

Background

The Alberta Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) conducted an online salary survey of its members from September 15 through November 15, 2008. This document, *Part I*, summarizes the income statistics for full-time employees. *Part II* reports the statistics for contractors/consultants and part-time employees. Details of the survey methodology, response rates, summary statistics and general commentary are contained in this document.

STC International conducted world-wide salary surveys for full-time employees until 2005 and full-time consultant/contractor(s) until 2003. Detailed statistics were reported on a country-wide basis; only the median was reported for provincial region. STC Alberta originally launched its local survey to provide more detailed regional data. In 2006 STC discontinued the international surveys altogether, replacing them with a single salary database containing only U.S.A. data.

The lack of Canadian statistics in the STC salary database imbues additional relevance to STC Alberta's salary survey. 2008 marks the third year of this standalone significance. Salary statistics for all three years are summarized below in Table 1:

Table 1. Full-time employee salary summary 2006-2008

Year	Number of Respondents	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
2008	70	64233	55000	60000	64000	69750	78000
2007	53	63484	48200	55000	63000	70425	77500
2006	60	60075	46950	51125	60000	67250	75000

Survey Methodology

STC Alberta conducted a salary survey online from September 15, 2008 through November 15, 2008, hosted by www.surveymonkey.com. An invitation containing the survey link was emailed to the 205 registered STC Alberta members (as of September, 2008); participants opened the link to answer the survey questions. Membership participation was encouraged by announcements in the September, October, and November editions of *SuperScript*, as well as follow-up list email announcements.

The survey was anonymous; members were not asked to disclose identifying information (i.e., name or STC membership number). SurveyMonkey used cookie technology to help ensure each survey participant completed a single response.

The Survey was designed with three streams of questioning based upon employment type: full-time employee, part-time employee, or contractor/consultant. Each stream contained a subset of questions specific to the employment type specified. For example, full-time employees were asked about annual salary, whereas contractors/consultants were asked about hourly rate. All responses, regardless of employment type, were reported in Canadian dollar amounts. None were adjusted for inflation.

The results were imported into Microsoft® Excel® and statistically analyzed. The resultant analyses were forwarded to STC Alberta President, Jessie Channey for review in December, 2008. A two-part report, *STC Alberta 2008 Salary Survey Results*, comprised of *Part I: Full-time Employees* and *Part II: Contractors/Consultants and Part-Time Employees* was generated, and presented to the STC Alberta Executive for review and approval in January, 2009.

Response Rates, Inclusions and Exclusions

In 2008, 122 of 205 eligible STC Alberta members completed the salary survey for a raw response rate of 60%. Responses were received from full-time salaried employees, part-time salaried employees, and contractors/consultants (see Table 2). Certain of these responses were necessarily excluded from the final analysis, as discussed below and summarized in Table 2:

- The survey is intended to generate data specific to Alberta’s regional market. Responses from the Chapter members who reside outside of Alberta, or who earn the majority of their income outside of Alberta, were not included in the analysis.
- Also excluded were responses from student members (full-time students in a post-secondary program leading to a career in technical communication) because the salaries paid to students for the work term component of education programs are typically below market value.
- Finally, responses that were inconclusive, incomplete, or contained conflicting data were not included in the analysis.

Table 2. Response summary

Excluded responses	
Students	2
Inconclusive/Incomplete/Conflicting data	3
Out-of-province residents	8
Total excluded, or invalid, responses	15
Included responses	
Salaried full-time employees	70
Salaried part-time employees	6
Contractors/consultants	31
Total included, or valid, responses	107

Accounting for the above invalid responses yields a valid response rate of 52%, a 7.5% increase over last year’s valid response rate. Comparing the valid response rates for the past three years shows that participation in the STC Alberta salary survey has consistently increased: 2008 (52%), 2007 (44.5%), 2006 (39%).

This is good news for the membership, overall, as the survey provides data specific to the Alberta marketplace, information that is costly to acquire via other means.

