

Authors Guild Annual Report for 2023

The Authors Guild
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Dear Members,

I'm thrilled to share with you the Authors Guild's Annual Report for 2023, which showcases the remarkable growth we've achieved in nearly every facet of the organization. The Authors Guild had a very productive and busy 2023, and we ended the year even stronger than we began it. We passed the 14,000-member mark, with 2,906 new members joining our ranks. We ended FY 2023 (October 1, 2022–September 30, 2023) with a healthy surplus of \$155,000, \$56,000 more than budgeted, and our capital campaign got off to a great start, raising more than half its goal of \$10 million. We also had a 50 percent increase in news coverage of our work.

Our advocacy and legal staff was busier than ever. The introduction of consumer-facing AI platforms set off a tsunami of activity to protect authors in the age of AI with the Authors Guild at the forefront, as did the continued surge of school and library book bans and laws to foster them. At the same time, our legal team saw a rise in the number of scams targeting authors and small publishers who got in over their heads and stopped paying or performing. Our legal services team handled 1,756 legal queries from members, a 9 percent increase, and continued to maintain a productive dispute resolution process with Amazon, escalating issues impacting our members' books directly to the KDP executive team. These issues include pirate and counterfeit books, unexplained account closures, payment embargoes, erroneous listings, and more. To keep up with all these efforts, we hired a new chief legal officer, Kevin Amer, who works on litigation, copyright, and legislative initiatives, and brought on last year's legal fellows, Darryl Jennings and Kyle Maxey, as staff attorneys.

The Authors Guild Foundation also had a successful year, raising a record \$4,042,068 in operating funds—more than double the \$1,532,208 we raised the year before—and has raised \$5,650,000 toward our capital campaign thus far. We welcomed Deborah Wilson and Bernard Schwartz to the Foundation's executive leadership team following Lynn Boulger's retirement. We also held another successful gala and a spirited WIT Festival in the Berkshires.

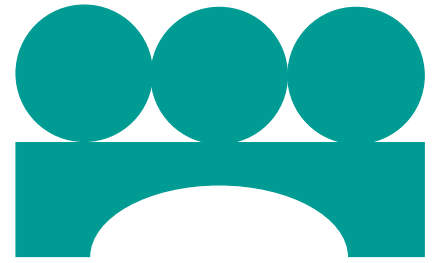
The educational programming offered by the Foundation continued to cover various aspects of the writing profession, including navigating the publishing industry, marketing and publicity strategies, career growth, and personal finance management. The inaugural Authors Guild Launchpad book marketing program took place in the fall of 2023 for authors whose books are scheduled for publication in 2024.

I invite you to read more about these initiatives and the full scope of our work in the Annual Report that follows. Thank you for your ongoing support as we continue to forge ahead for authors.



Mary Rasenberger
CEO of the Authors Guild and Authors Guild Foundation

ADVOCACY & LEGAL



The Authors Guild’s advocacy and legal work ballooned in 2023 thanks largely to the November 2022 release of consumer-facing generative AI models, the explosion of book bans in schools and libraries around the country, and the sudden proliferation of both outright scams targeting authors and micro publishers that got themselves into trouble and stopped fulfilling their financial and other obligations.

Our legal staff worked exceptionally hard and found themselves in dire need of more assistance. We hired a new Chief Legal Officer, Kevin Amer, who works on litigation, copyright, and legislative initiatives. Director of Advocacy and Policy Umair Kazi continues to lead much of our AI, collective bargaining, and worker protection initiatives, as well as our translator protections work and

lobbying against state laws that would force publishers and authors to sell ebooks to libraries at discounted prices. We also hired last year’s legal fellows, Darryl Jennings and Kyle Maxey, on a permanent basis as staff attorneys. They assist with our advocacy initiatives and legal services work, helping to reduce our contract review backlog and turnaround time. General Counsel Cheryl Davis oversees much of our work against book banning, as well as our DEIA-related work. Director of Legal Services Michael Gross continues to lead (and do much of) our ever-growing volume of legal services for members. We doubled the size of our membership over the last seven years and the number and range of legal requests have grown accordingly, as has the breadth of matters we now address—yet the legal team has managed to keep up!

Lobbying and Advocacy

Artificial Intelligence

In 2023, we focused much of our advocacy and lobbying efforts on generative AI. We launched and led a coalition of creator organizations to amplify the voices of working professional creators on AI-related issues, as these debates are all too often dominated by large copyright owners. We organized AI lobbying days for creator organizations; traveled to Washington, D.C., several times to meet with lawmakers; and held dozens of online meetings with congressional offices, the Copyright Office, the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). We drafted legislative proposals and worked with congressional offices on legislation, supporting several bills that were introduced.

We conducted multiple surveys of our members and other writers to measure their views on AI and ensure our efforts reflected the thoughts and desires of real authors. In July, we sent an open letter signed by more than 16,000 writers to the leaders of OpenAI, Alphabet, Meta, Stability AI, IBM, and Microsoft.

We established ourselves as leading authorities on AI and authorship both in the U.S. and internationally, taking part in several high-profile discussions and speaking at numerous events. We spoke at a public roundtable with the chair and commissioners of the FTC, the International Authors Forum (IAF) annual meeting, and the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO) annual and EU meetings. In October, we submitted detailed comments in response to the Copyright Office’s ongoing Artificial Intelligence Study. We also submitted recommendations to the European Commission during the negotiations process for the European Union AI Act and to the United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office.

We continued to advocate for author protections in strategic discussions with AI companies, literary agents, and publishers. Our goal in these meetings is to ensure that authors ultimately decide when and under what terms their works are used to train and develop AI technologies or in AI outputs. To that end, we are also in the process of helping to develop a collective licensing system that would allow authors (and publishers, where

they hold the necessary rights) to license their books to AI developers and select what uses they will allow.

In addition to our lobbying and advocacy efforts, we positioned ourselves as the go-to resource for authors on AI-related issues. We hosted and participated in public webinars, held special “Ask the Authors Guild” sessions for our members, published model contract clauses, and shared a comprehensive FAQ and other knowledge resources to help authors navigate the fast-changing and often-perplexing AI landscape.

Finally, we brought a class-action lawsuit against OpenAI on behalf of fiction writers, with 17 prominent writers serving as the class plaintiffs. We are also assisting with a companion class-action lawsuit on behalf of nonfiction writers.

Legislative Initiatives

We lobbied for and endorsed several key pieces of legislation related to AI, collective action, and federal arts programs in 2023.

As part of our AI policy initiatives, we gave Congress [a comprehensive proposal](#) to enact legislation that would address the unregulated development and deployment of generative AI and mitigate its impact on the creative industries. Our proposals centered on the core principles of consent, credit, and compensation, including:

- Requiring all generative AI companies to seek permission for the use of creators’ works in generative AI systems, and to fairly compensate creators who allow their works to be used in “training” generative AI
- Creating an antitrust exemption for creators to engage in collective licensing
- Creating obligations for all AI companies to disclose what datasets and works they use(d) to “train” their AI systems in the past, present, and future
- Requiring all AI companies to seek permission and pay compensation when creative works are used in outputs, or when names, identities, or titles of works are used in prompts
- Requiring the conspicuous labeling of AI-generated works as such, with enforcement provisions
- Creating a federal right of publicity that would simplify bringing a claim for use of voice, name,

image, or other indicia of a creator’s identity (whether such creator is living or deceased).

In April 2023, we made the first of several lobbying trips to D.C. to share our concerns about generative AI with lawmakers and their staffs, taking other creator groups with us. We were the first creator group to talk about AI on the hill, giving us the opportunity to build strong relationships with key staff working on AI-related legislation—including those in the House and Senate AI caucuses, House and Senate intellectual property subcommittees, and other offices. As a result of these relationships and the excellent work of our lobbyists at American Continental Group (ACG), we have had the opportunity to consult on and have been asked to endorse a number of pending or forthcoming AI bills, including many not yet introduced.

These bills include:

AI Foundation Model Transparency Act

This bill would direct the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in consultation with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), to set standards for what information about AI models must be provided to the FTC and what information must be made available to the public. Information identified for increased transparency would include training data used, how the model is trained, and whether user data is collected in inference.

AI Labeling Act of 2023

This bill would require that every generative AI system that produces images, videos, audio, text, or multimedia content should include a clear and conspicuous disclosure that the content was created through a generative AI system.

No Section 230 Immunity for AI Act

This bill would clarify that Section 230 immunity would not apply to claims based on generative AI.

Apart from AI, we have continued to push our draft legislation to grant freelance professional creators the right to engage in collective action, and an alternative draft bill that would exempt freelance professional creators from antitrust enforcement for engaging in collective action. We are also lobbying for the bipartisan Creative Workforce Investment Act, a renewed version of the Creative Economy Revitalization Act, which we backed during the 116th and 117th congressional sessions.

