countries. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a better understanding of the issues authors worldwide currently face when it comes to earning a creative living.

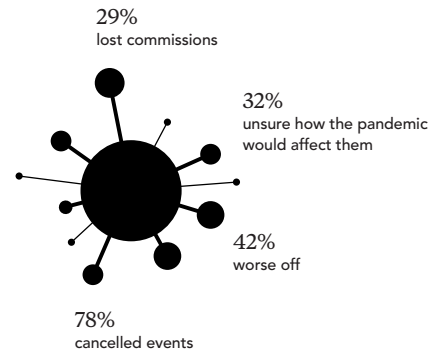
This report incorporates the findings of existing diverse research into the current working conditions for authors.

**While quantitative data currently only exists for developed countries like the UK, US, France and Canada, interviews included here with authors and authors’ representatives in Ghana, the Philippines and the Solomon Islands provide valuable context about the status of authors in developing countries where the creative industries are not yet as significant economically.**



<sup>1</sup> Confédération Internationale des Sociétés d’Auteurs et Compositeurs (CISAC) and EY, 2015. *Cultural Times: The first global map of cultural and creative industries.*

## The impact of COVID-19



The evidence for this report was drawn on before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; this is important to bear in mind as early evidence suggested it likely that there would be further harm to creator incomes as a result of the crisis.

The Society of Authors in the UK ran the first of their snapshot surveys in April 2020<sup>2</sup>: findings suggested that 78% of respondents had events cancelled after COVID-19 and 29% suffered as a result of lost commissions. The survey found that 32% of respondents were unsure how the pandemic would

affect them, while 42% expected to be worse off. Losses reported ranged from £100 to 50% of monthly income. In the coming years, much work will need to be done to evaluate the extent to which this has had an impact on creators and the creative industries.

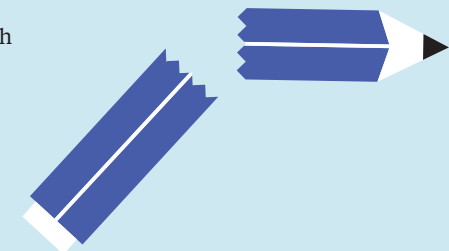
## How authors earn a creative living

Authors' incomes typically come from a variety of sources. These include: the primary sales of their original physical and digital content; secondary exploitations of such content including uses under licence; public appearances including readings and events at arts festivals; exhibitions; public lending right (PLR) payments; resale right royalties; awards and grants.<sup>3</sup>

Many authors support their income with public appearances. In France, a 2017 study<sup>4</sup> found that 35% of book authors had made a public appearance for their work (such as at a festival), and half of these authors had made multiple such appearances in a year. The same study found that 67% of book authors conduct another professional activity in addition to writing, with such jobs typically being in teaching, research or journalism. While authors rely on these public appearances to support their business, there has been a trend in not paying authors, necessitating campaigns such

as that by the Society of Authors (UK) lobbying for a boycott of those festivals where authors are not paid and for minimum standards of payment.<sup>5</sup>

This finding was similar to data from the UK where only 40% of authors earn their incomes solely from writing,<sup>6</sup> while in the US, an Authors Guild survey of incomes found that 57% of authors derived their incomes from writing work alone.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Society of Authors, 2020. *March Impact Analysis: cancellations, income loss and uncertainty in first month of lockdown.*

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, 2016. *Commission Study on Remuneration of Authors of Books and Scientific Journals, Translators, Journalists and Visual Artists for the Use of Their Works*; Horizon Research, 2016. *Writers' Earnings in New Zealand*; The Writers' Union of Canada, 2018. *Diminishing Returns: Creative culture at risk.*

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Culture and Communication, AGESEA, Conseil Permanent des Écrivains and Société des Gens De Lettres (SGDL), 2017. *The Economic and Social Situation of Book Authors.*

<sup>5</sup> Society of Authors. 'Guidance on rates and fees', [societyofauthors.org/Advice/Rates-Fees](https://societyofauthors.org/Advice/Rates-Fees).

<sup>6</sup> Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, 2018. *Authors' Earnings: A survey of UK writers.*

<sup>7</sup> Authors Guild, 2020. *The Profession of Author in the 21st Century.*

# Barriers to earning a living

Despite a continued growth in the creative industries valued at £112 billion in 2020, median earnings for professional writers have fallen by 42% in real terms since 2005.