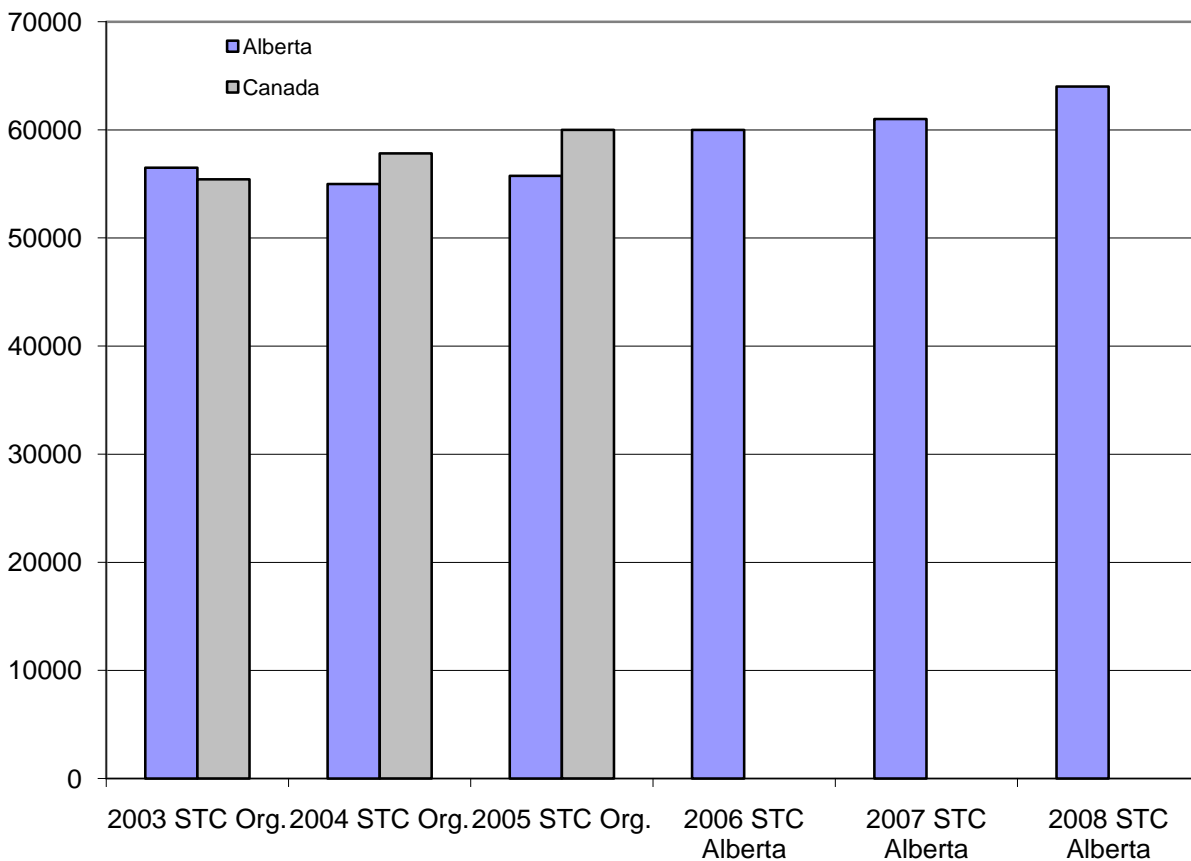
Results

This portion of the report, *STC Alberta Chapter 2008 Salary Survey Results*, is *Part I*, which summarizes the survey results for full-time employees. The results for consultants/contractors and part-time employees are reported separately in *Part II: Contractors/Consultants and Part-time Employees*.

Full-time employees reported a median salary of \$64,000 in 2008, a 4.9% increase over that of \$61,000 in 2007. The average (mean) salary reported was \$65,650, a 2.9% increase over that of \$63,484, higher than both the 2006 average salary (\$60,075) and the 2002 average salary (\$60,654).

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 Analysis

Terms used in the analysis are defined in Table 3. The data gathered in the survey is summarized in Table 4.

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.
Insufficient Data	Too few responses for statistical significance. Drawing conclusions would be speculative.

