



Background

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) conducts two salary surveys that include STC Alberta members. First, STC International conducts a worldwide salary survey each year that reports data for each country with significant membership. Secondly, STC Alberta, along with many other STC chapters, supplements this information by conducting its own salary surveys. Table 1 shows a side-by-side comparison of the features of the two surveys.

Table 1. Summary of STC Salary Surveys

	STC International Salary Survey	STC Alberta Salary Survey
Frequency	Annual	Last conducted in 2006
Participation	By invitation only; invitations sent to 10,000 of STC's 16,000 members	Voluntary; open to all STC Alberta members
Participants	Salaried employees only; separate survey for contractors/consultants	2007 and 2006 surveys reported income of salaried employees separate from contractors/consultants ¹ 2002 survey reported income of these two groups together
Participant response rate	2005: 23%	2007: 46% 2006: 39% 2002: 20%
Statistics reported	Percentile data for various categories for Canada as a whole, median income for Alberta	Percentile data for various categories for Alberta STC members earning the majority of their income in Alberta
URL	http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/salarySurvey01.asp	http://www.stc-alberta.org/Publications/publications.php
1. 2007 survey results for contractors/consultants will be published separately.		

Survey Methodology

In 2007, STC Alberta conducted a salary survey hosted at www.surveymonkey.com. This survey, modelled after the STC International survey, was announced in the May edition of the STC Alberta newsletter *SuperScript*. An invitation with the survey link was emailed to the 211 registered STC Alberta members (as of June, 2007).

The survey was available online from May 28 through June 30, 2007. To participate, members opened the emailed link and responded to the questions. No identifying information, such as member number and name, was requested. The SurveyMonkey site used cookies to ensure that each participant completed only one response.

Depending on the employment type specified by respondents (e.g., full-time employee, part-time employee, or contractor/consultant), participants were asked an appropriate subset of questions regarding such items as employee benefits, annual salary, and hourly rate.

The author then exported the survey results to a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet, which was then imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences – www.spss.com). Analysis was performed on these results, and the report submitted to the STC Alberta President, Lucille Worone, for review.

Because members may belong to more than one geographical community (chapter), the survey included questions about the province of residence and income source. Since the focus of the survey was intended to be Alberta, responses from members who live outside Alberta or obtain the majority of their income from outside Alberta were excluded (seven responses).

Regarding student members, the STC defines such members as full-time students in a post-secondary program leading to a career in technical communications. Because the work term is considered a component of the education program, work term salaries are typically below market value. Therefore, to accurately reflect market value, the four student responses were excluded from the survey analysis.

Also excluded from the analysis were responses that included conflicting or incomplete data.

Note: All dollar amounts are in Canadian dollars and have not been adjusted for inflation.

Response Rate

A total of 96 responses was received. This corresponds to a 44.5% response rate—considerably higher than the response rate of 2005 STC International survey (23%) and higher than the 2006 STC Alberta survey (39%). Table 2 shows a breakdown by response categories.

Table 2. Response summary

Excluded responses	
Students	4
Conflicting/incomplete data	2
Out-of-province residents	7
Total responses excluded	13
Included responses	
Salaried full-time employees	54
Salaried part-time employees	5
Contractors/consultants	24
Total number of valid responses	83