## Incomes in decline

A significant fall in authors' earnings has been observed across all countries where research into incomes was conducted.

In the UK, despite a continued growth in the creative industries valued at £112 billion in 2020, median earnings for professional writers have fallen by 42% in real terms since 2005; that is, from £18,013 in 2005 to £10,500 in 2017.<sup>8</sup>

## A study of visual artists in the UK found that the average yearly income was £5,000.<sup>9</sup>

For context, research by the UK's Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2017 found that the income level considered to be a socially acceptable standard of living for a single person was £17,900.<sup>10</sup>

This means that the average professional writer and artist in 2017 earned only around a half or a third of this amount respectively.

In the US, while it was calculated that the creative industries added \$1.3 trillion to the US economy in 2017,<sup>11</sup> the Authors Guild reported a 42% decline in median author incomes<sup>12</sup> from 2009 to 2017.

In France, the creative industries contributed €74 billion to GDP in 2013, but a survey found the majority of authors had experienced a decrease in income over the past five years. The same study found only 8% of authors earned above the national minimum wage.<sup>13</sup> Analysis suggested that developments in the book market had a significant effect on authors' earnings, including a decrease in book royalties over a long period.

In New Zealand a study by Horizon Research<sup>14</sup> found:

**The biggest challenge writers felt they were facing was the financial difficulties associated with being a writer. Writers talked about how their incomes were decreasing and how they weren't able to earn a living off writing alone. They also commented that there were fewer publishers available, or that publishers were inaccessible, while other writers felt there was a lack of support from publishers. When asked what they needed in the future to help them succeed as an author, the most commonly mentioned factor was money/income.**

<sup>8</sup> All Party Writers Group, 2018. *Supporting the Writers of Tomorrow: A report of the All Party Writers Group 2018 Inquiry into Authors' Earnings.*

<sup>9</sup> Melanie Gerlis, 2017. 'Artists are getting poorer', *The Art Newspaper*, 30 November 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2017. *A Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2017.*

<sup>11</sup> Siwek, ES, 2018. *Copyright Industries in the US Economy: The 2018 Report.*

<sup>12</sup> Authors Guild, 2020. *The Profession of Author in the 21st Century.*

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Culture and Communication, AGESEA, Conseil Permanent des Écrivains and Société des Gens De Lettres (SGDL), 2017. *The Economic and Social Situation of Book Authors.*

<sup>14</sup> Horizon Research, 2016. *Writers' Earnings in New Zealand.*

In Italy, a study of authors' earnings reported that 96.5% of interviewed writers were unable to make a living from their revenues from writing alone.<sup>15</sup> This finding was supported by a survey that found only 1% of authors in Italy were able to live on the income from their work as a writer.<sup>16</sup>

A survey by the Association of Finnish Non-Fiction Writers (Suomen tietokirjailijat ry) found income from work as a non-fiction writer decreased by more than 25% from 2012 to 2018.<sup>17</sup>

### **The median income from work as a non-fiction writer was €1,111 in 2018, down from €1,520 in 2012; this survey also found PLR accounts for 8% of this income.**

In Canada, where the book industry is worth CA \$2 billion, a 2018 study put the writing income of more than 85% of writers below Canada's poverty line<sup>18</sup> and found that writers were making 78% less than in 1998.

Moreover, a significant portion of this decline came in the three-year period between 2014 to 2017 when earnings fell by 27%.<sup>19</sup> The study made a direct link between this recent decline and increases in uncompensated educational copying, due to changes in educational copyright legislation.

A study of authors' incomes in Australia found that while authors of literary fiction were more likely than others to report declining incomes, 70% of them stated that low earnings prevented them from creating more of it.<sup>20</sup>

#### **b) Pay gaps**

The social background of authors in developed countries also has an impact on their earnings. Writers who identified as being from privileged backgrounds were more likely to earn higher incomes from writing, as well as from other employment.

