

**Portland  
Independent  
Publisher  
Survey  
2024**

The Portland Independent Research Survey was a collaboration between Berm, Broccoli, Buckman, Lurch, and Provecho, with support from Critical Conversations.

Conducted between October 7, 2024 and December 1, 2024, the survey was distributed by email to known publications, through word of mouth, and via postcards dropped off at book stores and magazine shops in the Portland area.

This report, survey, and the materials generated were organized by Berm editors Michael Kurt and Wesley Muller. Report and Data Design by Wesley Mueller. Operations and Project support by Michael Kurt.

[berm.world](http://berm.world)

[buckmanjournal.com](http://buckmanjournal.com)

[broccolimag.com](http://broccolimag.com)

[instagram.com/lurchzine](https://www.instagram.com/lurchzine)

[readprovecho.com](http://readprovecho.com)

[tfff.org/visual-arts/critical-conversations](http://tfff.org/visual-arts/critical-conversations)

# Report Summary

The 2024 Portland Independent Publisher Survey was funded by a grant from Critical Conversations. This grant went towards paying a roundtable of Portland-based publishers for their time to generate thoughts and questions around the Portland publishing landscape. Survey questions were polled among participants and selected as the most interesting to gather information from the larger community of publishers about. Some open-ended questions were summarized into common bullet points.

As this is the first year of the survey, some questions did not fit neatly into easy, digestible metrics. In future surveys we will create two pathways for response: one for book publishers and one for magazine publishers. This will help to create a cleaner basis for questions about things like budgets and advertising.

The following report is meant to capture a point-in-time reference for how independent publishers conduct business, budget for their productions, and what kinds of systems they rely on to work.

## Who benefits from this report?

This report benefits anyone working, or wanting to work, in independent publishing, printing, distribution, or sales. As this report covers both book and magazine publishers, there should be some expectations

set that some answers about budget, print size, and advertising will not always apply to every situation. But we hope that this will encourage new and existing publishers to better understand the local market and opportunities for publishers in the Portland area.

## Will the report continue next year?

We hope so! This report will be most beneficial if it continues to track these topics across multiple years.

## Report Details

This survey was hand-promoted with the help of many friends and magazines. In the one-and-a-half month period the survey was opened for responses, we received twenty-one submissions.

The research summit was privately held at the Buckman offices in Portland, OR on July 13, 2024 and included one representative from the previously listed publications. Each participant was paid \$100 for their participation in the four hour meeting.

A \$1,000 grant from Critical Conversations was submitted by, and awarded to, Berm to fund this project. This was an unrestricted grant, which only required a short written report at the end of 2024.

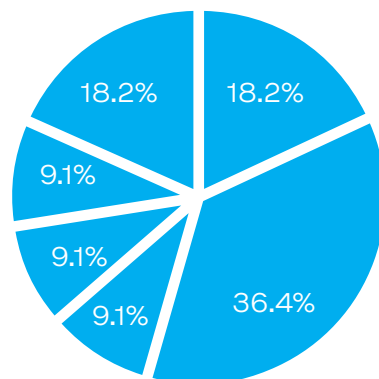
# Money

## Budget for Magazines

There are a lot of factors that go into the cost of producing a single issue of a magazine. For a handmade, stapled zine, costs may be low and involve more hands-on craft time to keep costs at a minimum. While for a larger, glossy magazine, significant costs go into design, printing, and packaging. If a magazine has contributors, it might need to pay artist fees or plan for royalty payments based on sales.

- 40% of magazine publishers have a **budget between \$500 - \$1,000** for each issue of they produce
- 20% of magazine publishers report a **budget of \$5,000+**

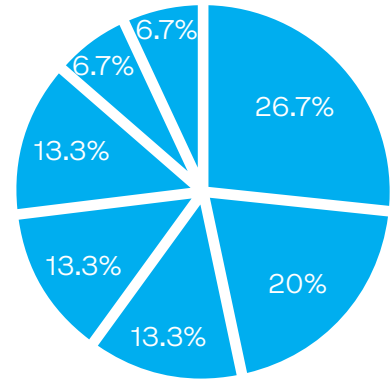
Under \$500	18.2%
\$500 - \$1,000	36.4%
\$1,000 - \$2,000	9.1%
\$2,000 - \$3,000	9.1%
\$3,000 - \$5,000	9.1%
\$5,000+	18.2%



## Budget for Book Publishers

Book publishing starts at a larger threshold for budgets: page counts are higher, print volumes are often higher, and elements like writing advances need to be considered. Book distribution, which will be covered in more detail later, also tends to have a higher cost due to the weight of books versus magazines.

