



Boat Writers Keep Pace with Technology and Industry *But Ranks Are Aging & Pay Decreasing*

Boating journalists are doing a good job keeping up with the technological, product and structural changes taking place in the marine industry they cover, but there are significantly fewer writers and they are growing older and poorer in the process. This thumbnail sketch is taken from the May 2014 survey of members of Boating Writers International compared with a similar analysis made five years ago. This year, 85 of 300 Active members (those who are active writers and communicators) provided feedback; in 2009, 95 of 400 Active members provided responses. The 25 percent drop in BWI membership in that time frame is reflective of significant consolidation in both the recreational marine and boating publishing industries.

The writers report widespread participation in the shift to digital in writing, running their businesses and promoting themselves. Close to half (46%) maintain their own websites, one third are active with blogs and forums, and 18% are posting videos on line. They are engaged on Facebook (70%), LinkedIn (67%), Google (40%) and Twitter (25%).

Magazines continue to be the primary clients for the writers, noted by 79% of respondents in '14 and 83% in '09, while blogging and website development work increased to 40% from 27% in the same period. Other notable changes in revenue sources shifted in marketing/advertising work to 28% from 9%, videography to 17% from 10%, and book writing to 21% from 17%. Revenue reported from newsletters, editing, public relations, TV and radio decreased in the period.

The boat writing profession continues to be populated by 70% men and 30% women, little changed over the past five years. The largest age group, 38%, moved into the 60-70-year range from the 50-60-year range, now 25%, in the period. Under 50 members now total 19% while the over 70 crowd grew to 15% from 9%. Annual income generally shifted downward, reflected in 29% of the writers reporting less than \$10,000, the largest category, followed by those making \$20K - \$30K (9% down from 13%) and \$30K - \$40K (unchanged at 8%). Three other income categories increased, led by \$60K - \$70K to 8% from 6%. Overall, the income change from 2012 to 2013 was reported by roughly equal thirds of the members as up, down or the same.

Asked how BWI could help them to improve their endeavors, members pointed to better understanding social networking and new technologies, marketing their work to traditional and digital publishing outlets and improving their blogging potential. They also seek more information on jobs and freelancing opportunities, ways to better monetize their digital efforts, and greater networking with their peers and industry personnel.

BWI Member Survey 2014

Q1. Are you:

2009

2014

Male	71.5%	69.4%
Female	28.5%	28.2%

Q2. How old were you on your last birthday?

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
Under 20	0%	0%
21-30	2.8%	2.3%
31-40	7.6%	4.7%
41-50	16.0%	11.7%
51-60	37.5%	24.7%
61-70	27.1%	37.6%
Over 71	9.0%	15.2%

Q3. What best describes your BWI membership status?

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
Active member of BWI	92.3%	94.1%
Associate member of BWI	7.7%	4.7%

Q4. How long have you been a BWI member?

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
Less than 3 years	20.3%	21.1%
From 3 to 4 years	17.5%	12.9%
From 5 to 9 years	32.2%	23.5%
Over 10 years	30.1%	41.1%

Q5. Which best describes your employment in the marine industry:

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
I work full time for a company	28.5%	24.7%
I work part time for a company	4.9%	1.1%
I am self employed (freelance)	64.6%	62.3%
I am currently unemployed	2.1%	7.0%

Q6. Which best describes your primary employer or freelance client? (Choose one)

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
Boating publication (boats under 80 feet)	48.2%	44.7%
Boating publication (boats over 80 feet)	7.8%	9.4%
Boating content website	--	7.0%
Fishing publication/website	5.7%	3.5%
Newspaper	0.0%	1.1%
Marine Trade Publication/website	4.3%	1.1%
Cruising Guide	--	2.3%

Television or radio outlet	2.1%	3.5%
Public relations firm	5.0%	5.7%
Marketing or Advertising firm	1.4%	4.6%
Association	3.5%	7.0%

Q7. What work do you primarily perform in the marine industry (Choose all that apply):

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
Magazine writing	82.5%	78.5%
News writing	30.1%	35.7%
Book writing	16.8%	21.4%
Newsletter writing	23.1%	20.2%
Editing	39.9%	36.9%
Public relations	23.1%	21.4%
Marketing/Advertising	9.1%	28.5%
Photography	39.9%	42.8%
Videography	10.5%	16.6%
Television	4.9%	2.3%
Radio	3.5%	1.1%
Blogging	10.5%	25.0%
Website development or technology work	16.1%	15.4%
Other	11.9%	9.5%

Q8. How much money did you make (gross) from this work in 2013?