Research has also detected a disproportionately negative impact on earnings for people from ethnic

minority backgrounds,<sup>21</sup> with a gender pay gap also evident in certain studies. For example, a study in the UK found that the average earnings of female professional authors were around 75% of those of their male counterparts;<sup>22</sup> while in the US it has been estimated that female authors make only 89% of the amount that male authors earn from writing.<sup>23</sup> The extent of this gender pay gap varied noticeably from country to country. A 2015 study of the earnings of Canadian authors, for example, found that women were earning only 55% of the amount earned by men.<sup>24</sup> However, while this gender pay gap is still present in New Zealand, a study found female writers typically had 10% lower total personal incomes than males but earned 10% more from writing.<sup>25</sup> Faye Cura, who runs a literary collective called Gantala Press in the Philippines,

highlighted the relationship between the limited opportunities for authors to make a living there and the fact that the country's cultural output does not reflect the lived experiences of so many people. There is a significant divide between professional Filipino authors who are able to write as a result of full-time employment (such as in journalism or the mainstream audio-visual industry) and those from what might be considered more working-class backgrounds who are underrepresented in Filipino culture as a whole. This chimes with the findings of studies in other countries that show a strong correlation between class and the ability to make a living as a creator. While Cura explained that Gantala Press aims to help remedy this imbalance of representation, she was concerned that its reliance on volunteer efforts would mean that its impact would be limited.

**“Writers are only able to earn a decent living if they serve the Government, private corporations (eg, in advertising), or mass media. As in other countries, state and private institutions maintain the privileged position of these writers through awards and other forms of validation. But we in the press believe that anyone can write or share her story. For us, there should be no distinction whatsoever between a professional writer and one who simply writes.”**

**Faye Cura (Philippines)**

<sup>15</sup> Federazione Unitaria Italiana Scrittori (FUIS), 2017. *The Socio-Economic Conditions of Italian Writers*. Available in Italian, abstract in English.

<sup>16</sup> Rafaella De Santis and Dario Pappalardo, 2010. 'Writing does not pay', *La Repubblica*, 2 November 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Suomen tietokirjailijat ry, 2020. *The Financial Position of Non-Fiction Writers in Finland*.

<sup>18</sup> The Writers' Union of Canada, 2018. *Diminishing Returns: Creative culture at risk*.

<sup>19</sup> The Writers' Union of Canada, 2018. *Diminishing Returns: Creative culture at risk*.

<sup>20</sup> Zwar, J Throsby D and Longden T, 2015. *The Australian book industry: Authors, publishers and readers in a time of change*.

<sup>21</sup> Royal Society of Literature, 2019. *A Room of My Own: What writers need to work today*.

<sup>22</sup> Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, 2018. *Authors' Earnings: A survey of UK writers*.

<sup>23</sup> Narrow the Gap, 2019. *Writers and Authors*.

<sup>24</sup> The Writers' Union of Canada, 2018. *Devaluing Creators, Endangering Creativity*.

<sup>25</sup> Horizon Research, 2016. *Writers' Earnings in New Zealand*.



Gantala Press is a feminist literary collective based in Metro Manila, the Philippines. Since its formation in 2015, the press has produced books, anthologies, comics, cookbooks and zines that centre on women's issues and narratives.

Gantala Press consistently collaborates with women's groups from various sectors and with cultural institutions in organising events and discussions on women, independent publishing, and food/agrarian and worker issues.



Francis Gbormittah is an academic with a focus in media arts and practice. He currently lectures in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. He is the President of the Ghana Association of Writers (GAW) and a member of the Steering Committee of the Pan-African Writers Association (PAWA). Francis has written scripts for films such as *Beggar's Plight*, *Wedding Blues*, *Aloma's Playhouse*, *Manya Krobo: Memories, Identity and Cultural Heritage*, and *SPA at 50*.

## Cultural factors

Interviews carried out in developing countries indicate that globalisation is an issue that affects the ability of authors to make a living in their country of origin, though not necessarily in a negative way. While access to cultures from abroad is broadly welcomed, many interviewees had concerns that it would lead to the erosion of indigenous culture to the point where it disappears. This can be a problem when the flow of culture is in one direction only. In such countries, authors often find that they cannot develop an equivalent international reach for their own creations.