Litigation

On September 19, 2023, the Authors Guild and 17 authors filed a class-action lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York against OpenAI for copyright infringement based on its mass-scale copying of books to “train” its ChatGPT system. The plaintiffs subsequently added Microsoft as an additional defendant.

The suit was brought on behalf of a nationwide class of fiction writers whose books have been used for training without permission. The named plaintiffs are David Baldacci, Mary Bly, Michael Connelly, Sylvia Day, Jonathan Franzen, John Grisham, Elin Hilderbrand, Christina Baker Kline, Maya Shanbhag Lang, Victor LaValle, George R.R. Martin, Jodi Picoult, Douglas Preston, Roxana Robinson, George Saunders, Scott Turow, and Rachel Vail.

The Guild organized the lawsuit to address the existential threat to the writing profession posed by the unlicensed use of books to create large language models (LLMs). These systems generate billions of dollars in profits for technology companies without a penny going to the authors whose work makes the models possible. As outlined in our complaint, OpenAI trained its LLMs on copies of books that were downloaded from notorious piracy sites, and those LLMs are increasingly being used to generate books and other materials that compete with the very works used to create them.

The Guild is also working closely with the attorneys representing a group of authors who filed a separate lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft on behalf of a class of nonfiction writers. Guild attorneys helped organize many of the plaintiffs in the case, who include Guild council members Jia Tolentino and James Shapiro; Guild advisory council members Daniel Okrent and Wade Hampton Sides; and Guild members Jonathan Alter, Taylor Branch, Eugene Linden, Stacy Schiff, and Simon Winchester. The parties have agreed to consolidate the two cases for pretrial purposes, with discovery already underway. Briefing on the copyright issues will take place early this year.

Collective Action and Labor Protections

We continued our advocacy and lobbying for collective bargaining rights for professional creators in 2023. In April, the Authors Guild and eight other creator organizations sent a letter to House and Senate leaders urging them to consider our proposed legislative reforms to

the National Labor Relations Act or an antitrust exemption that would allow professional creators to work together for mutual benefit without legal reprisal.

We launched a comprehensive FAQ around these efforts and held several in-person meetings with lawmakers at their offices in Washington, D.C., to mobilize legislative support. In addition, we held meetings with FTC Commissioner Alvaro Bedoya, Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division Jonathan Kanter and his staff, and Senator Amy Klobuchar’s chief antitrust counsel to discuss our legislative proposals for collective action, as well as collective licensing for AI. We will continue advancing our draft legislative changes to the National Labor Relations Act and our antitrust exemption through these and other avenues.

In April 2023, we submitted comments to the FTC in response to its highly anticipated proposed rule to ban non-compete clauses. Our comments highlighted the ways in which non-compete and equivalent restraining clauses prevent writers from using their works, harm writers’ incomes, and compound their economic precarity. The FTC has not yet adopted the rule but expects to vote on it in 2024.

Antitrust

We continued our fight against Amazon’s control over the publishing industry, joining Open Markets Institute and the American Booksellers Association in sending a letter to the FTC urging the agency to investigate Amazon’s unfair competition methods. The letter outlined how Amazon has gained and maintained a monopoly in its role as a seller of books to the public and a monopsony in its role as a buyer of books from publishers.

Spotify

Spotify’s launch of its audiobook service last year raised many questions and concerns about the state of the audiobook market, which has long been dominated by Audible, and the impact that Spotify audiobooks might eventually have on author earnings. Soon after the launch was announced, Guild staff met with the Spotify executives overseeing the audiobook program to gather information about service specifics and to share our strong concerns about moving to a completely subscription-based model. We also spoke with major publishers and with authors about the deals Spotify is offering for audiobooks.

We learned that Spotify is generally paying large publishers on a per-book basis, as though each listen were a sale, and the big publishers have mostly reported that they received what they consider favorable deals. However, some smaller publishers are participating in a “pooled” income model similar to Audible’s Audio-book Creation Exchange (ACX), where they receive a share of Spotify’s total revenue based on consumption as opposed to payment per audiobook sold.

The Authors Guild strongly opposes subscription-based models for audiobooks and will continue to push for audiobook licensing on a per-book basis, as well as for transparency in payouts from the “pool” income model. We have some concerns that if Spotify gained a significant market share, it could potentially attempt to reduce royalty rates in the future. We don’t foresee this being likely in the near-term as there isn’t a lot of overlap between Spotify and Audible customers, and the royalties paid by Spotify would have to be sufficient in total for publishers to agree to lower payments.

Internet Archive

Last March, four major publishers scored a resounding victory in *Hachette Book Group, Inc. v. Internet Archive*, the copyright lawsuit challenging the Internet Archive’s practice of scanning and making books freely available, without permission, on its Open Library website. A federal district court in New York held that the Open Library program infringed the publishers’ copyrights, rejecting the Internet Archive’s argument that its activities were fair use.

Following the decision, the court entered a permanent injunction prohibiting the Internet Archive from distributing books to which the publishers hold rights, both within the confines of the U.S. and in transactions involving the U.S. externally. Unfortunately, the court limited the injunction to books that the publishers have made available for electronic licensing. This means that the Internet Archive is not required to remove books that are available only in print from its website.

The Authors Guild is disappointed that the court adopted this limitation. The injunction leaves many authors’ books unprotected, including older books that may be out of print but that the author is planning to or may later want to republish. Authors often get their rights to out-of-print books reverted to them and republish them with a smaller publisher or through self-publishing. When these books are made available for free through Open Library, it usurps these potential markets, which can be an important source of income for authors.

But regardless of the scope of the injunction, the court’s decision on the main legal issue remains in place: Making full-text copyrighted books available for free on the open internet without permission is copyright infringement. We therefore expect the Internet Archive to comply with demands by authors who hold copyrights in their books (e.g., self-published authors and authors to whom rights were reverted) to take down any titles that are still on its website. We have instructions on our website explaining how authors can submit such demands.

The district court’s decision is currently on appeal in the Second Circuit. As we did in the earlier proceeding, we are submitting an amicus brief supporting the publishers’ claims and explaining how the Internet Archive’s mass-scale infringement would undermine the writing profession if allowed to continue.

Author and Translator Income Surveys

In September, the Authors Guild published the results of its 2023 Author Income Survey, the most comprehensive study of its kind in the U.S. to date. Thirty-six other organizations, including Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group, Ingram, B&N Press, PEN America, African American Literature Book Club, and many others collaborated with the Guild on the survey, and 5,699 published authors responded.

The survey revealed that the median book income (including advances, royalties, and fees from licensing and subsidiary rights) for full-time authors in 2022 was \$10,000, while the median combined total from books and other author-related income (such as editing, blogging, teaching, speaking, book coaching, copywriting, and journalism) was just over \$20,000. It also found that, while overall author incomes are still low, experienced self-published authors have nearly doubled their earnings since 2018, with the help of effective marketing efforts. We published these and other key takeaways on median author income, full-time self-published author income, genre author income, author income by race, and the most and least effective marketing channels on our website.

In November, we also published the results of our Survey of Literary Translators’ Working Conditions in 2022. This survey was conducted in collaboration with the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA), the American Translators Association, PEN America, and other groups, and was completed by nearly 300 literary translators living in the U.S. While there have been efforts in recent years to improve translator rights and

visibility, the economic outlook remains challenging for most literary translators, with 63.5 percent reporting an annual income of less than \$10,000 from literary translation in 2021—twice as many as in 2016. While average translation rates increased slightly to \$0.13 per word, translators’ incomes have not kept pace with inflation, regardless of full-time or part-time status.

These surveys provide invaluable data and insights into the economic realities of authors and translators today. We cite them frequently in our advocacy and will continue to do so as we call attention to the challenges faced by authors and work collectively to protect and sustain the literary voices that shape our world.

Scams

In response to a steep, ongoing increase in publishing scams, we began including scam alerts in our newsletter in April 2023. Each issue of the newsletter describes a specific scam that was recently reported to us, lists warning signs for authors to watch out for, and asks authors to let us know when they learn about new or suspected scams. We also caution authors to be generally wary of anyone who approaches them from out of the blue or who claims to be a prominent figure in publishing or entertainment as such outreaches are highly likely to be scams.

We also advise members who reach out to us on how they can report scams to the appropriate authorities and how to recover any money lost, where possible. Where scams involve other parties (such as production companies, directors, and agencies whose names are being fraudulently misused), we notify these parties so they can take their own action against the scammers.