Under \$1,000	20%
\$1,000 - \$2,000	26.7%
\$2,000 - \$3,000	6.7%
\$3,000 - \$5,000	13.3%
\$5,000 - \$7,000	13.3%
\$10,000 - \$15,000	6.7%
\$15,000+	13.3%



## What are the financial goals of independent publishers in Portland?

Publishers overwhelmingly responded that their goals were to break even and to be able to put any remaining funds towards creating their next publication(s). Other common goals were:

- Hire full time or additional contracted employees for day-to-day operations
- “Every book should pay for the next book”
- “To pay every author a substantial advance and be always financially solvent.”

## Payments to Contributors

### If you pay per page, how much do you pay?

Page rates are a common way to pay contributors for the work that appears in a magazine, journal, or anthology. By setting a page rate in the budget, a magazine may benefit from being able to accommodate for more experimental work that is not tied to a word-count.

\$157	1
\$100 - \$300	1
Varies	1
N/A	6

### If you pay contributors, what does your rate structure look like?

- Many magazine publishers reported they currently, or are in the near future, paying around \$100 per piece.
- Other models included rates structured around individual photographs used (\$10), or a per-poem rate (of \$25).
- Several responses also noted that they have not paid, or knowingly underpaid, contributors for their work and showed a desire to change that in future releases.

### Book Royalties

Royalty payments take different structures and are often determined by the print size and terms of the contract that is made between the book publisher and author(s).

- Book publishers pay royalties to contributors/authors and generally report basing royalties on a negotiated split between the publisher and author.
- Consensus among respondents was between 40-60% royalties paid to authors, based on the sales of the book.
- “We generally pay 50/50 after the cost of production as things sell, which looks more like 1/3rds most of the time.”

## Advertisement

Ads are an integral part of how many magazines are funded. They provided a sustainable model for pre-funding the production elements and the printing of a magazine. The way that advertisements work will vary depending on the size and frequency of a publication and the size and terms of the company that wishes to advertise.

### Are you ad supported?

- 10% said they **were** ad supported
- 75% said they **were not** ad supported
- 15% said they **would like to be** ad supported in the future

### How many pages of ads are in your magazine?

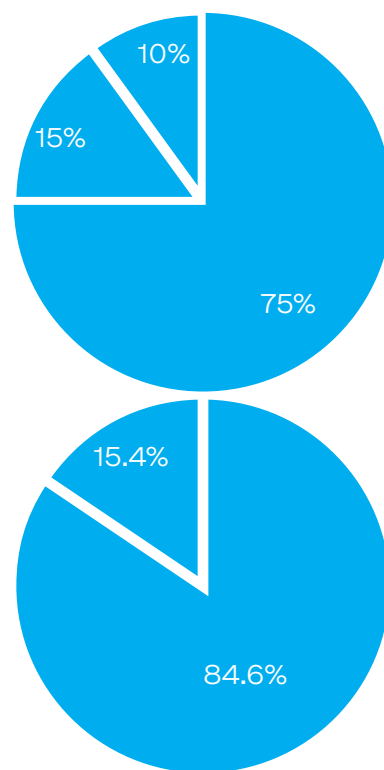
- Of 13 respondents, **84.6% reported they have zero pages of ads**
- Of 13 respondents, **15.4% report 6-10 pages of ads**

### What is your approximate ad rate?

- \$2,500
- \$500 for ½ page
- \$25 per ad

## Grant Funding

Grants are the lifeblood of many non-profit and arts organizations in Portland, but they are often time intensive to apply for and come with a lot of friction for new artists or publishers. In addition, grant funding often includes elements of reporting, demographic surveying, and extra work once awarded. Grants are also susceptible to underfunding and mismanagement because they often rely on being included in city or state budgets (for example, see: Portland).



In addition, there are two major pathways for grant funding: non-profit grants and project or artist-specific grants. Non-profit organizations are able to apply for larger funding opportunities and offer other tax incentives for large donors. Specific project or small organization grants (for organizations which do not hold a non-profit status) do not have tax incentives and are often smaller pieces of funding.