Table 4. 2008 STC Alberta salary survey summary for full-time employees

	Number of Respondents	%	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
All full-time employees	70	100	64233	55000	60000	64000	69750	78000
Employment level								
Entry	6	8.57	50725	40675	46263	55000	55000	56500
Mid-level, non-supervisory	31	44.29	61356	47500	53508	60000	65000	75000
Mid-level, supervisory	8	11.43	62250	52600	58750	64000	65750	70100
Senior level, non-supervisory	14	20.00	70166	50524	62000	69750	77000	83500
Senior level, supervisory	10	14.29	76670	64250	67650	78000	87125	89550
None Specified/Other	1	1.43	Insufficient Data					
Education*								
Certificate /Diploma	17	24.29	64006	48800	57500	62000	67200	76600
Bachelor/Applied Bachelor Degree	44	62.86	64053	47271	54750	62575	72000	87100
Master Degree	8	11.43	71500	60800	62000	68000	77000	83900
None Specified/Other	1	1.43	Insufficient Data					
Technical writing experience (years)								
<2	5	7.14	51470	40140	43350	55000	58000	61000
2-5	26	37.14	57661	47000	48800	55000	60750	70500
6-10	19	27.14	66139	58800	62000	64000	69500	78600
11-15	14	20.00	76014	62900	67050	77000	84875	89050
16-19	4	5.71	64879	56461	61629	65750	69000	72600
>20	2	2.86	90250	76050	81375	90250	99125	104450
Gender								
Male	22	31.43	61568	48560	57625	61500	64750	69900
Female	48	68.57	66090	47256	55000	64500	77000	85900
*Based on highest level of education achieved.								

Commentary

For the first time in this survey's history, the mean (average) salary reported for full-time salaried male employees was less than that of full-time salaried female employees. The average 2008 male salary was \$61,568; the average female salary \$66,090 – a 7% difference. This may be attributable to the female respondents reporting significantly more employment experience in technical communications than males (see Table 5). Sixty-three percent of females (30 respondents) have more than 6 years of employment experience specific to technical communications, compared to only 41% of males (9 respondents). Increased experience generally translates into higher compensation, which results in a higher average. More over, 54% of females (26 respondents) reported more than 20 years of overall work experience compared to only 14% of males (3 respondents). This suggests that more than half the female respondents transitioned to careers as technical communicators after spending time in other careers.

Table 5. Years of technical communication experience per gender

Technical communication experience	Females (48 respondents)		Males (22 respondents)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Less than 2	3	6.25	2	9.09
2-5	15	31.25	11	50.00
6-10	14	29.17	5	22.73
11-15	10	20.83	4	18.18
16-19	4	8.33	0	0
20+	2	4.17	0	0

The Chapter's membership demonstrates a broad base of experience, as most of the respondents (84%) reported between two and fifteen years of experience in technical communications.

Of the 70 full-time employees who responded to the survey, 66% earn their income in Calgary, 30% in Edmonton, 3% in Red Deer, and 1% in Lethbridge. Statistical analysis was not undertaken for Red Deer and Lethbridge due to the low number of responses. Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer reported technical writing experience predominantly in the 2 to 15 years range. Calgary's average salary remains the highest in the province, as was the case last year. Table 6 summarizes the Alberta urban area responses.

Table 6. Alberta full-time employees experience, urban area and average salary

Technical communication experience	Calgary	Edmonton	Red Deer	Lethbridge
Years	%	%	%	%
Less than 2	6.5	4.8	0	100
2 to 5	32.6	42.9	100	0
6 to 10	28.3	28.6	0	0
11 to 15	21.7	19.0	0	0
16 to 20	8.7	0.0	0	0
20+	2.2	4.8	0	0
Salary (Average)	\$66,931	\$60,679	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data