Examples of scam reports that we received and in turn shared in our newsletter include:

- Repeated efforts to impersonate Amazon (through names like “Amazon Studios” and “Amazon Publishing Office”)
- A film adaptation offer from someone claiming to be Steven Spielberg
- Fake books generated by AI and sold on Amazon using an existing author’s name
- An alleged professional services company for authors, Book Writing Experts, which failed to provide any services and hid its ownership and location
- A purported literary agency, Liberal Literature/Eagle Press Publishing House, which offered to submit work to Simon & Schuster for a fee
- Another purported agency, Pageturner Press & Media, which claimed it could secure a publishing deal with a Hachette imprint

Freelancer Protections

While pursuing collective action at the federal level is the centerpiece of our labor advocacy, we remain involved in other efforts to provide greater protections to freelancers. Together with the National Writers Union, Freelancers Union, and other groups, we made another push for a statewide Freelance Isn’t Free Act in New York after it was vetoed by Governor Kathy Hochul in December 2022 due to lack of funding. The legislation was passed again in 2023 and signed into law by Governor Hochul in November, giving the approximately 30 percent of New York State’s workforce who are freelancers, including thousands of authors, much-needed protections against late and non-payment for their work.

We also lobbied for and helped pass a Freelance Worker Protection Ordinance in the City of Los Angeles that enacted similar protections to the Freelance Isn’t Free Act in New York, and we are pushing for similar protections in other states and municipalities.

Campaign Against Banned Books and Censorship

Litigation

Efforts to ban books and prohibit the teaching of certain ideas related to race, racism, antisemitism, gender orientation, sexual identity, and reproductive rights continued to increase in 2023. In turn, the Guild increased its efforts to combat these measures, working with coalitions of affected people and groups to bring lawsuits challenging book banning laws in multiple states.

In Arkansas, we filed a lawsuit with the Central Arkansas Library System, five Little Rock residents, local bookstores, and a coalition of other organizations challenging a new law that sought to limit access to protected books and target librarians. One section of the act imposed criminal penalties for providing minors with materials considered “harmful to minors”—without clearly defining what that means. Since it would not be possible for libraries and bookstores to restrict the display of materials to minors without also restricting access for adults, the effect of the law would be to deny all residents access to any books that might possibly be deemed “harmful to minors.” Moreover, it would restrict middle grade and older readers from accessing any books that might be deemed “harmful” to younger children. The law would also have made it possible for any Arkansas resident to demand the removal of a book from a public library, which would give individuals control over the content of library collections. Our coalition’s suit asked the District Court of Arkansas to declare portions of the law unconstitutional for violating the plaintiffs’ rights to disseminate, receive, and read constitutionally protected books and other media.

In Texas, we filed a lawsuit with a coalition of Texas bookstores, national booksellers, and publishers to challenge the state’s ironically-named READER Act, defend the right to free expression, and protect the long-established rights of local communities to set and implement standards for school materials. The law violates the First Amendment by compelling speech and imposing content-based restrictions. It would require any entity that wants to sell books to Texas schools to rate millions of books and library materials for sexual content and identify them as “sexually explicit” or “sexually relevant.” These definitions are particularly problematic as they lack clarity and have no basis in existing law. The law represented a significant departure from the traditional rights of local communities to determine the appropriateness of materials for their schools.

The district courts sided with the Guild and its partners in both cases, preliminarily enjoining enforcement of both laws. The Arkansas court found the relevant section of the law to be “very poorly drafted,” concluding that “perhaps any vagueness may be chalked up to the General Assembly’s haste to enact [it], but the lack of clarity seems to have been by design. After all, by keeping the pivotal terms vague, local governing bodies have greater flexibility to assess a given challenge however they please rather than how the Constitution dictates.” The Texas preliminary injunction was appealed to the Fifth Circuit, which upheld it. The Arkansas case is proceeding with discovery, and motions for summary judgment will be made in May; if the case is not resolved on summary judgment, a trial is scheduled for October.

We also joined Penguin Random House and several First Amendment advocacy organizations to submit an *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) brief to the Superior Court of the State of California in *Mae M. et al v. Joseph Komrosky et al.* This lawsuit, filed in Riverside County, California, was brought by the Temecula Valley Educators Association, students, parents, and individual teachers to challenge Resolution 21, a measure adopted by the Temecula Valley Unified School District’s board of trustees that bans books espousing critical race theory. The amicus brief supported the plaintiffs’ request to preliminarily enjoin the enforcement of Resolution 21 because the ban unlawfully restricts students’ educational rights by imposing the district’s own ideological stance.

Programs and Other Efforts

In addition to legal actions, the Guild produced and participated in an array of programming on the topic of book bans. In September, we put on a webinar titled “Banning Oz: Wicked Writers Discuss Book Challenges” in which *Wicked* authors Gregory Maguire and Winnie Holzman discussed the reasons why their reimaginations of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* have faced censorship despite enormous popularity. For Banned Books Week in October, we produced a webinar on “Banned Books & the Law” with Heather Fleming, founder of the Missouri Equity Education Partnership.

We also took part in several programs and webinars hosted by others throughout the year, including a panel at the annual conference of the American Library

Association (ALA), in which Guild general counsel Cheryl Davis discussed strategies for Banned Books Week with representatives from the National Coalition Against Censorship and the National Council of Teachers of English.

Finally, we signed onto 35 letters with the National Coalition Against Censorship. These letters are typically directed to school boards around the country that have removed books from school library shelves without due process, urging them to reconsider their decisions.

International Work

The Authors Guild works with other writer organizations around the world on many shared issues, including copyright matters, collective licenses, improving contract terms, and artificial intelligence.

In October, Guild CEO Mary Rasenberger and Chief Legal Officer Kevin Amer attended the 2023 General Assembly and World Congress of the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO) in Reykjavik, Iceland. IFRRO is a membership association that facilitates the collective management of rights in text- and image-based works. Rasenberger participated on a panel where she discussed efforts to address generative AI in the U.S., including an update on the Guild's copyright lawsuit against OpenAI. Earlier, in May, Rasenberger attended IFRRO's European Group's meeting in Stockholm, where she spoke about how AI is likely to affect authors and potential solutions to

the problems. She also provided updates from the U.S., including a discussion of the *Hachette et al. v. Internet Archive* lawsuit.

Our CEO sits on the steering committee of the International Authors Forum, which holds regular meetings and also meets bi-monthly via Zoom with our English-speaking counterparts in the U.K., Canada, and Australia to collaborate and share updates and ideas. In 2023, we worked closely with the U.K.'s Society of Authors on matters relating to artificial intelligence, audiobooks, Amazon, and Spotify.

The Guild is a recognized non-governmental organization (NGO) observer at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and participated in ongoing initiatives of the WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights.

DEIA Initiative

The Guild continued its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) efforts in 2023. In November, we produced a panel called "How Can Traditional Publishers Better Work with BIPOC Authors?" at the Association of American Publishers' first DEI Summit, presenting data from our recent author income survey. The survey found significant disparities in income as well as marketing spend between white authors and BIPOC authors: Full-time Black authors earned a median income of \$15,250 in 2022, compared to \$20,000 for white authors, while Black authors typically spent \$3,182 on marketing vs. \$7,658 for white authors. The survey also showed a trend towards self-publishing among Black authors, especially those younger than 55. The panelists—Guild General Counsel Cheryl Davis, Guild Council member Jaunique Sealey, and editor Jenn Baker—discussed the need for traditional publishers to adopt more inclusive strategies. These include diversifying marketing and publicity teams, allocating specific budgets for BIPOC-authored titles, and involving

#OwnVoices authors in the publishing process. The session underscored the importance of moving beyond viewing inclusive works as niche and providing robust support for books addressing racial topics. The Guild's DEIA Committee is discussing creating a follow-up to that event that would focus on other ways to improve the publishing ecosystem for BIPOC authors.

We also began collaborating with the Association of American Literary Agents (AALA) and Literary Agents of Change to provide our members with the opportunity to interact with agents from historically underrepresented groups, with some special opportunities to query the agents.

Finally, our DEIA Committee is discussing what additional efforts we might take to address the growing problem of state lawmakers and local school boards removing books by BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ authors from school curriculums and school libraries.

Statements, Letters, and Briefs

A crucial part of the Authors Guild’s advocacy work is speaking out on issues that affect authors. We do this by filing public comments and issuing public statements. We also submit *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) briefs in cases that will likely impact authors. In 2023, the Authors Guild drafted or signed onto a wide variety of written statements, letters, and amicus briefs.

Statements

We regularly issue statements on matters affecting authors and the profession of writing. This past year, an unusually high number of issues arose that the Guild felt warranted a statement, on matters ranging from the fight against state book banning laws to support for the strikes by the Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA.