### Are you grant funded?

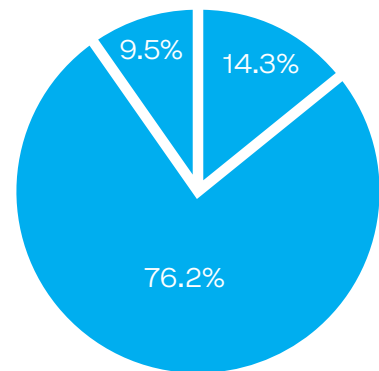
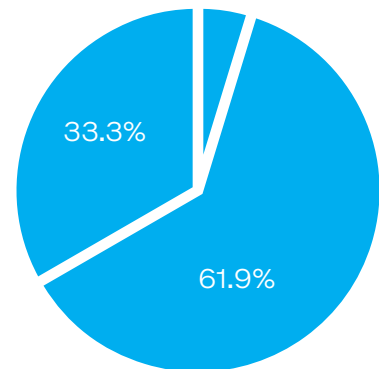
- 4.8% said **Yes**
- 61.9% said **No**
- 33.3% said **Sometimes**

### Does your organization hold a non-profit status?

- 14.3% said **Yes**
- 76.2% said **No**
- 9.5% said **We hope to in the future**

### What barriers have you encountered in the grant writing process?

- “Grants are time consuming”, many publishers reported as the number one reason they did not apply for them.
- “Time! Our team of two work full-time gigs elsewhere and we don’t have the time to take for research and well written applications for grants.”
- “It was a struggle at first to figure out how to write a grant. Luckily, I have seen examples from BERM, Portland Zine Symposium, and some other friend’s book grants to understand how they are written and can use them as a jumping off point.”
- “Since 2017 I have been awarded four competitive local grants (three solo and one with a collective). I enjoy



the grant writing process, but understand that not everyone feels this way.”

### Do you Pay Yourself?

Like many creative ventures, book and magazine publishing is often considered a “labor of love,” which means that the organizers and creators do not adequately pay themselves for their time and efforts. There are many factors that go into whether an organization can pay themselves for their efforts or not, but ultimately it comes down to the size of the budget for a project, the cost of printing, and being able to fairly pay contributors for their work.

- 85% said **No**
- 15% said **Yes**

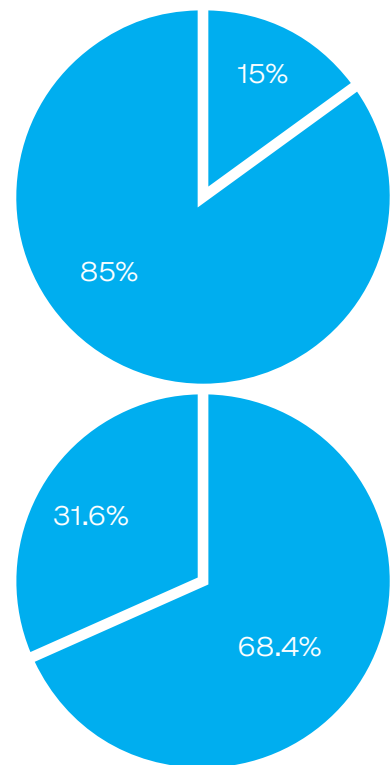
### Does your book, or any issue of your magazine, break even after sales?

To break even a book or magazine must make all of the money spent on production and payments to contributors back after sales.

- 68.4% said **Yes**
- 31.6% said **No**

### If you had extra time and money to improve your press, what would you do first?

- “Pay our contributors and ourselves!”
- “Hire an assistant; Pay contributors stipends upon acceptance”
- “I would bail on Ingram and self-distribute.”
- “I would send more postcards announcing the book. Postcards seem like a nice way to cut through the fog of the internet.”