Results

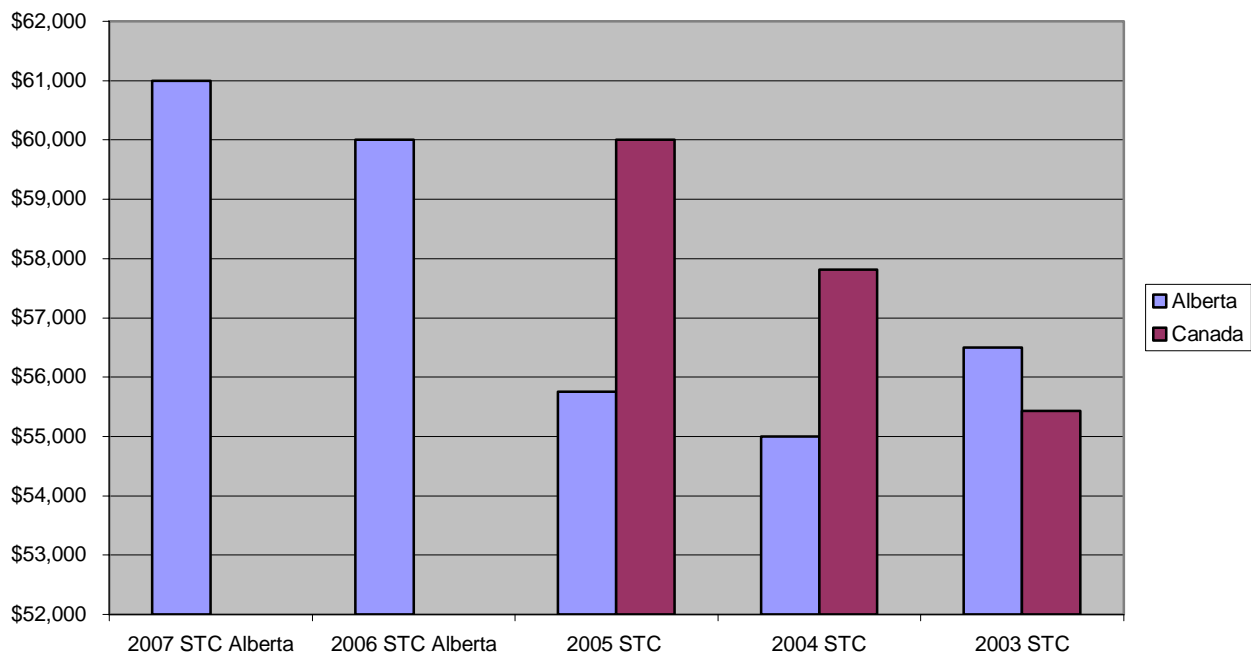
This report summarizes the survey results for full-time employees. The results for part-time employees and contractors/consultants are reported separately in *Part II: Contractors/Consultants and Part-time Employees*.

Full-time employees reported a median salary of \$61,000 in 2007, up from \$60,000 in 2006 and up from \$55,750 in the 2005 STC International survey. The average (mean) salary reported was \$63,484, higher than both the 2006 average salary (\$60,075) and the 2002 average salary (\$60,654).

Note: The 2002 STC Alberta survey combined the annual compensation of both employees and contractors/consultants in determining average income, where the 2006 and 2007 STC Alberta surveys report the income of these two employment types separately. The combination of contractor and full-time employee compensation in 2002 may have falsely skewed the average income positively, resulting in an apparent drop between the 2002 and 2006 surveys.

Figure 1 summarizes the median salary reported in the STC Alberta and STC International surveys for Alberta and Canada over the past five years:

Figure 1. Median salary by year (Alberta and Canada)



Salary Survey Statistics

The percentiles used to analyze the data correspond to those of the STC International salary survey. Table 3 outlines the definitions of the terms used in the salary survey. Table 4 summarizes the survey data. Please note that categories with only a few responses are not statistically meaningful, and therefore not generalizable to the chapter membership as a whole.

Table 3. Survey definitions

Base	The total number of responses in a category.
Mean	The average of the tabulated values.
10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 90%	Percentile values. For example, in the 25% column, 25% of the responses were below this value; 75% were above this value.
50%	Also called the <i>median</i> because half the responses are above this value, and half are below this value.

Table 4. 2007 STC Alberta salary survey summary: full-time employees

	Base	%	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
All full-time employees	53 ¹	100	63,484	48,200	55,000	63,000	70,425	77,500
Employment Level								
Entry	6	11%	49,382	37,400	41,600	52,500	55,224	55,896
Mid-level, non supervisory	18	34%	56,658	40,000	48,750	58,000	65,000	70,400
Mid-level, supervisory	9	17%	62,682	50,140	55,250	61,000	70,250	80,000
Senior level, non-supervisory	14	27%	68,117	58,500	64,500	67,900	71,250	77,500
Senior level, supervisory	6	11%	88,451	60,000	69,000	81,000	117,176	120,706
Other	0	0%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post-Secondary Education Level²								
None specified/other	2		66,667	61,000	61,000	67,000	72,000	72,000
Certificate	26		63,834	42,450	55,172	63,500	72,500	78,500
Bachelor's/Applied								
Bachelor's	43		63,988	43,200	55,000	63,000	70,250	80,600
Postgraduate	4		66,450	57,000	59,500	67,400	72,450	74,000
Sex								
Female	45	85%	63,369	43,300	54,280	61,000	70,425	77,500
Male	8	15%	64,125	48,000	57,250	61,500	77,000	81,000
Technical Writing Experience (Years)								
<2	8	15%	52,175	37,400	42,000	52,500	57,250	74,000
2-5	13	25%	58,181	41,200	50,150	57,500	66,400	76,000
6-10	15	28%	63,025	54,737	59,000	63,000	67,000	72,600
11-15	14	26%	71,178	46,820	59,375	70,425	78,376	100,853
16-19	0	0%	—	—	—	—	—	—
>20	3	6%	83,000	61,000	61,000	72,000	116,000	116,000