- [Authors Guild Commends Antitrust Action Against Google](#)
- [AG Statement on Tentative Agreement Between HarperCollins and Union](#)
- [Authors Guild Statement on Florida Book Bans](#)
- [ALA Report Shows Record Number of Book Bans in 2022](#)
- [Authors Guild Statement of Solidarity with the Writers Guild of America](#)
- [Authors Guild Statement on New Leaf Literary Letting Authors Go Without Warning](#)
- [Authors Guild Provides Support to Authors with-Book Options Impacted by WGA Strike](#)
- [Authors Guild Statement on Elizabeth Gilbert’s Decision to Delay New Novel](#)
- [Authors Guild Statement on Asian American Literature Festival Cancellation](#)
- [The Authors Guild Stands with SAG-AFTRA](#)
- [Authors Guild Condemns Florida’s AP Psychology Ban on Sex and Gender Content as an Attack on Free Speech and Academic Standards](#)

- [Authors Guild Statement About Sale of Simon & Schuster to KKR](#)
- [Authors Guild Endorses the Renewed Federal Writers’ Project: A Call to Support America’s Storytellers and Culture-Makers](#)
- [Authors Guild Opposes Compliance with Texas Law Requiring Book Ratings](#)
- [Authors Guild Condemns Seizure at Marion County Record: Urges Respect for First Amendment and Journalistic Integrity](#)
- [Authors Guild Applauds Consent Judgment Against Internet Archive’s Open Library but Calls for Wider Protection for All Books](#)
- [Authors Guild Calls on the Pulitzer Board to Broaden Literature Prize Criteria to Include All U.S. Residents](#)
- [Authors Guild Statement on WGA’s Tentative Agreement](#)
- [We Need Writers’ Voices in Dark Times](#)
- [Authors Guild Applauds Senators Brian Schatz \(D-HI\) and John Kennedy \(R-LA\) for Introducing the AI Labeling Act of 2023](#)

Letters

Following is a list of letters the Authors Guild signed onto in 2023:

- 12/14/23 – [Letter to Dallas Center – Grimes CSD Re: More than 70 books improperly removed from school libraries.](#)
- 12/6/23 – [Letter to Hanover County Public Schools Re: Removal of 75 books from school libraries.](#)
- 11/28/23 – [Letter to North Syracuse Central School District Re: Revisions for policy that restricts access to challenged books during the review process.](#)
- 11/15/23 – [Letter to Menomonee Falls Schools Re: Removal of 33 books from school library.](#)

- [11/7/23 – Letter to Boyle County School District Re: Removal of more than 100 books with false claims of compliance to Law SB 150.](#)
- [10/30/23 – Letter to Cobb County School District Re: Violation of current policy in removing books from school libraries.](#)
- [10/18/23 – Letter to New York Governor Kathy Hochul Re: Support for S5026/A6040, the Freelance Isn't Free Act](#)
- [10/16/23 – Letter to Sunapee School District Re: Revisions to school district policy that removes access to challenged books while under review.](#)
- [9/21/23 – Letter to St. Tammany Parish Library Re: Restriction of more than 150 books.](#)
- [9/8/23 – Letter to Fort Worth Independent School District Re: Removal of more than 100 school library books.](#)
- [9/8/23 – Letter to Somerset Public Schools Re: Challenging school rule that limits students' speech.](#)
- [8/30/23 – Letter to Carroll County Public School District urging revision of policy that allows challenged books to be removed while under reconsideration.](#)
- [8/16/23 – Letter to Craven County Schools Re: Recommendations for book review policy changes.](#)
- [8/15/23 – Letter to Director of Iowa State Department of Education, McKenzie Snow Re: Guidance for Senate File 496, which Iowa school districts are unsure how to implement.](#)
- [8/10/23 – Letter to Montgomery County Memorial Library System and Commissioners Court Re: Age restriction and labeling of children's and young adult's books in public libraries.](#)
- [8/9/23 – Open Letter Calling for Global AI Policy to Protect Editorial Integrity](#)
- [7/26/23 – Letter to New Hanover County Schools Re: Pending Challenge to Jason Reynolds' and Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You*](#)
- [7/24/23 – Letter to Hernando School District Re: Removal of Louis Sachar's *Marvin Redpost: Is He a Girl?*](#)
- [7/13/23 – Letter to Rockwell Falls Public Library Re: Cancellation of Drag Queen Story Hour and Suggestion About Removing Books with LGBTQ+ Themes](#)
- [7/10/23 – Letter to President Biden Re: Support for Anti-Book Ban Coordinator](#)
- [5/26/23 – Letter to Oklahoma Governor J. Kevin Stitt Re: Veto of Bill Weakening State Anti-SLAPP Laws](#)
- [4/7/23 – Letter to Iowa City Community School District Re: Removal of *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson](#)
- [4/6/23 – Letter to Sioux City Community Schools Re: Removal of *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson](#)
- [3/24/23 – Letter to the Greenville County Library System Re: Proposed Change to Library Collection Policy](#)
- [3/24/23 – Letter to Martin County School District Re: Removal of Nearly 100 Books from District Libraries](#)
- [3/8/23 – Letter to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Re: Removal of Library Books Without Following District Policy](#)
- [2/24/23 – Letter to Broward County Public Schools Re: Removal of Sex Ed Book Before Formal Review](#)
- [2/15/23 – Letter to Madison County Public Schools Re: Removal of More than 20 Books from School Libraries](#)
- [2/9/23 – Letter to Pinellas County Schools Re: Removal of *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison](#)
- [2/1/23 – Letter to McKinney Independent School District Re: Revised Sexual Content Policy](#)
- [1/24/23 – Letter to Hernando School District Re: Removal of 13 Books by Ellen Hopkins from School Libraries](#)

Amicus Briefs

In addition to its amicus brief in the *Komrosky* book banning case in California, the Guild joined with a coalition to submit another amicus brief to the Fifth Circuit in *Netflix v. Babin*. This lawsuit relates to a criminal prosecution against Netflix for “advertising and promoting child pornography” through its distribution of the award-winning film *Cuties*. The District Court had preliminarily enjoined the prosecution as having been brought in bad faith, explaining that “*Cuties* depicts and explores various relationships . . . while vividly revealing to viewers the dangers and consequences of leaving children unrestrained from—and at the mercy of—the highly sexualized and media-driven culture in which they are now immersed.”

Our amicus brief argued that allowing the prosecution of Netflix to continue could unleash a flood of chilling effects on a broad spectrum of protected speech. If not enjoined, the prosecution could spur similarly abusive and harassing prosecutions against a wide range of speech under other statutes based on the personal tastes of government officials. Even the threat of such prosecutions would have a chilling effect on others who fear similar actions targeting disfavored speech.

On December 18, 2023, the Fifth Circuit affirmed the District Court’s preliminary injunction.



MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH

In fiscal year 2023 (October 1, 2022–September 30, 2023), we had 13,675 members in good standing, with a renewal rate of 91.7 percent. We set another record with 2,906 new members joining in the 2023 calendar year. The number of members enrolled in auto renewal has

also continued to increase, leading to rising retention rates and smoother payment processing. As of March 18, 2024, we had a total of 14,711 members, more than 1,500 more than at the same time last year, and 11,367 members were signed up for auto renewal.

Recruitment

We continue to work toward building a larger, more diverse membership. This effort includes expanding our outreach to writers of different genres and backgrounds, including younger and more diverse writers, and enhancing our services and community-building experiences to better engage our members and make membership more compelling.

Part of our big jump in membership in 2023 appears to have been driven by our advocacy surrounding artificial intelligence, especially our open letter signed by more than 16,000 writers and allies and submitted to the CEOs of OpenAI, Alphabet, Meta, Stability AI, IBM, and Microsoft in July; the September filing of our class-action lawsuit against OpenAI (and later Microsoft); and our response to a September article in *The Atlantic* that allowed authors to search the Books3 dataset to see if their books had been used to train AI systems.

During the three-month span from August to October, coinciding with the intense media coverage around these efforts, we set a record of 1,120 new members. We also set back-to-back single-month records in both August and September, peaking at more than 400 applications in September alone. We also saw more applicants citing advocacy as their reason for joining, even outpacing legal services, usually the No. 1 reason given for joining the Guild.

MFA Students

We've commenced efforts to provide more support and education for MFA students. This year, we hosted two webinars specifically tailored to MFA students—"Handling Your MFA Student Loans" in May and "Publishing

After the MFA" in June—and reached out to a dozen MFA directors to invite their students. We also gave a talk for students in Drexel University's MFA program in the fall. We will promote these webinars to more MFA students and work on arranging additional talks in 2024.

Academic Authors

We met with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in early summer 2023 in our effort to reach more academic authors. In August, the Guild and AAUP held a joint webinar titled "Academic Freedom in Hostile Times," which AAUP shared with its members and promoted on its social media channels. In the coming months we will host a webinar to help scholars transition to trade publishing, and we will continue building on our relationship with AAUP in 2024.

