

Make more money – from picture research

WRITERS can make more money on the picture research side of the features they write – if they ask for it.

Recently an LFB member rang me for advice on a writing gig for a fashion web site. The rate offered was reasonable but nothing special, and the job involved a lot of tracking down copyright holders for specific images, which the freelance in question had already done. Looking at the Rate for the Job for magazine features, I noticed that several freelances had managed to get add-ons for picture research. £100 in one case, or \$200 Australian in another. And I met a contributor who writes

features for the same magazine as me, a non-member who gets a higher rate purely on the basis that “it’ll involve a lot of picture research.”

I did several work placements straight after my journalism course, and there was one element common to all of them. At each workplace, the art editor would – unasked – seek me out and tell me what they required from authors – images of 360 dots per inch (dpi) resolution, scanned in at A4 – and they all told me their biggest last-minute hair-tearing-out nightmare was getting images to go with

last-minute copy the authors had sent in.

Being able to talk the talk on the picture desk side of things often helped to clinch the deal when I pitched my first features.

Since then, many art editors jobs have been cut altogether, leaving subs or commissioning editors to improvise their way through picture research, and they’ll keep returning to you if they know you’ll save them work on this front.

When I now negotiate a deal, there’s often around £100 written into the contract as an extra for “picture research”. Think of it in terms of the amount of – scarce – picture editor’s time you’re saving, by presenting an editor with sample images and contact details for the copyright holders, and an indication of how much the images would cost to use. I’ve used this argument to put up my rates on several occasions. It’s not nearly as difficult as putting up actual word rates. I find it’s easier for editors to get an extra “picture research” item on an invoice past the bean-counters than it is to hit them with a straight higher rate for the piece.

I now go into libraries and archives with an eye to images as well as words – getting photocopies of suitable images I come across and recording details of how to get them from the copyright holder if needed later, and at what cost.

If I’m researching words already, the extra work of tracking down pics turns out to be very little compared to the value it can add to your total fee for the article. Remember always to ask for a copyright declaration to sign when making your single copy at the library or archive, and stick to it. And always warn your editor in writing that you’re only *showing* them images for which copyright has not been cleared.

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Flat Earth alert

NICK DAVIES, author of *Flat Earth News*, which exposes “the mechanics of falsehood, distortion and propaganda” in the media, will speak on at a meeting on **Wednesday 4 February**. London Freelance Branch are proud co-hosts of Nick’s talk, together with NUJ Press & PR Branch. This free event is at 7pm at the NUJ headquarters at Headland House, 308 Gray’s Inn Road, London WC1 (King’s Cross Tube). Drink and nibbles will be served. The paperback edition of *Flat Earth News* will appear at around that time. See www.flatearthnews.net for details of the book, and for regular contributions for journalists exposing “news stories” that are word-for-word, unchecked reproductions of press releases, along with other all too numerous examples of the culture of “churnalism”.

Stealth privacy law at visual creator gathering

DO RECENT precedents, such as the Max Mosely *News of the World* judgment, and other rulings by Mr Justice Eady on privacy and media reporting, represent a new privacy law by stealth? Are such judgments an abuse of the Human Rights Act? This is one of the topics that’s already confirmed on the agenda for the second NUJ Photographers’ Conference on **Monday 18 May 2009**.



The Science Museum’s Dageurrotype whole plate camera, 1839
Photo: © Matt Salusbury <http://mattsalusbury.blogspot.com>

Unsettling unnews

BREATH BATED, the *Freelance* is waiting to see what the US Supreme Court will do to the proposed settlement of claims for unauthorised use and re-sale of freelance writers’ works online, ruled illegal in 2001.

Some writers’ organisations had negotiated \$11.8 million from the *New York Times*, Reed-Elsevier (owners of the Lexis-Nexis online newspaper archive) and others. Some writers objected on the grounds that this wasn’t nearly

enough – especially since the owners of nearly 200 newspapers and magazines piled in to be covered, too, by the same sum.

As reported in the January 2008 *Freelance*, the objectors won – the settlement was thrown out by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York in November.

Ironically, the objectors disagree entirely with the grounds on which the court decided, since these appear to prevent authors who have

not registered their works with the US Copyright Office claiming anything at all, ever.

Members of the Supreme Court were due to discuss the case on 5 December, but on 8 December the case was re-listed for 12 December. We’ll update you online as soon as we hear anything: or see objector Irv Muchnik’s blog on what he calls the UnSettlement, at www.freelancerights.blogspot.com

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Insure your car for work

Freelances with cars are reminded that they should insure their car for “work purposes”. If, for example, you have an accident when you’re driving to or from the library to drop off or pick up books for your work, an awkward squad insurance company would be legally justified in not paying out if your car was insured only for uses that didn’t include work. Insuring your car for “work purposes” could save you some very expensive trouble.