



AALA Releases Results of 2023 Membership Survey; Younger, Newer Agents Joining Amidst Concerns over Industry and Income

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New York, NY – The Association of American Literary Agents released the results of its bi-annual membership survey. The results offer one of the most comprehensive studies to date regarding the role of the literary agent in the modern publishing landscape, with members offering insight into business practices while expressing broad concerns about consolidations and layoffs at the major publishers, about the compensation model for agents, and about an overall industry in flux

Respondents point to the “invisible” labor that agents do and for which they often are not compensated. “We do a lot of work that is essentially unpaid, often for years,” says one respondent, echoing the sentiments of many others. The pay structure is cited as the main contributor to the burnout felt by younger agents.

And, for all the attention to DEI issues, the survey underscores inequities between white and BIPOC agents with regard to income levels and other important measures in an industry that remains predominantly white. The survey also revealed differences in how white and BIPOC respondents are experiencing burnout. Of all white respondents, 23% report experiencing no burnout, compared to just 5% of BIPOC respondents — and only 9% of white respondents indicate that they worry that they will not be able to remain in publishing due to their current level of burnout, compared with 21% of BIPOC respondents. This suggests that BIPOC respondents are experiencing burnout more acutely and in greater numbers.

Nevertheless, survey results point to a number of bright spots and opportunities. Members give AALA positive marks overall and say they find value not only from their affiliation but also the role that AALA plays in ensuring its members adhere to the highest standards. In addition, respondents in 2023 compared to just two years ago are newer, younger and more diverse, as a result of recent initiatives, such as [new membership categories](#) and revisions to the [Canon of Ethics](#).

“I’m proud of the progress we’ve made as an organization in the past two years,” says Jennifer Weltz, president of AALA. “This report points the way for us to meet the needs of the growing membership, welcome and support the ongoing, active and enthusiastic participation of members and seek to attract those who have not had the opportunity or inclination to join.”

Comparing the landscape between the previous AALA survey in 2021 and today drives home the importance of AALA keeping apprised of the needs of members and potential members and remaining nimble in an industry that stands at a crossroads of change.

Conducted online between May 1 and August 1, 2023, the survey drew a total of 221 respondents. This number represents 48.7% of the total AALA membership.

About the Association of American Literary Agents

Since its founding in 1991, the Association of American Literary Agents has been a leading force in furthering the interests of agents, authors, and other rights holders. Through regular educational programming, community-building initiatives, and advocating for agents and authors alike, the volunteer-run organization is dedicated to helping our members maintain and broaden their professional skills in a fast-changing publishing environment. Recognizing the historically exclusive nature of publishing, AALA is committed to engendering a more diverse, equitable, participatory and inclusive publishing community. Members of AALA must agree to adhere to its widely-respected Canon of Ethics, thus ensuring that our membership maintains the highest standards of ethics and integrity in dealings with and on behalf of our clients and our publishing colleagues.

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