Partnerships

We continued to partner with writing organizations that support underserved communities in 2023, and worked to better understand their needs and reach new audiences. For the last few years, we've developed programming in our Business Bootcamps for Writers series in partnership with other organizations, including the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Blue Stoop, Broadleaf Writers Association, the Carnegie Center for Literacy & Learning, the Diasporic Vietnamese Artists Network, the Institute of American Indian Arts, and Las Musas. We will continue to grow these partnerships throughout 2024, and they continue to have a meaningful impact on membership growth.

We also sponsored Pete's Reading Series, a monthly reading event hosted at Pete's Candy Store in Brooklyn.

New Benefits and Perks

Launchpad Marketing Program

Last fall, the Authors Guild began a pilot session of a new member benefit designed to help with one of the toughest parts of being an author: marketing and publicity. Our members had been loud and clear about the need for additional help in this area; for years, it was by far the most-requested service in emails and conversations, on our member forum, and in surveys of our membership.

Running from September through November, the pilot session of Authors Guild Launchpad included special webinars, small group workshops, and one-on-one advice from marketing and publicity experts. Attendance at live webinars was open only to authors with books forthcoming in 2024, including non-members from our partner organizations, while webinar recordings and additional resources are now available on our website for all Authors Guild members.

The fall cohort of 25 adult fiction and nonfiction authors was led by literary consultant Katie Freeman. In March 2024, we began a second pilot session for a cohort of children's book authors. These initial sessions and feedback from participants will guide our efforts to expand the Launchpad program later this year.

Member Discounts and Offers

Near the end of 2023, we partnered with Gallagher Affinity to offer our members new discounts on products and services that are important to authors. New offers include:

- Car rentals from Avis and Budget
- Computers from Lenovo
- Hotels through Hotel Engine
- Auto, home, renters, pet, travel, and home warranty insurance quotes through Member Options
- Email marketing services from Constant Contact
- Office supplies from ODP Business Solutions (formerly Office Depot)
- Shipping by UPS

These new offers are in addition to those that were previously available.

We also added new discounts for Book Brush, an easy-to-use tool for designing book ads and social media graphics, and BookFunnel, a service for distributing ebooks and audiobooks, sending advance reader copies, and other tools that save indie authors time and energy.

Finally, after producing a trio of webinars on media training for authors with media strategist Paula Rizzo, we began offering a discount on Rizzo's Media-Ready Author Program. The program helps authors improve their on-camera and interview skills, such as where to look, how to sit, what to wear, how to set up a virtual studio, and how to speak in soundbites.

Members can browse all available discounts and offers at authorsguild.org/discounts.

Legal Services

Legal Requests

In fiscal year 2023 (October 1, 2022–September 30, 2023), the legal department handled 1,756 queries from members, up from 1,624 the year before—a 9.2 percent increase. We expect this trend to continue as our membership grows in 2024.

Legal requests handled in the last fiscal year included:

- 405 book contract reviews
- 111 agency contract reviews
- 47 reversions of rights
- 135 inquiries on copyright law, including infringement, registration, duration, and fair use
- 25 inquiries regarding securing permissions and privacy releases

- 41 First Amendment queries
- 992 other inquiries, including translation contracts, electronic rights, literary estates, contract disputes, contract questions, periodical and multi-media contracts, movie and television options, internet piracy, liability insurance, finding an agent, and attorney referrals

The Guild also maintains a productive dispute resolution process with Amazon, whereby we escalate issues impacting our members' books directly to the KDP executive team. These issues include pirate and counterfeit books, unexplained account closures and payment embargos, erroneous listings, and more. Last year, we helped dozens of members resolve issues with Amazon and were able to release thousands of dollars in embargoed payments to members for wrongful account closures.

Web Services

In 2023, 2,373 members subscribed to one or more of our website services. We currently host or manage 1,994 websites, 3,062 domain names, and 1,066 email accounts. We activated 128 new author websites last year and built 87 Site Express websites.

The core of our web services offerings is Sitebuilder, our low-cost, easy-to-use platform that allows members to quickly and easily create author websites. Sitebuilder users can simply fill out a form and have a member of the Guild's web services team build a website for them to review and approve, or they can opt to build their own website using one of our 77 templates and color palettes. Whichever method they choose, they can edit and update their sites at any time without the need to learn HTML or hire a designer.

Based on feedback from users, we made some major improvements to Sitebuilder in 2023. These included:

- Redesigning the most popular themes with more modern and spacious layouts.

- Updating underlying code to conform with accessibility standards.
- Adding an optional "splash page" for certain themes that allows authors to showcase a custom background image, such as a book cover, when visitors first arrive at their site.
- Overhauling the editing interface to make it cleaner, less text-heavy, and easier to use.
- Adding cookie notices and a default privacy policy to all websites to ensure compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), and other international privacy laws.
- Building a new Sitebuilder help section with training videos so users can see how to edit their content instead of having to read text-heavy instructions.

For any questions about these improvements, please contact us at webservices@authorsguild.org.



Regional Chapter



We launched our regional chapters in 2018, beginning with chapters in 14 areas around the country. The pandemic necessitated a switch from in-person to virtual meetings in 2020 and 2021, but in 2022, we began doing some in-person events again. That trend continued in 2023, with most meetings and events taking place in person. Live meetups are best for building strong communities, while occasional Zoom meetings give members the opportunity to interact across geographic borders. Virtual chapter events are often open to other chapters and the membership at large.

We currently have 15 active chapters in the following metro areas:

- Phoenix, Arizona
- Los Angeles, California
- San Diego, California
- San Francisco Bay Area, California
- Washington, D.C.
- St. Petersburg/Tampa, Florida
- Chicago, Illinois
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Detroit, Michigan
- Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- New York, New York
- Portland, Oregon
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Seattle, Washington

Last year, we added new ambassadors in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Tampa. We are looking to launch a new chapter in Texas this coming year.

If you'd like more information about getting involved in your local chapter, or you'd like to help start a chapter in an area that's not listed, please email chapters@authorsguild.org.

2023 Chapter Events

February 3 - Regional Happy Hour & Organizational Meeting (Bay Area)

February 7 - Meet a Developmental Editor (Portland)

February 8 - San Francisco Social (Bay Area)

February 11 - San Rafael Social (Bay Area)

March 3 - Meetup (Bay Area)

March 29 - How to Work with a Narrator for Your Audio Book (Boston)

April 4 - How to Work with an Editor (Phoenix)

May 4 - Local Author Book Sale (Detroit)

May 20 - The Writer with a Thousand Faces (New York City)

May 22 - Authors Helping Authors Roundtable Discussions on Book Marketing (Bay Area)

May 24 - Writers of Color Mixer (Bay Area)

June 5 - East Bay Local Meetup/Social (Bay Area)

June 14 - Peninsula Local Meetup/Social (Bay Area)

July 11 - Summer Social Event (Boston)

July 19 - Social/Meet n Greet (Tampa)

August 6 - Meet n Greet (Los Angeles)

August 30 - Mixer/Social (San Diego)

October 15 - Page to Stage to Screen: What You Need to Know About Adaptations (Raleigh-Durham)

October 18 - Social Media Savvy: How Authors Use Digital Platforms to Reach Readers (New York City)

November 9 - Marketing Plan 2024 (Tampa)

November 12 - Meet n Greet (Raleigh-Durham)

November 16 - Social Gathering/Meetup on the Topic of Agents (San Diego)

December 4 - Local Networking in the New England Area (Boston)

December 10 - Holiday Gathering (Los Angeles)

Member Technology Updates

Each year, we make improvements to our website at authorsguild.org, member portal, WordPress backend, and other integrations and infrastructure to keep our technology up to date, make things easier for members, and cut down on time-consuming manual work for Guild staff.

In 2023, we also began laying the groundwork for moving our member database from a physical server in our office to a cloud-based platform. This process will begin in the summer of 2024. It will be an enormous undertaking to replace the database the Guild has used for decades and ensure that the transition is seamless for members and staff.

The new platform will feature native integrations with many of the systems used by the Authors Guild and Authors Guild Foundation, including email communications, our member message board, donations, and more. It will also introduce powerful new filters and reports that will enable our staff to more easily identify and track membership trends and member engagement. This move will be a major focus in 2024 as we work to modernize our infrastructure and simplify our processes. At the same time, we will continue making improvements to our existing infrastructure so we can provide members with the best service possible.