1. One respondent made a data entry mistake in entering salary, so it has not been included in these calculations.
2. As respondents may hold more than one degree or certificate, percentages are not relevant.

Commentary

As seen in the 2006 survey, a large majority of the respondents has between two and fifteen years of experience in technical communications. However, in both cities the highest number of respondents reporting full-time work experience was in the “>20 years” category. This discrepancy might suggest those respondents who have worked full-time for more than 20 years have not worked in technical communications their entire careers.

The gender gap reported in the 2002 and 2006 STC Alberta surveys continues in 2007, but has narrowed considerably, with the mean salary for men (\$64,125) higher than that for women (\$63,369) by only 1.2%. Unlike in the 2006 survey, the percentage of women with more than 5 years experience in technical communications (57%), is nearly equal to the percentage of men with the same level of experience (60%), which may have resulted in the narrowed gap.

Of the 54 full-time employees who responded to the survey, 72% earn their income in Calgary, and 28% in Edmonton, which is largely reflective of the Chapter’s membership base. The mean (average) salary in Calgary was \$64,331, compared with \$61,125 in Edmonton. The two cities’ respondents reported similar years of technical communications experience (as seen in Table 5, below) with the exception of the “6-10 years” category, where a higher percentage was reported in Edmonton. The minor differences in the other categories, coupled with the significant difference in favour of Edmonton in the “6-10 year” category, do not provide a sufficient explanation why Calgary’s average salary was ~5% higher than Edmonton. It is possible that the difference is due to the economic boom that Calgary has experienced in recent years.

Table 5. Comparison of Calgary and Edmonton levels of technical communications experience: full-time employees

	< 2 Yrs	2-5 Yrs	6-10 Yrs	11-15 Yrs	16-19 Yrs	> 20 Yrs
Calgary	6 (15%)	10 (26%)	9 (23%)	11 (28%)	0	3 (7%)
Edmonton	2 (14%)	4 (21%)	6 (43%)	3 (21%)	0	0

Education Levels

As in the 2006 survey, respondents were asked to report on the levels of post-secondary education they have achieved, as well as the domain in which they received their education. This question allowed respondents to report on multiple diplomas/degrees and domain areas.

Table 6. Breakdown of education levels and domains

	Cert/Diploma %	Bachelor’s %	Master’s %	PhD %	Other %
Arts (other than English)	1	15	2	0	0
English	3	9	0	0	2
Info Tech / Comp Science	7	3	1	0	0
Science / Math / Eng	1	5	1	0	0
Tech.Comm	8	16	0	0	0
Other	11	9	0	0	1
Total	31	57	4	0	3

The largest concentration of post-secondary education is at the level of certificates/diplomas and bachelor’s degrees, with only a handful of respondents reporting graduate work or other forms of post-secondary education. Interestingly, the domain with the highest concentration of diplomas/degrees

reported is technical communication. The first graduates of Mount Royal College's Bachelor's Degree in Technical Writing (later updated to Technical Communications) entered the workforce in 1998, so it is not surprising that these graduates comprise an increasing proportion of STC members. This may indicate a trend toward a formal technical communication education as the primary entry point to the technical communication occupation.

Respondents who had no specified post-secondary education reported higher salaries than participants with certificates, bachelor degrees, or applied bachelor degrees. This disparity may be explained by the greater number of years of experience reported by respondents with no specified post-secondary education (Table 7). However, the small percentage of respondents (5.5%) in this category precludes any definitive analysis of this discrepancy.