# Distribution

## How do you distribute your releases (self, via distro, etc.)?

- 64% Self Distribution through web-site or social media
- 24% Use a Distributor
- 12% Self Distribute through a whole-sale service

## Do you consign copies of your book or magazine with stores?

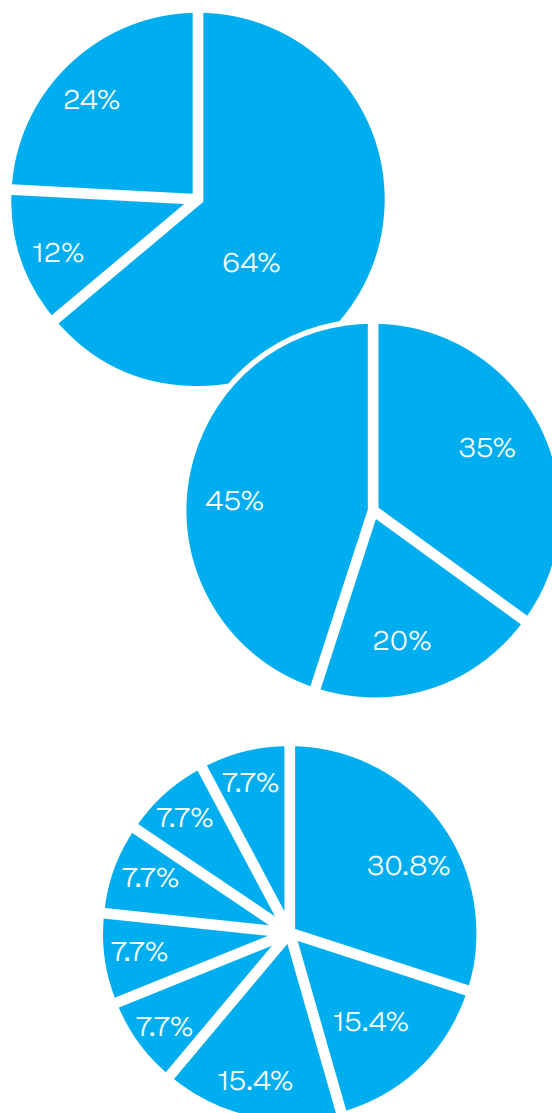
- 35% said **Yes**
- 20% said **No**
- 45% said **Sometimes**

## If you use a distributor, who do you use?

Ingram Spark	30.8%
Small changes	15.4%
Faire	15.4%
MMS	7.7%
NYU	7.7%
Bookazine	7.7%
New Leaf	7.7%
Asterism	7.7%

## If you sell in stores, what kind of stores do you sell in?

- Independent book sellers (art book stores, newsstands, boutique stores) were the most common answer to where independent publishers sold their publications.
- In Portland, specific call outs included: Hi Books, Chess Club, Floating World, Powell's Books, Broadway Books, Nationale, and Bishop & Wilde.
- Book or Zine Fairs



- “We sell in one bookstore. We are currently subscriber driven, but are experimenting with more ways to sell.”

## Printing

Of the many concerns we covered during the Portland Independent Publisher’s summit in 2024, printing was at the forefront of a lot of people’s mind. This largely had to do with the lack of affordable printing services for magazines and books within the United States. The variety of print options, methods, and ability to print at low quantities can all play a role in how a magazine is constructed, budgeted, and for which price it will sell to the public.