Highlights of our work in 2023 include:

- **New dedicated server:** We migrated our website infrastructure to a new dedicated server, which should keep us comfortable in our hosting environment for the next several years.
- **General updates and code cleanup:** After moving to a new Wordpress site in 2022, we spent some time updating software and cleaning up old code that was no longer necessary. Our current code is much leaner and continues to prioritize security.
- **Outsourced DNS:** When we launched Sitebuilder many years ago, domain name (DNS) records for individual websites were hosted and maintained on the Authors Guild's servers. This method had become outdated with the advent of cloud-computing services, so in 2023, we moved member DNS records off our servers into new cloud architecture. This allowed us to leverage cloud provider support and replace older code.
- **Improved integration between our member database and website:** Guild staff identified a need for faster communication between our member database and website for certain actions. To that end, we implemented a new way for staff to manually trigger a sync if they need member content updated right away. This enables us to process changes and respond to member requests in a quicker manner.



Authors Guild Website

It has been a year and a half since we relaunched our website in October 2022. In that time, we've continued to update content, fix bugs, and make improvements based on member feedback and reported experiences.

Key improvements in 2023 include:

- **Advocacy:** We updated our advocacy accomplishments page to reflect major achievements in the last several years. We also created and continually updated a page devoted to our ongoing work around artificial intelligence, highlighting our policy recommendations and resources for authors in this critical area.
- **Resources:** With nearly 200 resources in our resource library, we are constantly thinking about ways to make individual resources easier to find. To that end, we made a big change to the website's main menu, adding an expansive submenu with prefiltered links for many of our most popular topics and series.
- **Events:** We updated the events page to list Authors Guild events, chapter events, partner events, and member-submitted events in one place, with a

filter to narrow the list down to one or more categories. We also linked events in a series to past events in our resource library and added past events as a menu option to make them easier to find.

- **Member testimonials:** Our staff is very appreciative when members send us comments, and especially compliments, about the Guild's work. All feedback is important for driving our work forward, and recommendations from members are extremely helpful for recruitment. We have recently updated our homepage and page templates to show relevant testimonials in various sections. We've published the first few testimonials and will continue expanding them in 2024.
- **Filters:** We continued to improve the filter options under news, resources, and events, adding new topics and series when necessary and removing redundant filters. We also separated the filters for each of these sections so we can further tailor them to show relevant content.
- **Search:** We made some general improvements to site search, dramatically improving search accuracy and removing some irrelevant and duplicate results.

Newsletter

The Guild's biweekly newsletter is a way for both members and non-members to stay up to date on our advocacy and other efforts. Members receive the newsletter automatically, while anyone can sign up to receive the newsletter for free on our website.

We added several new recurring features to the newsletter in 2023 to provide writers with more information and make the newsletter as useful as possible:

- **AG in Action:** Guild staff are always attending or presenting at various hearings, roundtables, panels, and other events. This series, also published in the news section on our website, recaps recent events that

involved the Guild as well as letters, court filings, and other actions of note.

- **Scam alerts:** Publishing scams have risen sharply in recent years. Each issue of the newsletter now includes a scam alert that describes a specific scam that was recently reported to us, lists warning signs for authors to watch out for, and asks authors to let us know when they learn about new scams.
- **Chapter updates:** Each newsletter includes details about upcoming events for our 15 regional chapters as well as information about how members can get involved.

- **Featured services and discounts:** We periodically include a section highlighting a specific service or discount for members. These featured services and discounts are intended to remind members of offerings they might not know about and encourage non-members to join the Guild.

Press Releases

In 2023, the Authors Guild issued numerous press releases on core activities and issues impacting authors, generating more than 440 major media stories—a 46 percent increase over 2022. A significant focus was our advocacy around AI and its impact on creators’ rights, including our class action lawsuit filed against OpenAI and Microsoft and our open letter to AI companies signed by more than 16,000 authors. We also issued releases on recommended contract clauses prohibiting certain AI uses.

Other highlights included the election of Maya Shanbhag Lang as Guild president, the expansion of legal efforts to protect authors through lawsuits over unpaid royalties, the publishers’ legal victory against Internet Archive, the forging of an alliance with the European Writers’ Council, and Guild events such as the WIT Festival and Pascal Hall Author Series.

Below is a list of press releases we issued in 2023:

- [The Authors Guild, John Grisham, Jodi Picoult, David Baldacci, George R.R. Martin, and 13 Other Authors File Class-Action Suit Against OpenAI](#)
- [Open Markets, the Authors Guild, and American Booksellers Urge FTC and DOJ to Investigate Amazon’s Book Retail Monopoly](#)
- [The Authors Guild Welcomes Kevin R. Amer as Chief Legal Officer](#)
- [European Writers’ Council and Authors Guild Join Forces to Advocate for Authors’ Rights and Address Emerging Challenges](#)
- [More than 15,000 Authors Sign Authors Guild Letter Calling on AI Industry Leaders to Protect Writers](#)
- [Authors Guild Foundation Elects New Board President](#)
- [Michael Cunningham, Emma Straub, Jane Smiley, and Rita Dove Among the Featured Speakers at the Authors Guild’s Second WIT Festival in the Berkshires Sept 21–23](#)
- [AG Introduces New Publishing Agreement Clauses Concerning AI](#)
- [Authors Guild Foundation Honors Literary luminaries at 2023 Gala](#)
- [Authors Guild and Coalition Partners Ask Congress for Collective Action Rights for Professional Creators](#)
- [Authors Guild Celebrates Success of Banned Books Club](#)
- [Authors Guild Members Elect Maya Shanbhag Lang President](#)
- [Authors Guild Foundation Announces \\$10m Capacity Building Campaign](#)
- [Authors Guild Foundation Welcomes New Executive Leadership: Deborah Wilson and Bernard Schwartz](#)
- [Preorder Fourteen Days, a Collaborative Novel by Margaret Atwood, Doug Preston, John Grisham, Dave Eggers, Celeste Ng, Tommy Orange, and Many Others](#)
- [New Authors Guild Survey Examines State of Literary Translators’ Working Conditions](#)
- [Exploring Narrative, Truth, and the Power of Storytelling at the Authors Guild’s 2023 WIT: Words, Ideas, and Thinkers Festival](#)
- [Key Takeaways from the Authors Guild’s 2023 Author Income Survey](#)

- [Authors Guild, Creator Groups Meet Lawmakers on AI Issues](#)
- [Authors Guild Celebrates Resounding Win in Internet Archive Infringement Lawsuit](#)
- [Pascal Hall Authors Series Returns for Second Season](#)
- [AG Recommends Clause in Publishing and Distribution Agreements Prohibiting AI Training Uses](#)
- [Authors Guild Wins Key Concessions in Settlement with Authors' Place Press](#)
- [Authors Guild Files Suit Against Authors' Place Press Over Unpaid Royalties, False Royalty Statements](#)

Top Media Coverage

The Guild received widespread media coverage in 2023, earning mentions in more than a thousand news articles. Press mentions typically focused on our advocacy, especially around AI and book banning, as well as our literary and educational events and developments in the publishing industry.

AI Coverage

Our class-action lawsuit against OpenAI was extensively covered across major publications such as *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *Forbes*, *Bloomberg Law*, *The Hill*, *Wired*, *Scientific American*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *the World Intellectual Property Review*, *CNBC*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York* magazine, *The Guardian*, *Law.com*, *CBC*, *Law360*, *ABC News*, the *Today show*, and others.

Other AI-related news topics that regularly featured the Guild included the threat AI poses to creative careers, U.S. copyright law and other copyright concerns around AI, our calls for AI guardrails at the FTC, and concerns over AI photo apps and Google's book scanning practices.

Author Income

Our 2023 author income survey highlighted the ongoing financial struggles faced by writers and received extensive coverage in *Publishers Weekly*, *Esquire*, and Jane Friedman's newsletter, *The Hot Sheet*.

Book Bans and Freelancer Advocacy

Our state-level advocacy to fight book banning and enact new laws protecting freelancers was covered in many national and local publications. This included our challenge of the so-called READER Act in Texas, advocacy for the Freelance Isn't Free Act in New York, and our work with the ALA's Freedom to Read campaign. Notable publications included *Publishing Perspectives*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *The New Yorker*.

Lawsuits Against Publishers

Our efforts to resolve legal actions with bad publishers were covered in *Law360*, *Publishers Lunch*, and *Publishers Weekly*.

Publishing Industry News

We were cited in coverage of the failed merger between Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster, changes to Amazon's ebook return policy, the Justice Department's antitrust lawsuit against Google, and the outcome of the lawsuit over Internet Archive's Open Library. Notable publications included *New York* magazine, *Publishers Lunch*, *Good E-Reader*, *The Guardian*, and *The Bookseller*.

Labor Issues

Our statements and activities around the HarperCollins union strike, the Writers Guild of America strike, and the controversy surrounding New Leaf Literary & Media were covered in publications such as *Vox*, *The Mary Sue*, and *Deadline*.

