

Defend Public Lending Right

Dozens of authors' organisations and individual authors have responded to the government's consultation on the future of the Public Lending Right office, which distributes money in compensation for the effect of book sales of lending from libraries. The message is: leave it alone! Also, note that registering with www.plr.uk.com now enables you to collect for Irish lending as well.

The Rate for the Job

OUR FIRST Rate for the Tweets is among some unusual gigs in this month's Rate for the Job. And as proof that upping your rates is possible even in austere times, a sub reports getting "on request" a £10 raise in shift rates – the first for eight years, however. Moral of the story: "don't ask, don't get"?

Thinking about work for a company you've not dealt with before? Simply look at the Rate for the Job to find out what companies in similar niches have paid. Then aim higher.

You can submit rates online, in confidence, at any time, at www.londonfreelance.org/rates – please give not only the basic rate (e.g. for FBS, First British Serial rights) but extra payments negotiated for extras, like the Web. These are shown as (eg) £400 + 100. We now record rates in Euro as well. Rates marked **X** are, in the editor's fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy © few.

Broadcast: AFP, 2 video packages £200 + exes **XXXX**.

Crosswords: *Guardian* (2012 house agreement) Prize crossword £177; Cryptic crossword £167; Quick crossword £35.

Illustrations: (2012 house agreement) *Guardian* Leader cartoon £420.75 + 29.25; *Observer* Section cover £349.69 + 24.31; *Observer* 1/4-page £241.23 + 16.77; *Guardian* Sport illustration: £216.92 + 15.08; Letters page cartoon £141.19 + 9.82.

Photography: *Daily Telegraph* picture on spec, 1 in square £90; *Quotidiano* 2 photos €200; *Guardian* (2012 house agreement) 4-hour shift £190;

Guardian pic on spec, over 5 inches – minimum £150, stock pic; *Guardian* half page – minimum £124.49.

Shifts: *Times* "Helmand embed", 10 days, £2000 + exes; *ENDS Report* (environment, Haymarket) subbing day, raised from £140 on request, first rate rise since 2006, £150; *South London Press* layout, subbing, reporting day £100 **X**; Snapper's website, editing words, per hour £30; *Guardian* subbing day (house agreement, + 11.7% paid time off) £180.24; *IDS Pay Report* writing/research day £100 **XX**; corporate client editing intranet, 7-hour day £56 **XXX**.

Translation: Scottish Courts interpreting (hour?) £18, no exes **X**.

Words, per 1000: *Guardian* house agreement minimum, web uplift is 6.5%, £290.49 + £20.19; *NBC* The Grio up to US\$285; *One in Four* feature, uplift for online use £100.

Words, other: rewriting 85,000-word novel for private individual, £1300; composing and sending six Tweets while covering all-day event £100; *Guardian* commissioned Comment is Free, minimum £90.



The Gong

This month's Gong – a wake-up call to late-paying clients – goes to the creditors of former media outlet Evans. We heard via the Nibweb email list (see www.londonfreelance.org) of one author owed money by them, who finally got paid some of what they were owed – 33p in the pound – in mid-September, after over two years. The cheque was underwritten by "Evans Nigeria". Two years isn't that slow for an insolvency process, in which you register a claim as a creditor and wait for the Official Receiver to divvy up what remains in the company. The trick is to get paid before a company is wound up.

Photo © Dave Rotchelle

Universal Credit: universal stitch-up

LAST MONTH the *Freelance* highlighted the parliamentary consultation on the regulations governing Universal Credit, which is expected to have a severe impact on freelance and part-time workers.

The NUJ has now submitted a response to the consultation, which has also seen responses from bodies such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group.

Universal Credit allegedly simplifies welfare by rolling all benefits – working tax credit, child tax credit, housing benefit and so on – into one. But the new rules are even more complex. People who claim what's now called "Working Tax Credit" because of low earned income will have to submit monthly reports, alongside yearly tax returns.

It seems that some time after the October 2013 target date for Universal Credit there will be a transitional "pilot" phase, after which the Universal Credit regime will kick in, and self-employed claimants could be sent on compulsory courses on stacking supermarket shelves if they don't earn enough in any one month.

It's becoming more difficult for us to maintain, let alone increase, our incomes. But the proposals are likely to subject claimants earning below a "minimum floor" – the minimum wage for 35 hours, about £212 per week – to the harassment of "sanctions" already faced by people claiming unemployment benefits.

A recent example of this was more than 22,000 warning letters being sent – incorrectly, as it turned out – to "warn claimants of a poten-

tial loss of benefits if they fail to participate in the schemes" as directed by Jobcentre Plus, a series of errors for which the Department for Work and Pensions was criticised in a High Court judgment delivered by Mr Justice Foskett.

The Universal Credit consultation memorandum claims, "The policy intent for applying a Minimum Income Floor is to encourage and incentivise [sic] individuals to increase their earnings..." Welfare blogger Johnny Void points out that under the new measures it will no longer be an employer's responsibility to pay the minimum wage, but a worker's responsibility to earn it.

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● There's a longer version online, with informative links.

'Journalism, a force for good'

THE NUJ's closing submission to the Leveson inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press continues developing the union's argument for a "conscience clause" to be inserted into journalists' contracts, protecting those of us who refuse to do work contrary to the union's Code of Conduct.

Looking at the future of press regulation, the statement calls for a successor to the Press Complaints Council in which journalists are rep-

resented on the board (as currently in Ireland), and advocates extending "unwaivable moral rights to cover newspapers and magazines".

The NUJ's submission concludes, addressing Lord Justice Leveson: "Yours has been an unprecedented inquiry into the reality of how the press operates within the UK.

"It was born out of a scandal that shocked the public and put the spotlight on journalistic practices and ethics as never before. This has to

be an Inquiry that achieves change through the implementation of recommendations that come out of it – the NUJ, like you, does not wish to see the outcomes of this Inquiry to become yet another footnote in the annals of journalistic history."

The submission is only 18 pages of quite big type and it's worth taking not too long to read the whole document. See links at www.londonfreelance.org/fli/1208leve.html for more.