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Salary Survey: Finally, A Little More in the Paycheck

May 1, 2004 2:25 PM
Liz Borod

Editorial jobs are opening up and publishers are budgeting raises again-but workloads are still growing faster than salaries.

The results of the Folio: 2004 Editorial Salary Survey should be heartening news: Editors' salaries climbed back to 2000 levels, the recent high-water mark for the industry. Salaries for editors-in-chief averaged \$93,561, or \$232 (.25 percent) more than in 2000.

If running in place isn't your idea of progress, it's still an improvement over 2002, the last time Folio: conducted the salary survey. During 2001 and 2002, in the grip of an ad recession, salaries fell in most categories-senior, managing, executive editor and e.i.c. /editorial director. Top editors' pay fell by 9.6 percent in 2001 and 1.2 percent in 2002; other titles also dropped in 2001, but rose in 2002.

Implicit in the numbers is the good news that, after three years of slashing headcounts, freezing salaries and open slots remaining unfilled, publishers are again budgeting raises. "Publishers need to pay people more to keep them," says a Fairchild b-to-b publisher. "As the market opens up, people who are antsy can now find something else instead of just sitting tight."



Illustration by Tim Bower

\$ PROFILE/OVERALL			
	Average	Business	Consumer
Age	44.4	43.8	44.9
Years worked in editorial	17.8	17.4	18.1
Years worked at present company	10.5	9.7	11.4
Years in current position	6.1	5	7.1
No. of people supervised	6.3	5.6	6.9
No. of magazines worked on	1.9	1.8	1.9

Even if the ad market hasn't heated up yet, editorial want ads have increased, and the

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market for editors seems to be thawing. "People are no longer afraid to leave jobs they hate," says Laurel Touby, founder of career Website Mediabistro.com.

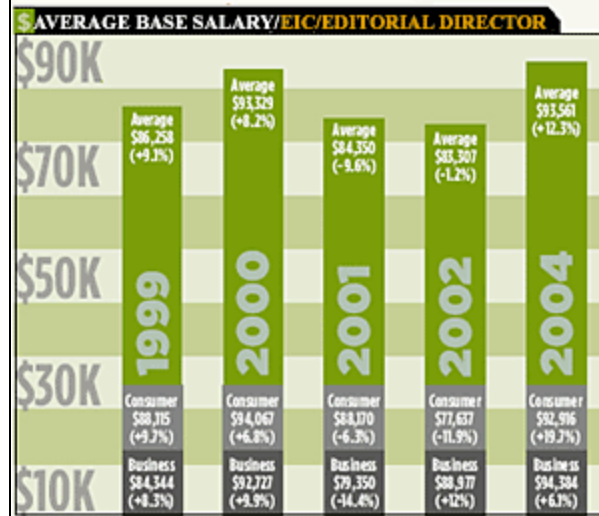
PROFILE/EIC/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR			
	Average	Business	Consumer
Age	45.9	45.9	45.8
Years worked in editorial	19.8	20.4	19.2
Years worked at present company	11.9	11.1	12.6
Years in current position	6.7	6.1	7.3
No. of people supervised	9	9	9
No. of magazines worked on	3	2	3

SALARY BREAKDOWN/EIC/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR	
Average Salaries	
39 or younger	\$67,542
40 or older	\$101,799
Years worked in editorial	
Less than 10 years	\$72,592
11 - 20 years	\$85,700
21 or more years	\$106,950
Years worked at present company	
5 or less years	\$91,390
6 to 10 years	\$80,667
11 or more years	\$102,603
Years in Current position	
2 years or less	\$89,208
3 - 6 years	\$89,560
7 years or more	\$100,951
Responsible for	
1 magazine	\$96,870
2 or more magazines	\$91,923
Full-time employees supervised	
1-2	\$59,196
3 or more	\$99,627
By circulation	
Under 50,000	\$81,057
50,000 to 99,999	\$92,823
100,000 to 499,999	\$105,923
Paid circulation	\$100,020
Controlled circulation	\$87,275