### Do you print in the US?

- 84.2% said **Yes**
- 15.8% said **No**

### Do you print local to Portland

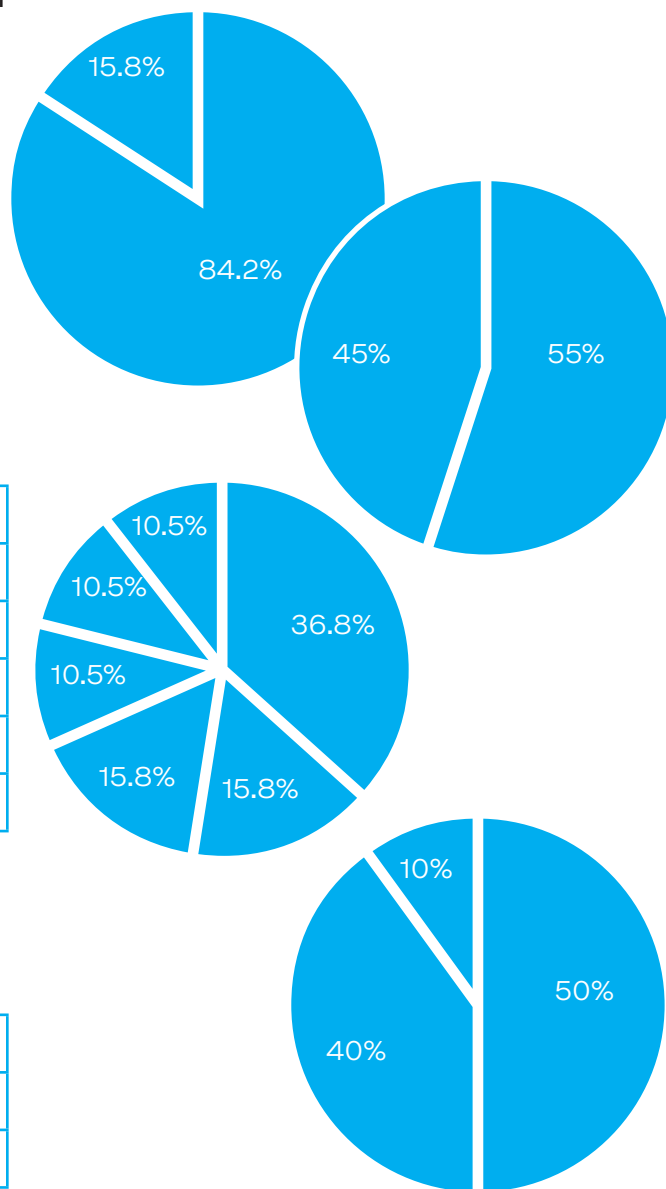
- 55% said **Yes**
- 45% said **No**

### What volume do you print at?

50-100	10.5%
100-200	36.8%
200-300	10.5%
300-500	10.5%
500-1000	15.8%
2000+	15.8%

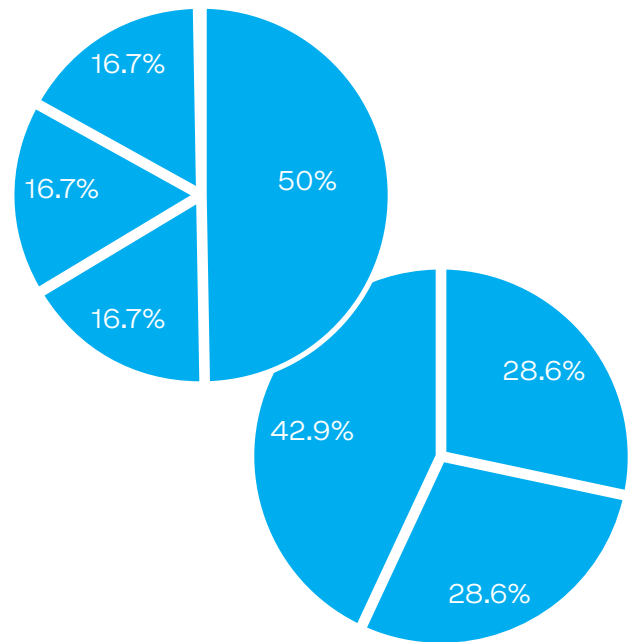
### For magazines: What is your approximate printing cost for each copy?

\$1-5	50%
\$5-10	40%
\$10-20	10%



### For books: What is your approximate per-book print cost?

\$1-5	50%
\$5-10	16.7%
\$10-15	16.7%
\$20-25	16.7%



### Do you reprint after the first run?

- 42.9% said **Yes**
- 28.6% said **No**
- 28.6% said **Sometimes**

### What type of printing do you do? (e.g. digital, offset, photocopying, etc)

- Offset Printing
- Print on Demand
- Digital Printing
- Risograph
- Letterpress
- “Ye olde photocopier”

### How do you find a printer?

Responses for this question varied and were hard to generalize. Below are a few common answers:

- “Solicitations”
- Asking other publishers
- Searching online
- Photocopier
- Brother HL-L3270CDW
- Risograph printers
- From the 2023 Portland Book Fest

### What is your average size / page count per release?

- Publishers who create works with higher page counts averaged around 147 pages, with the largest page count

reported as 649 pages.