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
Less than \$10,000	17.8%	29.4%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	16.3%	7.0%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	13.3%	9.4%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	8.1%	8.2%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	8.9%	5.8%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	8.1%	5.8%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	5.9%	8.2%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	4.4%	3.5%
\$80,000 to \$89,999	3.0%	3.5%
\$90,000 to \$99,999	2.2%	3.5%
Over \$100,000	11.9%	5.8%

Q9. How did your income differ from the previous year?

Answer Options	<i>2009</i>	<i>2014</i>
More	28.8%	30.5%
Less	30.9%	31.7%
Same	40.3%	32.9%

Q10. Rank the reasons you joined BWI (1 = Lowest)

Answer Options	2009	2014
It's my primary professional association	9	7
To participate in the writing contest	7	6
To gain the information provided	6	8
To participate in the organization	5	5
To network with others in the industry	8	9
To gain access to the membership card and directory	4	3
To access the BWI Member LinkedIn Site	--	2
To have an Online Directory presence	--	4
Other:		
To attend the annual meeting in Miami		
To improve my writing		
To serve as a judge [of the writing contest or for new products]		

Q11. How satisfied are you with BWI?

Answer Options	2009	2014
Very satisfied	20.4%	36.4%
Satisfied	70.4%	38.8%
Neutral	--	18.8%
Less than satisfied	9.2%	4.7%
Unsatisfied	0%	0%

Q12. Which skills would you most like BWI to help you learn or improve? (Choose three)

Answer Options	2009	2014
Writing for magazines	21.4%	17.7%
Writing for online publications	22.2%	16.4%
Writing books	12.7%	15.1%
Selling articles to magazines	23.0%	31.6%
Selling articles to online publications	19.0%	36.7%
Editing	10.3%	5.0%
Photography	7.1%	6.3%
Videography	8.7%	11.3%
Blogging	24.6%	21.5%
Creating/enhancing a personal website	27.8%	16.4%
Creating an electronic newsletter	12.7%	12.6%
Understanding social networking and new technologies	38.1%	46.8%
Understanding copyright laws and legal issues	31.0%	21.5%
Other:		
Learning to protect my rights as a writer		
More information on the industry for people who write about and make a living in boating		
I look elsewhere, not BWI, for skills enhancement		

Q13. What services would you most like BWI to provide? (Choose three)

Answer Options	2009	2014
Information on jobs and freelance opportunities	68.5%	60.7%
News on the marine industry	26.6%	28.5%
News on the marine publishing industry	44.1%	46.4%
Networking opportunities with BWI members	36.4%	39.2%
Networking opportunities with the marine industry	40.6%	39.2%
Continuing Webinars on topics of interest	40.6%	26.1%
Seminar to understand technology in boat systems	--	5.9%
Learning details of monetizing blogs and websites	--	41.6%
Reduced rates on consultation with a media attorney	14.0%	4.7%
Form letters, primers and other legal resources	14.0%	3.5%
Other	9.8%	1.0%

Q14. What legal issues interest you most? (Choose only one)

Answer Options	2009	2014
Being sued over my articles	13.6%	10.6%
Collecting on invoices	7.1%	6.3%
Theft of copyrighted material	15.0%	11.7%
Unfair labor practices	5.7%	4.7%
Taxes for freelancers	5.7%	9.5%
Contracts for writing or other work	25.7%	15.1%
I am not interested in any legal issues	20.7%	39.2%

Q15. What would you like BWI to be doing for you beyond what the organization currently offers? (Open-ended question)

Actively seek projects/opportunities/assignments for members.

Regional get-togethers or seminars.

Recognize that as journalists our primary responsibility is to inform and, possibly, entertain our readers. Our primary job is not to make the industry look good.

More opportunities for writing on European boating issues for US readers.

Get more members.

Mentoring program (2). Pair up long time writers with new ones who are interested in learning the ropes

More visibility at marine industry events.

Assist in making skills and specialties known to publishers; Provide an annual directory of marine industry media contacts. (2)

Help with continuing education by scheduling webinars on new technology and systems re boats and electronics.

Freelance journalists and copywriters are struggling to remain relevant and earn a decent living. We need more tools in our toolbox for learning new media, monetizing blogs/websites, and simply bringing more to the table. We can't earn a living from a handful of print magazines anymore.