Francis Gbormittah, who represents the Ghana Association of Writers, expressed concern that the current generation of Ghanaian authors have not been able to establish themselves as successfully as others before them. He identified an urgent need to build the reader base in Ghana to make the national publishing industry more viable. He believes that a long-term approach is needed to support indigenous culture in order to reach a point where Ghanaian authors can partake in the international exchange of culture as those in other countries do. Such measures may be necessary in many developing countries to achieve parity around the world when it comes to the influence of the global creative industries.

**“Basically, our market is local. Our books don’t go out, for some time now, as it used to be in the past. Today, in Ghana, when you talk about authors, we will be mentioning names of people who are about 70, 80 years old. It will be difficult to mention names of people who are between 40, 50, 60. There has been a generational gap in the way our writing has an impact on people. Those 70, 80-year-old people made their name while they were younger. It means that young people, or the younger generation are writing but their works are not making the necessary impact, internationally. It remains in the local front.”**

Francis Gbormittah (Ghana)



## The impact of risk

Uncertainty about the value of the content that authors create and its potential for success already exposes both them and any third parties (for example, publishers, producers and agents) contracted to help them produce and market it to an intrinsic level of risk. The contracts agreed between the author and such third parties determine the extent to which risk and reward is shared. For example, a buyout contract (where a publisher or producer would own and control the copyright and all other rights in the work in exchange for an upfront payment<sup>26</sup>) could lead to an author being unable to benefit from the success of their work in the long term.

Publishers, producers, agents and the like are often better placed to manage risk than authors. They are able to diversify across a wide portfolio, with potential losses sustained by one author's works, offset on average by the profits generated by the works of others. While some form of risk diversification

is possible for individual authors (for example, when the poor commercial performance of one of their works is offset by the success of another), the portfolio held by an individual author is typically smaller than those of their contractors. Therefore, the ability of authors to diversify the risk they invest in their work is much more limited.

Over 70%  
of authors now use social  
networks to promote their  
books, events and readings.



<sup>26</sup> Writers' Guild of Great Britain, 2015. *Writing Film: A good practice guide*.

<sup>27</sup> Authors Guild, 2020. *The Profession of Author in the 21st Century*.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Culture and Communication, AGESSA, Conseil Permanent des Écrivains and Société des Gens De Lettres (SGDL), 2017. *The Economic and Social Situation of Book Authors*.

<sup>29</sup> Mosendz, P., 2014. 'Amazon has basically no competition among online booksellers', *The Atlantic*, May 30, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> All Party Writers Group, 2018. *Supporting the Writers of Tomorrow: A report of the All Party Writers Group 2018 Inquiry into Authors' Earnings*.

<sup>31</sup> Federazione Unitaria Italiana Scrittori (FUIS), 2017. *The Socio-Economic Conditions of Italian Writers*. Available in Italian, abstract in English.

## How the market is changing

### The impact of digitisation and online publishing

Digitisation has led to profound changes in the market for authors' works, which have also had an impact on their earnings. The US Authors Guild reported the growing dominance of Amazon along with lower royalties and advances for mid-list books (which publishers typically blame on losses they are forced to pass on). This includes the extremely low royalties paid on sales that are deeply discounted and low net royalties of 25% on ebooks.<sup>27</sup>

Digital media affects authors in contrasting ways depending on the genres they work in. In a study of authors in France, 84% of authors felt that digital media had not had an impact on their income. Writers of graphic novels, for example, rarely discerned an impact from digital media and, if they did, it was more like to be a positive one.<sup>28</sup> However, authors of educational works were much more likely to have perceived a negative impact of digital media on their business.

The rise in online publishing has also encouraged a surge in self-published authors. Amazon has become one of

the chief beneficiaries for the self-publishing boom, offering one of the main platforms where independent authors can sell their titles, and launching print-on-demand services aimed at such authors. In many countries, Amazon is now central to both independent and traditional publishing businesses. Its Kindle and Kindle app rank as the most popular e-reader, and Amazon has maintained its status as the largest ebook retailer for many years.<sup>29</sup> The market dominance of Amazon has been raised as a concern, for example, in a recent UK parliamentary inquiry.<sup>30</sup> This dominance is in sharp contrast to a traditional print market that remains spread across a diverse range of sellers.