Table 7. Post-secondary education and experience

Post-secondary education level	Percentage with more than 10 years' experience
Certificate	35%
Bachelor's/applied Bachelor's	30%
None specified/other	100%

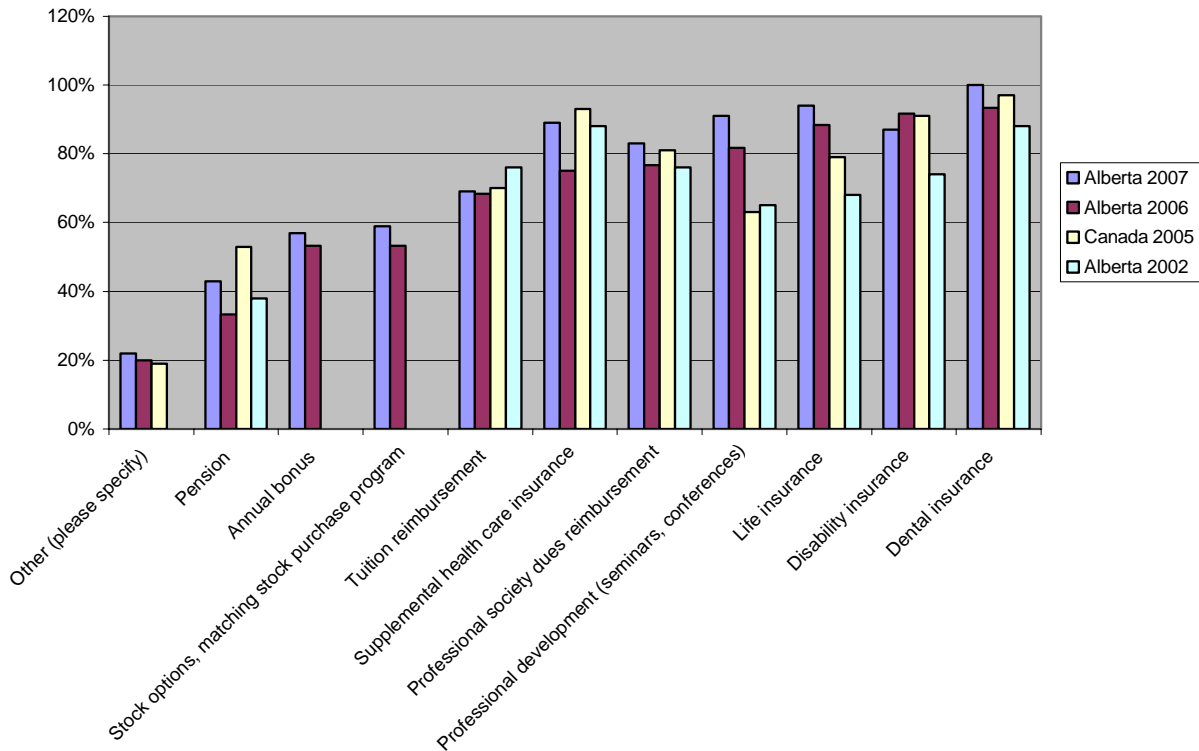
Employee Benefits

In general, the benefits received by Alberta members, with the exception of pension and supplemental health insurance, compare favourably with those of their Canadian counterparts (Figure 2, page 7). In fact, the trend is, for most of the benefits reported, an increase over what was reported in the 2006 survey.

Questions about annual bonus, stock options, stock purchase programs, and other benefits were asked in the 2006 and 2007 surveys, allowing for year-on-year comparison. Most of the benefits saw at least small increases, with those reporting pension (10%) and professional development (11%) benefits increasing the most, and a drop in those reporting disability insurance (-5%). Other benefits listed by the respondents included the following:

- Matching RRSP contributions to \$4,000 maximum
- Deferred profit sharing
- Fridays off during summer, week off between Christmas and New Year's
- Commissions
- Fitness club membership reimbursement, free yoga/pilates classes, workout facilities
- Flight benefits
- Onsite gym and Internet access
- Vision care
- Personal time off days as well as four weeks annual vacation

Figure 2. Benefits provided by employers



Conclusion

The median salary of the STC members who participated in this Alberta survey was about 8% higher than the median income reported by the 2005 international survey (Figure 1), which can probably be attributed to differences in methodology (Table 1). The difference between the 2006 and 2007 median salaries is only approximately 2%.

Thank you to all the STC Alberta members who took the time to participate in this survey. The high response rate of the 2006 and 2007 surveys indicates that the membership is comfortable participating in a survey hosted by an external site. This high response rate also enables more detailed and meaningful calculations, such as percentiles and cross-tabulations.