Literary Initiatives and Events

Our literary events, including the WIT Festival and Pascal Hall Author Series, were covered in *The Berkshire Eagle*, *Berkshire Magazine*, the *Penobscot Bay Pilot*, and other local publications.

Social Media

In 2023, we garnered 3.2 million impressions across our social media channels—X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky, and Threads—a 120 percent increase from the previous year. Total engagement on these platforms increased 277 percent compared to the previous year.

Despite Twitter’s ownership change and rebrand to X, our engagement on that platform alone accounted for 2.8 million impressions. Still, given the continuous changes at X and the fact that many writers have left the platform, we expanded our efforts to include two leading new social media platforms: Bluesky, which was founded by former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, and Threads, which was launched by Instagram. As of March 2024, we have 1,700 followers on Bluesky and 2,600 followers on Threads. We will continue to build audiences there in tandem with our other social media efforts. We are also exploring additional new platforms including TikTok.

Finally, we developed a schedule for posting consistently to Instagram and made frequent use of its stories feature, increasing our impressions by 137 percent over 2022 and upping organic engagement by 158 percent. We also doubled our number of followers with 2,694 new followers in 2023; we now have 5,360 followers as of March 2024 and anticipate continued growth on that platform.

Our most popular posts include:

Twitter/X

[Thread outlining specific AI regulations the Guild is lobbying for, posted in response to a tweet about “gpt-author”—an AI tool using GPT-4, Stable Diffusion, and Anthropic API to generate an entire fantasy novel](#)
June 21, 2023; 214,000 views; 39,706 engagements

[Tweet about Prosecraft, a tool that relied on pirated copies of books to publish linguistic analyses](#)
August 7, 2023; 379,000 views; 12,347 engagements

[Tweet about New Leaf Literary dropping one of its agents’ authors](#)
May 15, 2023; 170,000 views; 10,200 engagements

[News post and thread outlining what authors needed to know if their works were found in the Books3 database](#)
September 27, 2023; 103,000 views; 3,458 engagements

[Tweet about the Guild’s Open Letter to Generative AI Companies](#)
July 14, 2023; 118,000 views; 2,412 engagements

Instagram

[Post outlining what authors needed to know if their works were found in the Books3 database](#)
September 27, 2023; 1,396 engagements

[Post about the Guild’s class action lawsuit against OpenAI](#)
September 20, 2023; 395 engagements

[Post about Guild President Maya Lang speaking to the BBC about AI advocacy](#)
July 25, 2023; 302 engagements

Facebook

[Post outlining what authors needed to know if their works were found in the Books3 database](#)
September 27, 2023; 508 engagements

[Post about the 31th Authors Guild Foundation Gala being hosted by Roxane Gay and Debbie Millman](#)
February 21, 2023; 286 engagements

[Post about the Guild’s class action lawsuit against OpenAI](#)
September 20, 2023; 275 engagements



Leadership Change

The Authors Guild Foundation is thrilled to welcome Deborah Wilson and Bernard Schwartz to its executive team. Wilson joins the Foundation as executive director and Schwartz is the new executive producer of literary programs. Deborah replaces Lynn Boulger, who served as the Foundation’s executive director for three years and retired in January 2024. The Guild benefited immensely from her leadership, warmth, relationship-building, and professionalism. She founded the Guild’s WIT: Words, Ideas, and Thinkers Festival in Lenox, Massachusetts, and expanded its fundraising efforts.

In her role as executive director, Wilson will oversee fundraising, board relations, staff supervision, strategic planning, and operations for the Foundation. She brings more than 25 years of nonprofit management experience strengthening mission-driven organizations. Most recently, Wilson served as chief development officer at PEN America, where she spearheaded the expansion of the operating budget, exemplified exceptional donor

cultivation skills, successfully transformed gala fundraising strategies to substantially enhance revenue, and increased donor contributions to impressive levels. We are lucky to have her join our team!

Schwartz is responsible for developing, executing, and expanding the Foundation’s literary programming, including the popular WIT Festival and new initiatives in New York City and across the country. He has 18 years of experience overseeing literary events, classes, education outreach, and archive activities as the leader of the 92nd Street Y’s Unterberg Poetry Center, significantly contributing to its prominent status in the cultural community of New York City. A visionary curator, he is known for his creative instincts, advocacy of writers, and talent for identifying and cultivating new partnerships across the philanthropic and performing-arts landscape. He reports to the executive director and will work with her to cultivate donors and sponsors to support the Foundation’s expanded literary programming.

Educational Programming

The Authors Guild Foundation produces an abundance of free programming that is open to the public, supporting the Foundation’s mission to support and further the profession of writing and assist U.S. writers in their professional goals. Our events are designed to serve the needs and interests of Guild members and to reach non-members seeking advice and support in their writing careers. Writers often join the Guild’s ranks after learning about us through such programming.

In our last fiscal year, our webinars averaged a live audience of 278 people, with our Business Bootcamps for Writers series averaging nearly 400 attendees per event and more than a thousand for popular topics. We record each of the Foundation’s virtual events and some in-person events so that even more writers can find and

watch them after the fact. These recordings are freely available in the resource library on our website.

In addition, Authors Guild CEO Mary Rasenberger, Chief Legal Officer Kevin Amer, General Counsel Cheryl Davis, Director of Legal Services Michael Gross, and Director of Policy and Advocacy Umair Kazi spoke at dozens of events on Zoom and around the country on legal issues such as artificial intelligence, banned books, publishing contracts, film option agreements, and more. We often share recaps of these events in “AG in Action” posts in our biweekly newsletter and on our website.

Agent Talks

Our new Agent Talks events featured a literary agent presenting on a specific area of their expertise, with a

Q&A session at the end to provide a space for authors to hear the agent's perspective on publishing. The agents also provide a direct route for attendees to query them if their current capacity allows. This series is in collaboration with the Association of American Literary Agents and Literary Agents of Change.

November 13, 2023—Revising with Your Agent with Monica Rodriguez and moderator Samantha Fabien

December 11, 2023—Business Strategies for Writers with Sandra Proudman and moderator Sarah Khalil

January 22, 2024—The Modern Author's Press Kit with Sarah N. Fisk and moderator Tamara Kawar

March 4, 2024—Book Contracts 101 with Rebecca Matte and moderator Tamara Kawar

Authors Guild Launchpad

The pilot session of Authors Guild Launchpad ran from September to October 2023, with live webinars open only to authors with books forthcoming in 2024. Webinar recordings and additional resources are now available on our website for all Authors Guild members.

September 13, 2023—Diving into Book Publicity with Kait Astrella, Bev Rivero, Kathy Daneman, and moderator May-Zhee Lim

September 20, 2023—Preparing for Publication Day with Madhushree Ghosh, Alejandra Oliva, Patricia Park, and moderator May-Zhee Lim

October 4, 2023—Channels of Communications, Part 1 with Karissa Chen, Andrea Jo DeWerd, Janay Nachel Frazier, and moderator Randy Winston

October 18, 2023—Channels of Communications, Part 2 with Ingrid Carabulea, Keely Platte, Emily Prado, and moderator Jane Friedman

November 1, 2023—Pitching Pieces: Essays, Op-Eds, Book Lists with Emily Firetog, Denne Michele Norris, Keziah Weir, and moderator Eshani Surya

November 16, 2023—On the Road and At Home: The Role of Events with Michelle Malonzo, Sara Ortiz, Lily Philpott, and moderator Randy Winston

Banned Books Week

In addition to our ongoing legal advocacy work and participation in Unite Against Book Bans, we spoke out against book banning with two special events for Banned Books Week 2023:

September 11, 2023—Banning Oz: Wicked Writers Discuss Book Challenges with Winnie Holzman, Gregory Maguire, and moderator Cheryl Davis

October 2, 2023—Banned Books & the Law with Cheryl Davis and Heather Fleming

Business Bootcamps for Writers

Since 2021, Business Bootcamps for Writers has covered the fundamentals of publishing, marketing, career growth, and a variety of deep-dive lessons. In 2023, our most popular ongoing series addressed the path to publication and best practices for authors. It also included our From Manuscript to Marketplace programs, which provide case studies on acquisitions, the editorial process, and promotion. Many events in the Bootcamps series were developed in partnership with other organizations, including the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Blue Stoop, the Broadleaf Writers Association, the Carnegie Center for Literacy & Learning, the Institute of American Indian Arts, and Las Musas. These collaborations allow us to cover more angles and reach new audiences.