- Publishers of shorter works, or magazines, responded with an average of 40 pages per release.
- The lowest page count reported was six pages

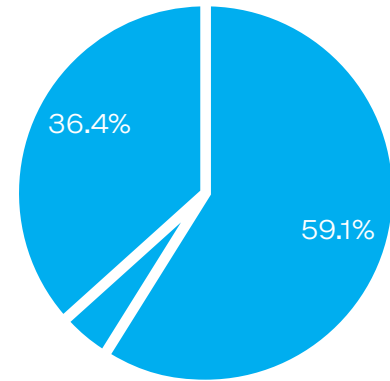
## Process and Operations

### Year over year, are you growing?

- 59.1% said **Yes**
- 4.5% said **No**
- 36.4% said **A little!**

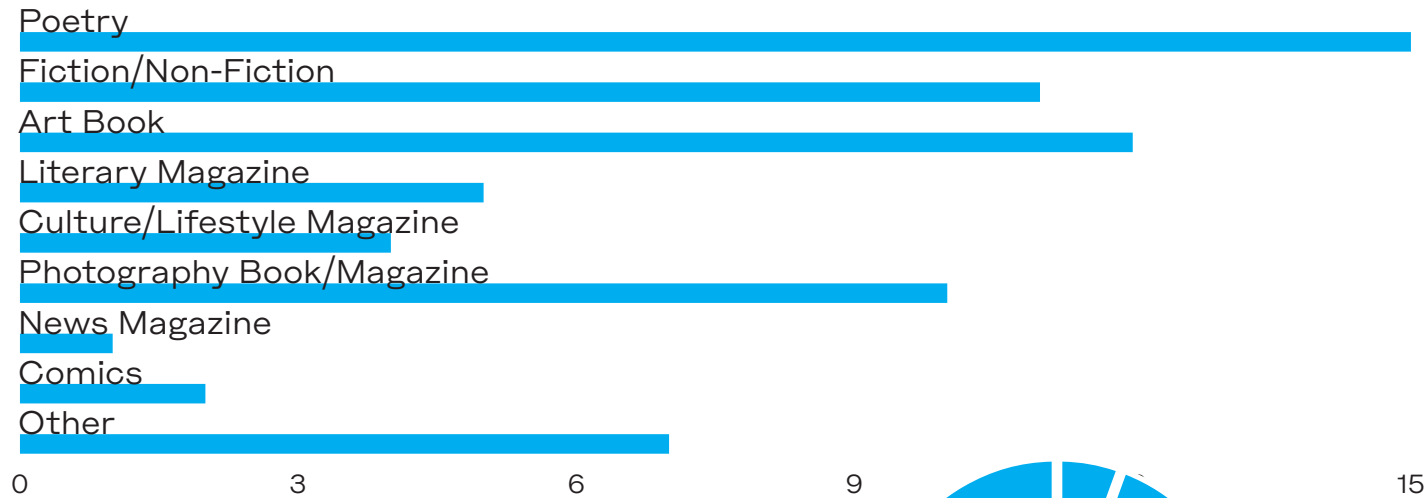
### What does growth mean to you?

- “Publishing more books with more confidence that our process is easier, the end result is more beautiful, and that more people are aware of our work, whether through wholesale, in-person fair sales, or through social excitement.”
- “Being able to do the next book/publication in the right size edition. I’d like to recoup whatever investment I have made in a publication within a year or two. I dread having a stack of books around my house for years.”
- “Working with better known artists to that we can continue to support less well-known artists”
- “Expanding the diversity of our catalog, bringing in editors from wider geographic area in PNW”
- “For me, growth means having the ability to do more with our



zine (page count-wise, new contributors, new mediums,) connect with more zinesters/artists, and being able to make the project financially stable to move forward.”

What kinds of publications do you publish? (poetry, art book, lit mag, etc)



How often do you release?