Define the separation that should exist between editors and writers. It now seems that most writing is really done by staff editors.

Be more proactive about seeing what magazines are actually paying for stories. This seems to be the Big Dark Secret. I'd like to see a Writer's Digest style listing of magazines and their pay rates, editorial contacts, and tips on pitching. Forge alliances with other professional communications groups.

Contest, awards, and recognition for radio shows.

Help obtain better hotel and travel rates if possible.

More opportunities to network (2). It would be nice to know more people.

Better looking and more professional membership card; simple email newsletter, more often, and more easily readable on a smart phone.

Working with our partners in the industry to increase rates and become more rational about the rights extracted from freelancers. There are easy ways to produce win-win scenarios. BWI could be that mediator to bring in enforceable best-practices around fees and rights.

Actively seek new participants for innovation judging. Stop asking industry what we can do for them. Ask them to start supporting us - the writers, bloggers, etc., with advertising. Energize BWI website with timely industry news, story suggestions, writing gigs, networking calendar.

Finding more freelance opportunities, if there are any left.

Q16. BWI recently changed a few categories in the annual writing contest; indicate which you have entered or plan to.

Answer Options	2009	2014
Boat Tests & Reviews	--	48.8%
Gear and Product Tests	--	33.3%
Boat Projects, Renovations & Retrofits	--	51.1%
Online Excellence	--	40.0%

Q17. If BWI were to add a new category to its annual writing contest, which would you enter? (Choose only one)

Answer Options	2009	2014
Photography	33.6%	45.9%
Series of two or more articles	16.4%	26.2%
Books (or book chapters)	10.2%	24.5%
Cruising Guides	--	18.0%
Other:		
Video (4)		
Humor (1)		
Maritime History (1)		
Solo Boating (1)		
Newspaper Columns (1)		

Q18. How would you rate the BWI website?

Answer Options	2009	2014
Very informative and useful	8.5%	16.4%
Somewhat informative and useful	61.3%	41.1%
Neutral	--	27.0%
Less than informative and useful	13.4%	3.5%
Not informative or useful	1.4%	2.3%
I have never visited BWI's website	15.5%	5.8%

Q19. (Q22-B) What content would you most like to see added to the BWI website? (Choose two)

Answer Options	2009	2014
How to use social networks and new technologies	34.6%	32.3%
How to find new freelance clients	38.6%	47.6%
How to create a personal or professional website	24.4%	20.0%
How to enhance a blog	16.5%	20.0%
How to manage digital photos and video	25.2%	23.0%
How to write for Internet publications	22.0%	35.3%
How to address legal issues	15.7%	13.8%
Other:		
Keep it current.		

Q20. What online activities do you engage in regularly, meaning at least once a week? (Choose all that apply)

Answer Options	2009	2014
Maintaining my own website	--	46.4%

Posting to a blog	24.2%	32.3%
Posting videos (e.g., to YouTube)	--	18.3%
Commenting on articles or blogs	25.8%	23.9%
Posting on a forum	35.0%	32.3%
Posting on a social network	40.0%	56.3%

Q21. Which of the social websites do you regularly use? (Choose all that apply)

Answer Options	2009	2014
Facebook	39.3%	70.0%
Twitter	19.3%	25.0%
LinkedIn (BWI's Member-Only site)	--	21.2%
LinkedIn (the overall site)	37.0%	67.5%
Pinterest	--	12.5%
Google (including "+", etc.)	94.8%	40.0%
Tumblr	--	1.2%
Instagram	--	6.2%
VK	--	0.0%
Flickr	7.4%	1.2%
MySpace	3.7%	0.0%
None	--	4.8%

Q22. Which marine related website do you find most helpful in your daily work.

Soundings (2)
 Trade Only Today (11)
 Race, Figawi, etc.
 NMMA.org (2)
 IBI News (3)
 CruisingWorld.com
 BoatU.S. (2)
 BYMnews.com
 USCGboating.org
 ABYCcinc.org
 TrawlerForum.com
 TheHullTruth.com
 Panbo (2)
 YachtForums
 The-Triton.com
 All at Sea
 AGLCA
 Maritime Executive and gCaptain
 WoodenBoat
 Chesapeake Bay Program - In the News
 SeeDealerCost.com

BoatingBusiness.ca
BoatingIndustry.com (2)
None (2)