April 3, 2023—Residencies and Retreats with Tracey Abeyta, Hannah Bae, Brandon Hobson, Abeer Hoque, and moderator Deborah Taffa

May 3, 2023—From Manuscript to Marketplace: House of Cotton with Monica Brashears, Nadxieli Nieto, and Claire McLaughlin

May 15, 2023—Film & TV Option Agreements with Cheryl Davis and Caitlin DiMotta

May 24, 2023—Building Your Own Benefits Package as a Self-Employed Person with Lee Frisari of Brass Taxes, Meredith Tannor of Freelancers Union, and moderator Erin Lowry

May 30, 2023—Media Training for Authors, Part 3: How to Get and Keep Media Attention with Paula Rizzo

October 24, 2023—From Manuscript to Marketplace: Autumn Song with Patrice Gopo and Courtney Ochsner and Rosemary Sekora of University of Nebraska Press

November 8, 2023—From Manuscript to Marketplace: The Free People’s Village with Sim Kern, Rebecca Podos, and Irene Vázquez

November 9, 2023—How to DIY Your Book Launch (Whether Self-Published or Traditional) with Chelsea Fagan, Kwame Mbalia, and moderator Erin Lowry

November 15, 2023—Book Advances: Best Practices to Spend, Save, and Invest with Paco de Leon, Eric Myers, Andrea Stewart, and moderator Erin Lowry

December 5, 2023—Hollywood 101: The Financial, Legal, and Creative Aspects of Literary Adaptations with Eddie Gamarra and moderator Cheryl Davis

Educational Webinars

We also produced timely and unique programs to address issues in the publishing world and to spark discourse about our advocacy work. These educational webinars covered key issues related to free speech and legal and financial considerations for authors.

April 27, 2023—Deal Memo 101: What Authors Should Know and Negotiate Before Signing with Ginger Clark, Leigh Eisenman, Lauren MacLeod, Kirsten Wolf, Michael Gross, and moderator Cheryl Davis

June 5, 2023—Publishing After the MFA with Alex DiFrancesco, Ashley M. Farmer, Darrel Alejandro Holnes, and moderator Leigh Stein

August 15, 2023—Bookshop.org Affiliate Program for Authors: Info and Q&A with Ellington McKenzie

August 22, 2023—Academic Freedom in Hostile Times: A Chat with AAUP with Michael DeCesare and moderator Richard Thompson Ford

January 25, 2024—How School Book Bans May Implicate Civil Rights Laws with Matt Nosanchuk and Cheryl Davis

Money Matters

For several years, we have partnered with financial advice author Erin Lowry (the Broke Millennial series) to host Money Matters: The Road to Financial Literacy. The ongoing series covers personal finance topics as they relate to authors and freelancers, plus discussion panels on increasing and diversifying income.

May 17, 2023—Handling Your MFA Student Loans with Betsy Mayotte, Cindy Zuniga-Sanchez, and moderator Erin Lowry

July 25, 2023—Fireside Chat with Berna Anat & Erin Lowry

Festival and Conference Partnerships

Sponsoring literary festivals helps us advertise the Guild to potential members around the country and increase awareness of the Foundation’s advocacy work. Often, we sponsor or co-host educational events about the business side of writing, as part of our mission to educate and support all working writers.

In May 2023, we supported the Santa Fe Literary Festival, which brings together world-renowned authors, thinkers, and passionate readers. We sponsored the event “On Stage with John Irving,” moderated by Douglas Preston.

We also renewed our sponsorship of the Latinx Kidlit Book Festival, which reaches writers, readers, and educators. In September, we sponsored an author education event called “Ten Things I Wish I Knew About Marketing My Book” featuring Angela Montoya, Laura Taylor Namey, Zoraida Córdova, and Anika Aldamuy Denise.

AWP Conference & Bookfair

The Authors Guild was a literary partner for the Association of Writers & Writing Programs’ annual Conference & Bookfair, held February 7–10, 2024, in Kansas City. Guild staff met with countless authors and aspiring writers at our booth to discuss our advocacy work and member benefits. We also hosted an educational panel and a featured literary event.

February 7, 2024—Authors Guild Members’ Reception at Afterword Tavern & Shelves

February 8, 2024—Legal and Ethical Issues in Memoir with Maya Shanbhag Lang, Hannah Pittard, Nancy Wolff, and moderator Umair Kazi

February 9, 2024—Meredith Talusan and Kai Cheng Thom in conversation with Maya Shanbhag Lang

Fundraising

The Authors Guild and Authors Guild Foundation's 2022–23 fiscal year ended on September 30, 2023, with the Foundation raising \$4,042,068 in gifts to all funds. This was more than double the \$1,532,208 we raised the year before. thanks to four major gifts to our new capacity building campaign.

The capacity campaign will enable the organization to hire additional legal staff, build an AI licensing platform, and support more work around banned books. We will also add \$7 million to our endowment to make this growth sustainable. As of March 2024, we have raised \$5,650,000 in gifts and commitments thus far.

Authors Guild Foundation Gala

We are delighted with the success of the 31st annual Authors Guild Gala, which was attended by more than 370 people on May 18, 2023, at the Plaza Hotel in New York. It was the first in-person benefit we've held since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

In addition to raising critically needed funds to support the work of the Foundation, the Gala also raises our profile among writers and the public. We owe a debt of gratitude to our phenomenal co-hosts, Roxane Gay and Debbie Millman. Honorees Roxana Robinson, Angie Thomas, and Chris Finan shared powerful remarks on the importance of free speech and diverse voices in literature, and Roxana used her time at the podium to talk about how important the Guild is.

Plans for the 2024 Gala are well underway. The event will be held on Thursday, May 30, at Pier Sixty in New York. Honorees include Heather Cox Richardson (with Ken Burns presenting the award), W. Paul Coates (Walter Mosley presenting), and Jesmyn Ward (LeVar Burton presenting). Author and actor Molly Ringwald will serve as host.

Pascal Hall Authors Series and Residency

The Authors Guild Foundation works with the Leshner Family Foundation in Rockport, Maine, to organize the Pascal Hall Authors Series and short-term residency. Four authors of diverse genres are invited for a one-week stay to relax or work, alone or with their families. In exchange, we ask the authors to give one public talk while they are there. In 2023, we hosted James Shapiro,

Stacy Schiff, Sigrid Nunez, and Neil Gaiman. The schedule for 2024 is shaping up with Elliot Ackerman, Emily St. John Mandel, and Jia Tolentino.

WIT Festival

The Authors Guild Foundation's WIT: Words, Ideas, and Thinkers Festival returned to the Berkshires for its second year in September 2023. We explored the theme of "Changing the Narrative" through nine sessions with more than 1,500 attendees. Speakers included Jane Smiley, Margaret Verble, Oscar Hokeah, Steven Levy, Emma Straub, Maya Shanbhag Lang, Rita Dove, André Bernard, Michael Cunningham, Roxana Robinson, Isaac Fitzgerald, Saeed Jones, Patrick Radden Keefe, Martin Baron, and Stacy Schiff.

The 2024 festival is scheduled for September 27–29, in Lenox once again. The theme is "The Power of Words: Why Writers Matter." The program is shaping up nicely, with nine panels featuring wonderful, talented speakers. The full program will be announced on June 14.

The Authors Registry

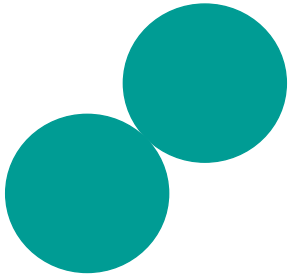


The Authors Registry was created in 1995 to distribute fees and royalties that were collected, mainly in foreign jurisdictions, for photocopies and electronic use in educational, business, and governmental institutions, as well as for library lending payments, on behalf of U.S. authors. Library lending royalties had not previously been paid out to U.S. authors.

These royalties and fees come from a variety of sources, with most coming from the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS), which collects fees for secondary uses of copyrighted work, such as photocopies, cable retransmissions, digital reproductions,

and educational recordings throughout the U.K. The Authors Registry also disburses fees collected by the Dutch agency LIRA, which sends the Authors Registry royalties for American authors from libraries under the Netherlands' Public Lending Right.

In 2023, the Authors Registry distributed \$2 million to 6,068 American authors. To date, the total distributed is more than \$44.6 million. Payments range from a few dollars to a few thousand. The Authors Registry pays authors of academic, nonfiction, fiction, children's, and every other category of literature and charges a fee of 10 percent on all distributions.



THE AUTHORS LEAGUE FUND

The Authors League Fund was founded in 1917 to help authors, journalists, poets, and dramatists during financial emergencies. The Fund provides direct aid for urgent needs, such as rent or mortgage payments, utilities, groceries, and medical bills. In 2023, the Fund gave \$400,000 to 116 writers.

The Authors League Fund is a sister organization to the Authors Guild and it encourages Guild members to apply for support if needed and to spread the word about its assistance to fellow writers. The Authors League Fund helps any writer living in the U.S. and American writers living abroad. Authors Guild membership is not required. Apply online at www.authorsleaguefund.org.

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