LOWEST/HIGHEST SALARY REPORTED:
\$35,000/
\$185,000

AVERAGE BONUS EXPECTED:
\$12,285

PERCENTAGE WHO EXPECT TO RECEIVE A BONUS:
63.7%



Folio: defines an editor-in-chief or editorial director as the person who sets editorial policy and to whom all editors report; may hold other executive titles; may be in charge of other products in other

One sign of an improving job market for editors: Job jumping, the tried-and-true way to boost salary and title, is once more in vogue. "There already is a lot of movement at the highest level," says Karen Danziger, executive vice president at the search firm Howard Sloan Koller.

When bosses move, so do their protégés, which has a multiplier effect, creating more openings. "Everyone wants to bring his or her no. 2 along, and then these changes start trickling down to the lower levels," says Danziger. For example, Adam Moss recently took Hugo Lindgren with him from *The New York Times Magazine* to *New York*.

Still, after years of cuts and job insecurity, editorial employees have lowered their expectations. Many *Folio*: survey respondents say they're working harder with little or no pay, but feel lucky to still be in journalism. "I took over some managing editor and production/layout duties when positions were eliminated," wrote one editor-in-chief. "Compensation? I still have my job."

Happy days are certainly not here again. In some quarters, austerity measures remain in effect. There's a policy at *Money* magazine, for example, that anyone who makes over \$150,000 forgoes a raise. (Clearly, lots of editors

departments in addition to editorial.

would love to have that problem!) There haven't

been any raises at *Forbes* lately, but bonuses are starting to return. In December many staffers got a bonus worth two paychecks. And the editorial staff at Crain Communications, which lifted a salary freeze for top earners last year, got their usual bonus of an extra paycheck, says Gloria Scoby, group publisher and senior vice president. Like other b-to-bs, Crain underwent substantial downsizing.

Many magazines are still holding back on editorial bonuses. "A lot of bonuses have been trimmed," says Susan Gordon, president of Lynne Palmer Inc., a publishing headhunter. Only 51.5 percent of survey respondents (and 63.7 percent of editors-in-chief) say they expect a bonus for 2004, of anywhere from \$500 to \$40,000, with an average of \$8,963. "Companies can still get away with not giving bonuses," says Danziger.

Thus, the overall supply/demand picture has not improved dramatically: Positions that were eliminated are not being restored - and may not be until publishers feel that advertising gains are sustainable. In some categories, such as shelter and entertainment, publishers are starting to rehire. In others, such as consumer business, there's still a chill. At *Money*, as with other Time Inc. magazines, there's an unofficial freeze: "We have to get permission from several levels of higher-ups to fill positions that are open job lines and that are budgeted. We might get to fill the position or not," explains an editor. *Forbes* has had a hiring freeze since the spring of 2001: "I doubt that will change anytime soon," says one editor. "Crain has had a self-imposed

hiring freeze for the past three years, but we replace critical jobs,” says Scoby. “When the business improves at various titles, we will selectively add back. The publishers will add jobs when they know they can make them stick, because it’s painful to have to cut back.”

\$ PROFILE/EXECUTIVE EDITOR			
	Average	Business	Consumer
Age	46.1	45	47.1
Years worked in editorial	17.9	16.4	19.3
Years worked at present company	10.5	9	12
Years in current position	6.3	4.8	7.8
No. of people supervised	6	4	8
No. of magazines worked on	1	1	1