Education

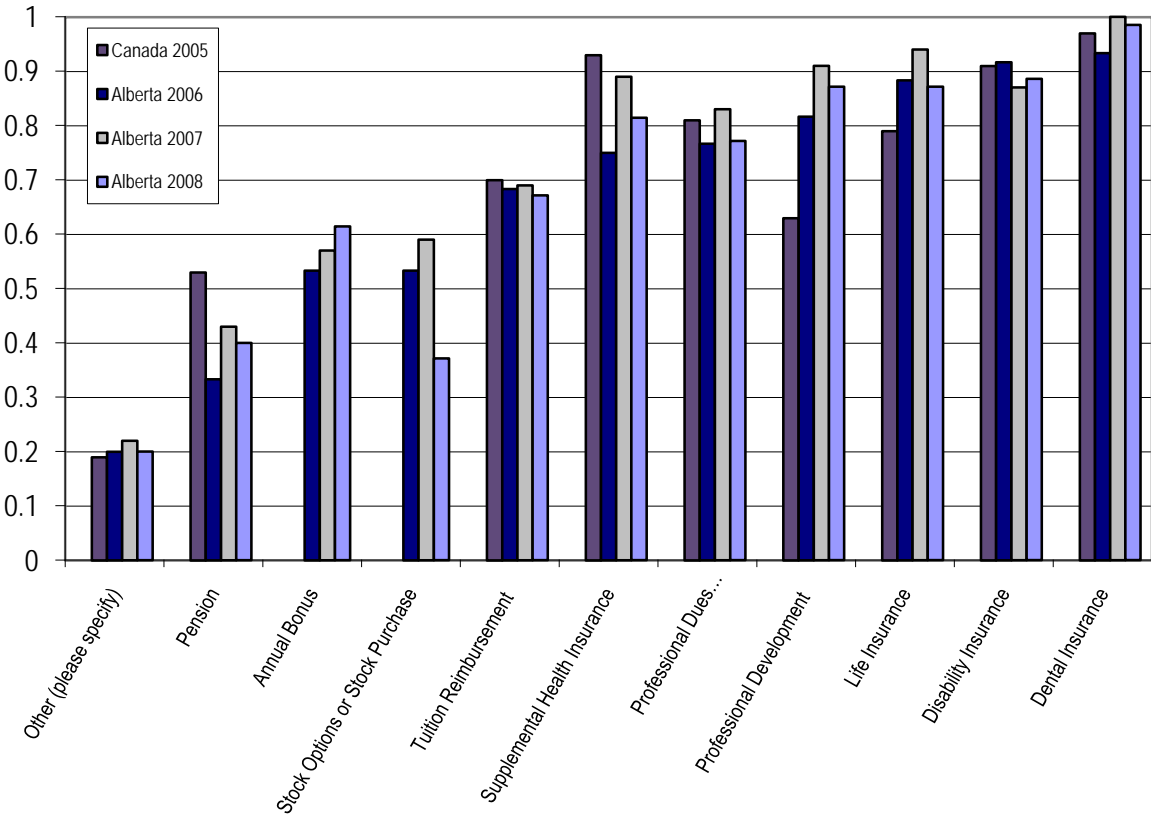
The majority of STC Alberta member’s reported education at the bachelor degree level (63%). Eleven percent (11%) have earned master’s degrees. The highest concentration of bachelor degrees (26%) was reported in Arts (English Major). Close to half of the respondents (43%) have completed some form of post-secondary education in the domain of Technical Communication, such as the certificates, diplomas and degrees offered at Mount Royal College and Grant MacEwan College. This data indicates a strong interest in professionalism and in Technical Communication as a planned career path.

Employee Benefits

In general, the benefits received by Alberta members continue to compare favourably with those of their Canadian counterparts, based on 2005 Canadian statistics (see Figure 2).

Questions about annual bonus, stock options, stock purchase programs, and other benefits were asked in the 2006, 2007 and 2008 surveys, allowing for year-on-year comparison (see Figure 2). The number of respondents reporting benefits decreased, ranging from a 2% decrease in those reporting tuition reimbursements to a 22% decrease in those reporting stock options or stock purchase plans. Annual bonuses, on the other hand, were offered to 61% of the respondents, a 4% increase over 2007.

Figure 2. Benefits provided by employers



Conclusion

Thank you to all the STC Alberta members who took the time to participate in this survey. The high response rate for the 2006, 2007 and 2008 surveys indicates an ongoing and increasing interest in participating in the survey.