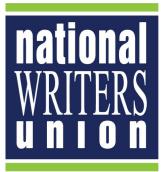
200 Ways to Make a Living as a Writer in the Digital Age

Edward Hasbrouck National Writers Union, Boston Chapter

April 9, 2022



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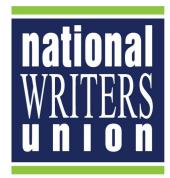
Making a living as a writer: Is the glass half full or half empty?

- <u>Print</u> markets and revenues are declining.
- But people are <u>reading more than ever</u>, and
- <u>More money than ever</u> is being made from publication and distribution of written work!
- The issue isn't whether there is money to be made, but how the pie is being divided.
- More than ever, we <u>can</u> make a living as writers, <u>if</u> we are paid our fair share.



There is no "typical" writer.

- Most writers have multiple income streams, often from different business models.
- Different writers prioritize different ways of monetizing our work.
- There are more ways to generate revenue from writing than most writers realize.



Five dimensions of monetization:

- 1. Frontlist vs. backlist
- 2. Print vs. digital
- 3. Business models
- 4. Revenue sources
- 5. Publication formats



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1st Dimension: Frontlist vs. Backlist

- A writer has three main classes of assets which they can use to generate revenue:
- 1. Ability (labor power) to create new writing.
- 2. Rights (copyright) to your personal backlist.
- 3. Brand equity (reputation, fan base, etc.) in your personal brand.



2nd Dimension: Print vs. Digital

- Sales, revenues, and freelance rates of printed newspapers, magazines, etc. are falling.
- But people are reading more online and in digital formats, on computers, on e-readers like Kindles, and on their phones.
- If there's a chance to make up some of the lost print revenue, it's from digital sources.



3rd Dimension: Business Models

- 1. Employment
- 2. Independent contracting (can be similar to employment in some ways, e.g. monthly flat fee to write a blog or e-mail newsletter)
- 3. Freelancing (licensing to third-party publishers)
- 4. Self-publishing



4th Dimension: Revenue Sources

- 1. Sales (including *de facto* sales through all-rights "buy-out" contracts)
- 2. Wages and wage-like contracting fees
- 3. Licensing
- 4. Advertising
- 5. Subscriptions and memberships



5th Dimension: Publication formats

- 1. Printed publications
 - A. Books
 - B. Printed periodicals (newspapers, magazines, journals, etc.)
 - C. Short-form print editions (offprints, chapbooks, ephemera, worksheets, etc.)



5th Dimension: Publication formats

- 2. Digital editions and formats:
 - A. Web content (Web sites, blogs, etc.)
 - B. Apps
 - C. E-books and other downloads
 - D. E-mail (newsletters, etc.)
 - E. Videos, multimedia, and interactive digital formats (including games and instructional materials).



Many marketplaces for digital text:

- Each of these five dimensions of monetization is independent of the others.
- These modes of monetization are also independent of the genre of writing (journalism, fiction, instructional materials, etc.).
- A work can be monetized in multiple ways at the same time, and in different ways at different times – or in only one way.



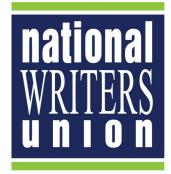
200 ways to make money from writing in digital formats

- 2 frontlist (new work) and backlist (old work)
- x 2 original formats: print and born digital
- x 5 revenue sources
- x 5 digital publication formats
- = 200 ways to make money fromwriting in digital formats



Trends in writers' revenues (obvious):

- Print \rightarrow digital
- 3rd-party publishers \rightarrow self-publishing
- Traditional "publishers" \rightarrow new intermediaries



Trends in writers' revenues (less obvious):

- Frontlist \rightarrow Backlist (inc. "re-mix" of own work)
- Long-form \rightarrow short-form & "granular" text
- Fixed "editions" → dynamic publication
- Geographic segmentation \rightarrow time-limited licensing



National Writers Union (NWU) https://nwu.org

> Edward Hasbrouck NWU Northern California Chapter ehasbrouck@nwu.org

> > https://hasbrouck.org edward@hasbrouck.org +1-415-824-0214



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