LOWEST/HIGHEST SALARY REPORTED: \$22,000/\$220,000

AVERAGE BONUS EXPECTED: \$8,500

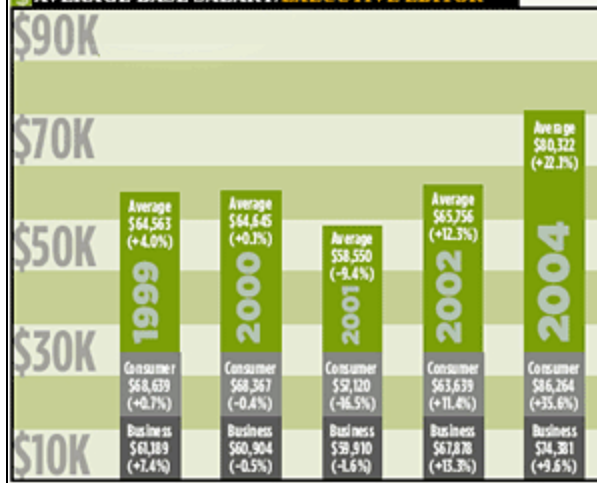
PERCENTAGE WHO EXPECT TO RECEIVE A BONUS: 48.1%

\$ SALARY BREAKDOWN/EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Average Salaries:	
39 or younger	\$61,015
40 or older	\$86,119
Years worked in editorial	
Less than 10 years	\$54,436
11 - 20 years	\$78,221
21 or more years	\$92,533
Years worked at present company	
5 or less years	\$70,086
6 to 10 years	\$71,474
11 or more years	\$94,332
Years in Current position	
2 years or less	NA*
3 - 6 years	\$78,161
7 years or more	\$85,502
Responsible for	
1 magazine	\$81,298
2 or more magazines	\$78,800
Full-time employees supervised	
1-2	\$64,878
3 or more	\$88,249
By circulation	
Under 50,000	\$62,470
50,000 to 99,999	\$71,859
100,000 to 499,999	\$90,626
Paid circulation	\$88,623
Controlled circulation	\$71,314

*Results based on fewer than 20 respondents are not reported.

\$ AVERAGE BASE SALARY/EXECUTIVE EDITOR



Folio: defines an editor or executive editor as the person who is responsible for the editorial direction and content, including art, text and cover, for one or more magazines.

you had to show them the pay stub to prove it,” says an ex-staff member.

PROFILE/MANAGING EDITOR	
	Business*
Age	40
Years worked in editorial	14.2
Years worked at present company	8.9
Years in current position	4.3
No. of people supervised	4
No. of magazines worked on	1

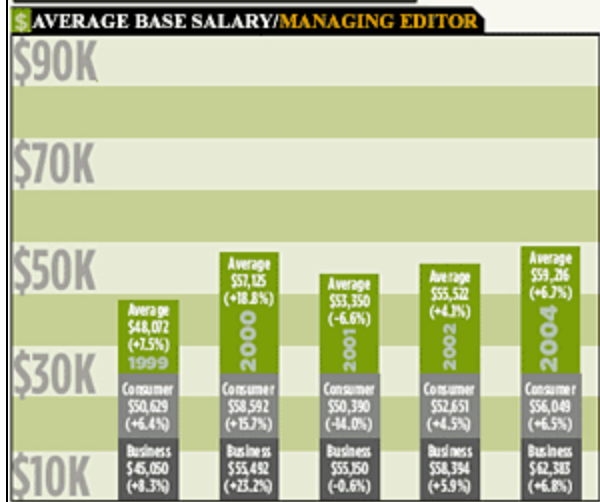
*Results for consumer magazines were not reported because the numbers were statistically insignificant.

SALARY BREAKDOWN/MANAGING EDITOR	
Average Salaries	
39 or younger	\$54,446
40 or older	\$62,094
Years worked in editorial	
Less than 10 years	\$50,369
11 - 20 years	\$63,029
21 or more years	NA
Years worked at present company	
5 or less years	\$50,598
6 to 10 years	\$64,596
11 or more years	\$65,870
Years in Current position	
2 years or less	\$58,435
3 - 6 years	\$54,234
7 years or more	NA
Responsible for	
1 magazine	\$60,766
2 or more magazines	\$54,194
By number of full-time employees supervised	
1-2	\$54,898
3 or more	\$65,711
By circulation	
Under 50,000	\$46,196
50,000 to 99,999	\$50,634
100,000 to 499,999	NA
Paid circulation	NA
Controlled circulation	\$59,100

LOWEST/HIGHEST SALARY REPORTED: \$27,500/\$135,000

AVERAGE BONUS EXPECTED: \$2,971

PERCENTAGE WHO EXPECT TO RECEIVE A BONUS: 42%



The managing editor is defined as the person who coordinates the editorial, art and production departments to ensure that the magazine is published on time and is in acceptable form. This person also oversees the copyediting and proofreading functions.

