

The Authors Guild, Inc.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PUBLISHERS FROM THE AUTHORS GUILD, MEMBERS OF THE AUTHORS COALITION, AND MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL AUTHORS FORUM

Unfair terms in publishing agreements negatively affect authors' incomes and even their ability to write at all. That's the conclusion the Authors Guild's Fair Contract Initiative has repeatedly demonstrated since it was launched in May 2015. Now it's time to act on that conclusion.

The Initiative's fresh look at standard book contracts has proven without doubt that provisions that would never be acceptable in other contexts have long been taken for granted in publishing agreements. Authors are now standing together to say "no." It is time for publishers to give authors the respect, compensation and fair play they deserve.

What we demand is simple: Publishers need to revise many of their standard contract terms to make them more equitable. Authors should get *at least* 50% of net e-book income, not a mere 25%. They should not have their hands tied with non-compete and option clauses that can make it impossible for them to write new books without delay. They should not be forced to accept royalties that can decline by 50% when the publisher cuts its wholesale price by a single cent. They should be able to get the rights back when the publisher stops supporting a book.

And authors should be able to get a fair shake even if they don't have powerful agents or lawyers. When negotiating with known agents, publishers often start from previously negotiated contracts that remove many of the most draconian provisions handed to unagented authors. Why not do the right thing by all authors and eliminate those provisions for everyone?

Authors' income is down across all categories. According to a 2015 Authors Guild survey—our first since 2009—the writing-related income of full-time book authors dropped 30% over that time period, from \$25,000 to \$17,500. Part-time authors saw an even steeper slide: their writing income dropped 38%.

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While there are many reasons for these declines, unfair terms, including reduced royalty rates, are clearly a major part of the problem. Without serious contract reform, the professional author will become an endangered species and publishers—as well as society at large—will be left with less and less quality content. Publishers need to treat their authors equitably so they can keep writing the kinds of books that have enabled the publishing industry to achieve the financial and cultural status it enjoys today.

We'll be asking for individual meetings in the coming months with publishers both large and small to discuss the substance of the attached articles and what publishers can do to ensure this business is fair and profitable for those who create the works that sustain it.

We don't stand alone in our commitment to more equitable book contracts. The Authors Guild Fair Contract Initiative has earned the support of many U.S. and foreign authors groups, representing many tens of thousands of individual members in the United States alone. Those supporting groups have signed on to this letter.

Sincerely,

The Authors Guild

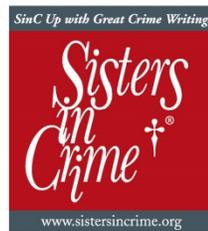
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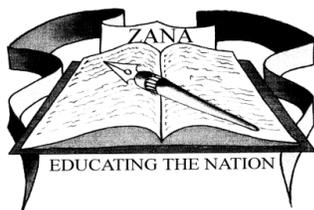
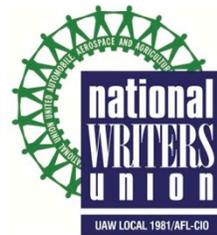
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