### The impact of social media

Social media has become increasingly prevalent in the lives of authors and is viewed as particularly important for marketing purposes. Participation in social networks is now seen as crucial for authors wanting to make useful contacts and develop opportunities. According to FUIS Italy, over 70% of authors now use social networks to promote their books, events and readings, as well as to communicate both with their readers and other writers.<sup>31</sup>

## What authors need in order to thrive

### Fair remuneration

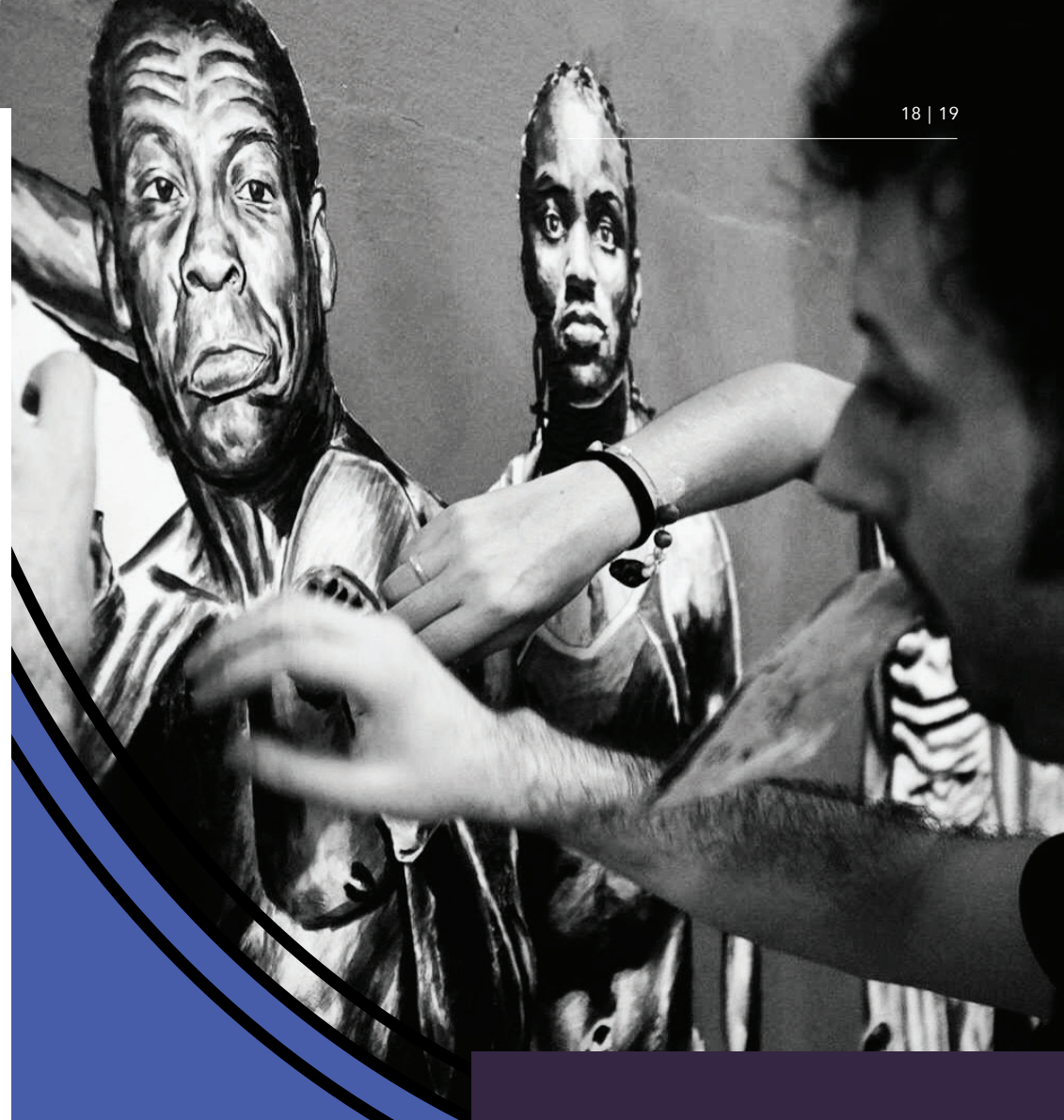
Decent levels of remuneration that reward all the various uses of their works are necessary both to encourage authors to begin to create initially and to sustain them so they can continue to do so. For example, in the UK, a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that a 10% decline in authors' incomes would lead to a 20% drop in output.<sup>32</sup>

Collective Management Organisations (CMOs) and the PLR schemes that now exist in 35 countries worldwide also have an important role to play in ensuring such fair remuneration for authors. This especially applies where the complexity of supply chains and the various possible secondary uses of their works can make it difficult for authors to understand what kind of payments they might be entitled to. The forms of remuneration typically managed by collecting societies, such

as secondary licensing, PLR and resale rights, can make up a significant part of an author's income.