-chief-and a surprisingly higher average salary for editors at business titles versus those in consumer-the sampling is

InTouch, which launched in 2002, pays more to writers than *US Weekly* - perhaps to compensate for the commute to Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

One positive result of the speedup is that editors are gaining new skills, as their jobs get more complex and entrepreneurial. Editors who can keep up with the new rigors of the job may be in demand, says Gordon. "Magazines are looking for people to help them run more efficiently and save money."

Indeed, editors-in-chief responding to *Folio*'s survey say they are wearing more hats than ever. "I act as de facto publisher and represent my company on a national alliance of related pubs," says one b-to-b e.i.c., who considers this extra work pro bono. Another e.i.c. at a small pub says: "My job covers everything from secretarial duties to art director/designer to reporter to editor to editorial visionary to industry historian with no raise in three years and elimination of a bonus program two and a half years ago. My workload is up, my pay is down."

While the survey shows a nice bump up for editors - in

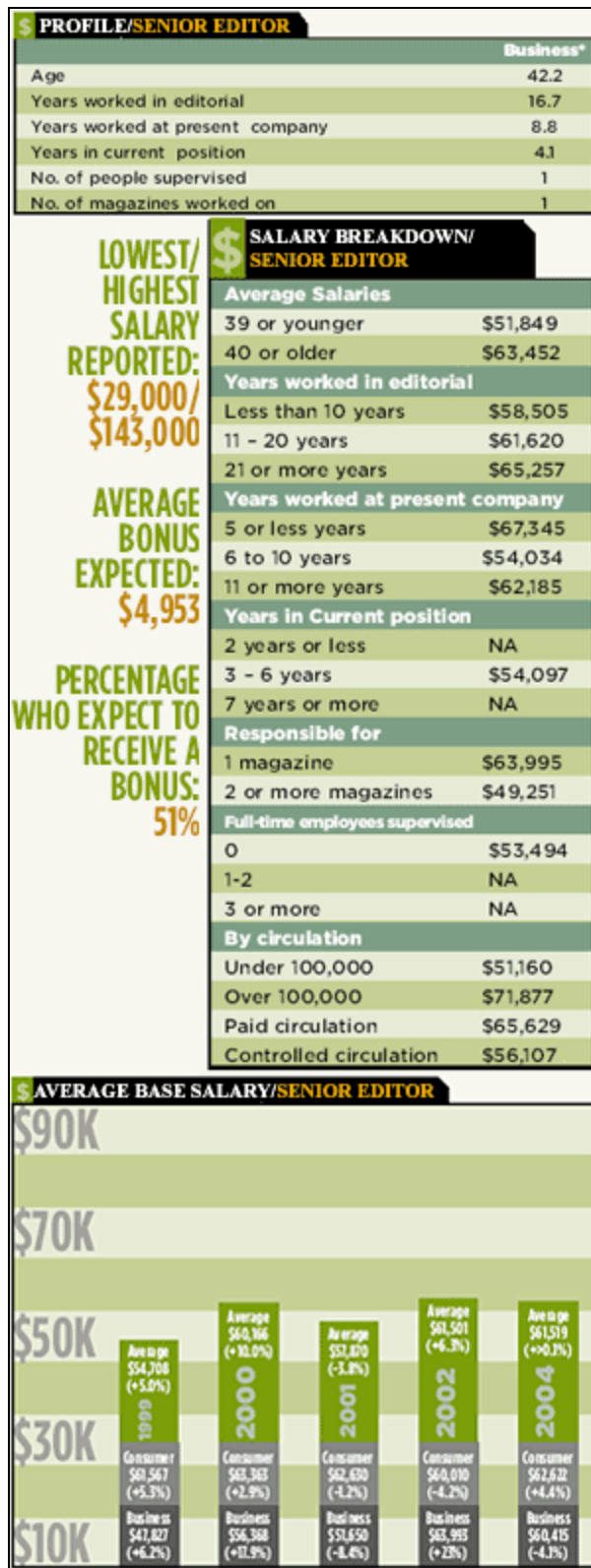
skewed to smaller magazines, and clearly does not capture the Bonnie Fullers of the world. Most respondents were from magazines with less than 100,000 circulation and less than \$6 million in revenue. At companies such as Time Inc., Condé Nast and Hearst, even e.i.c.s at smaller books get a base of \$300,000 to \$400,000 and a bonus that can bump that up to \$600,000, according to Danziger.

