

Survey of Editors 2003

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It was interesting to see very little change in the reported rates charged. The average hourly rate was \$50, virtually the same as in 2001. Once again, there were huge variations, with the lowest reported hourly rate for editing \$20 and the highest rate \$140. Rates for some services were higher (project management at \$65 and document development at \$73), while others were lower (proofreading \$40 and indexing \$45). Manuscript assessment came in with a large variation of \$57 per hour or \$320 per manuscript, which would work out at well under half the average hourly rate. It may be that the 2001 figure was slightly high, owing to the over-representation of Canberra editors, and the 2003 figure slightly low, since Queensland rates tend to be lower than the national average. An analysis of the state and territory breakdown of rates gives the following averages for charged freelance editing: ACT (\$73), South Australia (\$60), Tasmania (\$53), NSW and WA (\$50), Victoria (\$49), Queensland (\$45). While there was a fairly good number of responses from ACT, Queensland, NSW and Victoria, the sample sizes from Tasmania, South Australia and WA were very small. There were many comments on rates. A familiar refrain was that they are 'too low for the services provided'. Many gave reasons for charging low rates: 'discounts to needy students'; 'getting the work is more important than the rate'; 'clients will not pay higher rates'. Several people expressed a desire for guidance on the appropriate rates to charge: 'A session on how to charge would be good'; 'Guidelines are needed on rates and quoting for newcomers'; 'Would like to know more about setting fees'; 'It's difficult to know what to charge, what the market will bear—I don't want to price myself out of the market or undercut colleagues'. It's common to charge different rates for different clients, and different jobs. Some discount for 'worthy causes' and some charge higher rates for corporate and government work. A final comment sums up many people's views: 'It's time to move on rates. Editors must work together.'

(Excerpt from 'Analysis of second national survey of editors (July 2003)' by Pamela Hewitt, reproduced with permission)