During a panel side-event on PLR at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2016, British author Maggie Gee stated that her UK PLR payments were a decisive factor in her ability to continue writing after the publication of her early novels.

Artist's Resale Right (ARR), also known as *droit de suite*, provides a fair contribution to artists from the proceeds of ongoing sales in the global art market, as well as an incentive to continue creating. A study by DACS in the UK found that over 50% of ARR recipients sell their artwork for under £5,000 on average.<sup>33</sup> ARR is administered by a collecting society that undertakes the process of contacting a wide range of sources to collect and distribute money that is due to artists.<sup>34</sup>



In the UK, a survey of artists found that 81% spent payments from ARR on their living expenses.

<sup>32</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012. *An Economic Analysis of Education Exceptions in Copyright*.

<sup>33</sup> Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), 2019. *Fair Share for Artists*.

<sup>34</sup> Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), 2019. *In the Artists' Words*.



“The situation for Argentine visual artists is complex. The Society of Argentine Visual Artists (SAVA) is focused on legislation to advance resale rights of artists and provide income for their subsistence.

A large part of the artistic community does not live exclusively from creative activity, they work in teaching and other activities related to the arts. For artists to make a living, it is necessary to educate users to properly pay for the uses they make of the works. Latin American culture is not so deeply rooted in the respect for authors' rights and SAVA aims to change this by informing the community. Some artists who make a living exclusively from art, through the sales and licenses, can achieve a basic standard of living.

SAVA continues to strive to uphold artists' rights to further professionalise the visual arts and thereby increase their incomes.”

Nicolás J. Jusidman, Executive Director,  
Society of Argentine Visual Artists (SAVA)

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**“Audiovisual authors around the world live almost exclusively on their authors’ rights. The boom in online services reveals the public’s growing appetite for our works, but in the absence of a legally guaranteed non-transferable and proportional remuneration that allows them to be associated with all the uses and to benefit from the commercial success of their works, they are an endangered species, and with them, our many languages, cultures and imaginations.”**

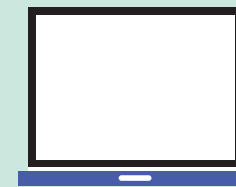
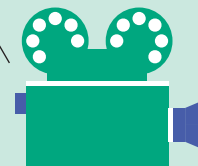
Adrián Caetano, Film Director,  
Screenwriter and Directores Argentinos  
Cinematográficos (DAC) member

While the works of authors across the world are now being accessed online more than ever before, their creators are not always fairly remunerated for such access. Screenwriters, for example, often remain unpaid for the use of their work online, despite audiovisual works generating significant revenues for on-demand services. It is currently often difficult to resolve this lack of remuneration given the huge inequality in the negotiating relationship between producer and screenwriter. Authors’ organisations such as the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) and

the Federation of European Film Directors (FERA)<sup>35</sup> have called for the need for an additional right as well as better creator contracts to resolve this.

Therefore authors urgently need remuneration rights that reflect the myriad uses of their works in the digital age. An ‘Unwaivable Right to Remuneration (URR)’ for online uses would ensure that authors are properly rewarded for their contribution to the vast libraries of work now being made available by on-demand streaming services.

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<sup>35</sup> Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) and Federation of European Film Directors (FERA), 2018. *Better Contracts*.

## Robust copyright frameworks

When legislators consider changes to copyright frameworks, it is important that they understand the difficulties authors routinely face in making a professional living, both in developed nations and in developing countries where the challenges can be even more significant. No copyright exception should disregard fair payment to authors for the use of their work.