Time4Media, Rodale and Hachette Filipacchi pay somewhat less. Their chief editors receive a base of roughly \$175,000 to \$250,000 with a bonus of \$50,000 to \$75,000. B-to-b publishers such as Crain's, IDG and Reed also inhabit that middle range. Small, independent publishers pay the least-\$125,000 to \$200,000-says Danziger.

Geography matters too: Just being in New York City upped e.ic.'s average base to \$108,364, compared with the North Central states where the average was \$74,446.

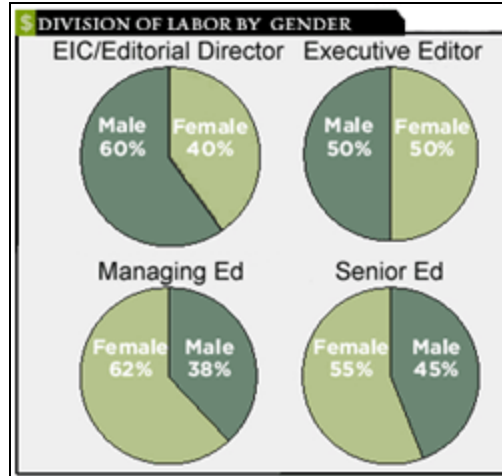
Top editors clearly feel overworked and underpaid, but senior editors (the middle managers of the magazine world) have more to complain about. While the year-over-year comparisons are imprecise (the surveys are confidential, so

Folio: does not know who is in the sample each year), b-to-b senior editors actually fell behind. Their average salary dropped from \$62,993 to \$60,415 since 2002. Consumer-magazine senior editors reported an increase, but at 4.4 percent, it was the lowest of all job categories,



The senior editor plans and writes or assigns features and other articles. They may also head the editorial feature department and oversee other editorial employees. This person keeps abreast of trends and news and is responsible for all editorial work in an assigned area.

bringing them up to \$62,622. And senior editors say they bear the brunt when positions are eliminated: "I do all the work of a managing editor because we don't have one, but my salary and title have not been adjusted accordingly," wrote a senior editor. The grumblings of survey respondents are real. One sums it up this way: "I'm responsible for the entire brand: editorial, marketing, advertising, circulation for the main magazine and related products. Sure, my pay was increased as I took on new responsibilities, but is it enough? Never!"



METHODOLOGY

On February 4, 2004, Folio: mailed questionnaires for its Annual Editorial Salary Survey to 2,700 professionals selected on an nth name basis from the Folio: database. Three hundred and ninety-two usable surveys were returned, resulting in an effective response rate of 14.5 percent. Data was analyzed by Kristin Letourneau, Ph.D., senior data manager, and Lynn Adelmund, director of marketing research, at Primedia Business Magazines & Media. Results have been

weighted to reflect this industry composition: consumer magazines with under 100,000 circulation, 16.5 percent; consumer magazines with more than 100,000 circulation, 33.5 percent; business magazines with under 100,000 circulation, 33.5 percent; and business magazines with more than 100,000 circulation, 16.5 percent.

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