The context of educational uses provides a particularly salutary example. While in the 21st century we benefit from the global sharing of information, it is also crucial that educational materials representing diverse cultures and written in indigenous languages are available to support the distinctive culture of each nation. In order to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 of ensuring 'inclusive and equitable quality education' and promoting 'lifelong learning opportunities for all', authors must be able to create works for the specific needs of students in their home countries.

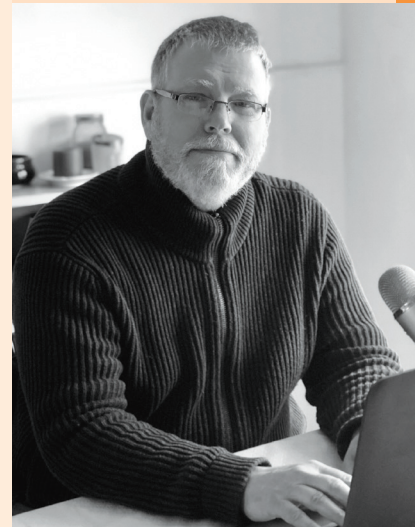
Ideally, copyright measures in place need to strike a balance between fair remuneration for educational writers, while also enabling widespread use of these works at a fair price to educational institutions, though at a lower rate than they would pay when making a primary purchase. Getting the balance right

between allowing both for fair use and fair remuneration can be challenging but, when such a balance is not achieved, the effect on authors and their incomes can be disastrous.

According to Vincent Nomae and James Tuitae of the Solomon Islands Creative Writers Association, the national attitude to cultural works and creators there contrasts with that in many countries where being an author has long been seen as a profession in itself.

**Even with this different approach, however, creators in the Solomon Islands have expressed the view that the protection of their work is important in order to encourage them in sharing it.**

The Solomon Islands Creative Writers Association promotes creative writing and literary awareness in the Solomon Islands. It supports writers, organises workshops and seminars, promotes writers through local media, assists with publication and protects their interests, in addition to producing works for the Solomon Islands Education Department.



**“Because authors depend on multiple writing-related income streams to make their living, it’s vital that not a single one of those streams is damaged. That is why a copyright approach that prioritises licensing and the respect for creator rights is so important. One need only look at my own country, Canada, for an example of the damage that can result from not balancing exceptions with licensing. Here, educational copying royalties all but disappeared after the introduction of an ill-considered and poorly defined exception to copyright. The result has been losses to the creative economy of hundreds of millions of dollars, and the collapse of domestically published educational materials.”**

**John Degen, Author  
and Executive Director of  
The Writers’ Union of Canada**

## Fair contracts

Fair contracts, which determine the levels of remuneration both writers and visual artists will receive for any exploitation of their work, are also essential if the creative industries are to flourish worldwide.

The International Authors Forum (IAF) has established ten guiding principles that should govern author contracts.



A European Commission study found that fair contracts had the greatest positive impact on remuneration<sup>36</sup> and yet, a study in Italy reported that contractual negotiations represent one of the biggest issues for authors who often lack knowledge in this area.<sup>37</sup> Agents are frequently employed by authors to navigate such issues but not all authors will have access to their services.

For this reason, contracts are also one of the most prominent areas of work for writers' unions and other freelance associations. These organisations often play an important role in negotiating model contracts for the use of authors' works which would be unattainable when negotiated on an individual basis. However, such organisations are typically

under-resourced and often not present at all in countries with less developed creative industries. In such countries, campaigning for the establishment of such organisations would help ensure that authors have access to the professional support that is increasingly necessary if they are to pursue a writing living.

In Ghana, Francis Gbormittah of the Ghana Association of Writers called for better copyright and contract education in order to positively influence attitudes to how authors' works are used and to help professionalise the sector, limiting the risk of authors' careers being cut short by exploitive practices. It can be difficult for authors in Ghana to receive fair treatment for their work: many authors report fraudulent publishing houses buying the rights to their works and avoiding paying any royalties, sometimes even dissolving their companies to avoid scrutiny. Authors also receive next to no remuneration for the widespread copying of their work in copy-shops, a practice that undermines the market for legitimate sales of their work. Given that neither publishing nor copying are well policed or regulated, and with print piracy prevalent, Gbormittah believes that digital publishing could offer a better regulated alternative.

## The IAF's Ten Principles of Fair Contracts

- 1  Contracts should not be forever
- 2  Authors should share in the success of their creation
- 3  Authors' copyright should be respected
- 4  Party being granted the right must use it or lose it
- 5  Ensure authors' work can reach its broadest possible audience, and authors are recognised and rewarded for all forms of access
- 6  Contractual commitment to regular reporting and payment for all uses of authors' work
- 7  Safeguard respect for authorship and the integrity of the work
- 8  Safeguard authors' future availability and choice in the marketplace
- 9  Clearly defined contract terms and responsibilities with an agreed definition of what is 'reasonable' and 'not to be unreasonably withheld'
- 10  A balance between risk and profit

<sup>36</sup> European Commission, 2016. *Commission Study on Remuneration of Authors of Books and Scientific Journals, Translators, Journalists and Visual Artists for the Use of Their Works.*


<sup>37</sup> Federazione Unitaria Italiana Scrittori (FUIS), 2017. *The Socio-Economic Conditions of Italian Writers.* Available in Italian. abstract in English.

## Professional support and encouragement

Authors' unions and other associations worldwide help authors manage their professional business and communicate with other authors working in the same field. Even where legislation in a particular country provides regulation to protect the rights of authors, such organisations also strengthen the voices of those in weaker bargaining positions. Authors' organisations frequently campaign in support of fair remuneration too, for example, by lobbying for appearance fees for writers at literary festivals and other events.

CMOs also play an important role in supporting authors in creating their works. For example, as well as rewarding writers financially for the contribution they make to a vital public good — that is the availability of culture in public libraries — public lending right schemes are also hugely valued by writers for the evidence they provide that their works continue to be read and enjoyed.

Like PLR, ARR has been described by recipient creators as important not just in terms of earnings but also for the recognition it provides.



“One of the shocking truths about the multi-billion-earning publishing business is that most professional writers don’t make enough money to earn a living from writing alone. I am no longer among them — I’m grateful for this, and I know that I am one of the lucky few. However, many of my colleagues are not so fortunate: the small but regular income derived from secondary copyright or the PLR is often very welcome, paying for a holiday, a present or a little treat for the family. Even more importantly, PLR serves as an important validation for authors who may no longer be receiving royalties from their books: it reminds us that we still have readers, and that our work is important. In a world in which such validation is increasingly rare, this is a precious thing indeed, and deserves appreciation.”

Joanne Harris, Author

## Conclusion

Further research in a wider spread of countries is needed if we are to reach a better understanding of the conditions in which authors globally attempt to earn a creative living. However, it can be stated with certainty that in every country where such research has been conducted, evidence shows a marked decline in earnings, despite international growth in the creative industries.

“Royalties have allowed me the freedom to create more.”

Pogus Caesar, Artist

The needs of writers and artists are diverse and vary from profession to profession, but clearly there are some common measures that can be put in place to help ensure that authors can thrive while earning a sustainable, professional living.

- ||| **Robust copyright frameworks**, which balance the needs of creators and users, are as important as ever. While digital technologies have tested this balance at times, judicious licensing mechanisms can bridge any gap between requirements. No copyright exception should disregard fair payment to authors for the use of their work.
- ||| In instances where copyright does not provide a suitable framework, additional rights that provide remuneration for creators must also be in place. For example:
  - **Public Lending Right**, which makes payments to writers for the use of their work in libraries.
  - **Artists Resale Right**, which rewards the ongoing enjoyment and revaluation of an artists’ work.

— **Unwaivable Remuneration Right**, which remunerates authors for the long-term use of their works by on-demand streaming services.

- ||| Contracts often determine how an author receives the majority of their income. Whether negotiated through agents, unions or via other sources of expertise, **authors need support in arriving at fair contracts** that properly reflect the value and rights enshrined in their works. Such contracts are vital across the entire creative community to ensure that good practices are upheld and predatory practices are outlawed.
- ||| There is evidence of authors’ incomes being in decline prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and early evidence suggests the pandemic will lead to a further decline. We will reach out to our members to find out more about this and we would also urge organisations such as the UN to undertake an **assessment of the impact this crisis will have on creators and creative sectors**.

Taken together, these essential measures will help ensure that creators around the world can make a living from all the myriad ways in which they contribute, both to our diverse cultures and to our creativity, at a global level.



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