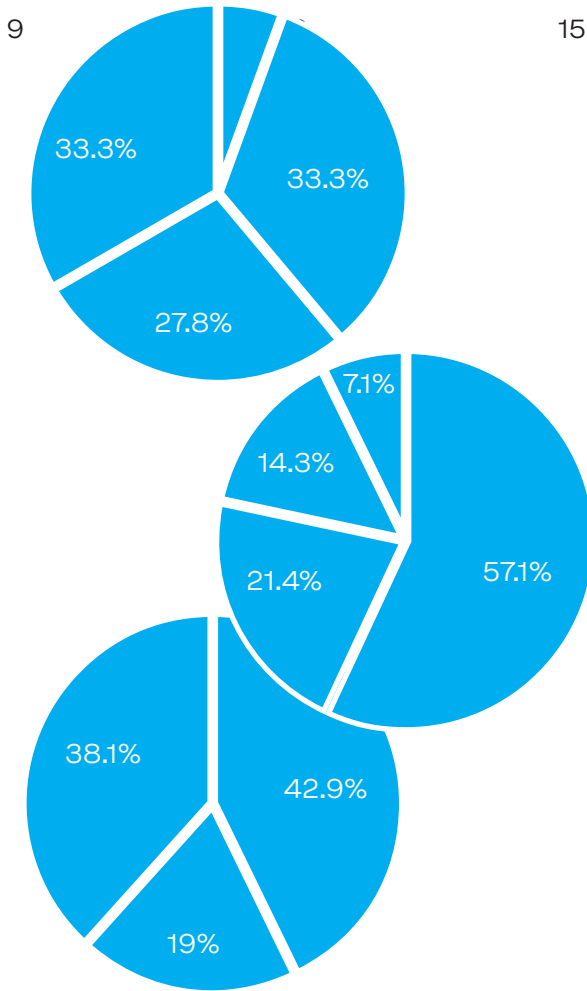
Weekly	5.6%
Quarterly	33.3%
Twice-Annually	27.8%
Annually	33.3%

How many contributors do you aim for in each publication?

1-5	57.1%
5-10	21.4%
20-30	14.3%
30+	7.1%

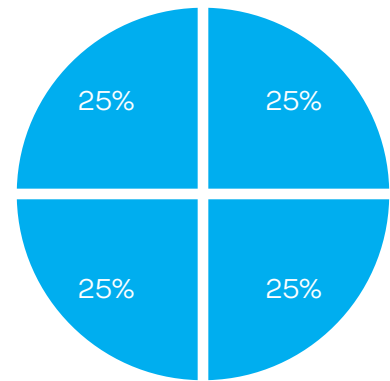
Do you take submissions?

- 42.9% said **Yes**
- 19% said **No**
- 38.1% said **Sometimes**



## If you take submissions, how many do you get per open period?

1-10	25%
50-100	25%
100-200	25%
200+	25%

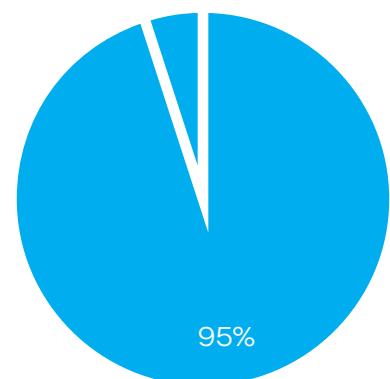


## What is your target audience?

- “People who like printed matter”
- “Independent comic & art book readers”
- “People interested in image / text works and people interested in an art book format.”
- “Readers interested in off-kilter books.”
- “People who are curious about food and love magazines.”
- “Artists and art academics interested in glossy designed magazines”
- “Anyone who loves queer drag artistry! Anyone who loves DIY and self-initiated projects and FUN!”

## Do you think about the demographics of your contributors? (race, gender, cultural representation, etc)

- 95% said **Yes**
- 5% said **No**



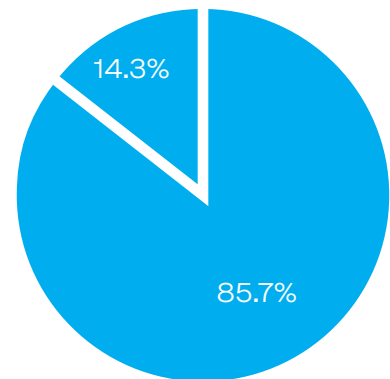
## What other media do you produce? (meaning: non-printed media like shirts, designed goods, etc.)

- Art prints (Riso, letterpress, other)
- Stickers

- Hats
- Tote bag(s)
- Patches
- Postcards
- T-shirts
- Tarot decks
- Music (records, CDs, digital albums)
- Buttons
- Bookmarks
- Drink Koozies

## Do you use social media for promotion?

- 85.7% said **Yes**
- 14.3% said **Sometimes**



## If you have a release party or event, what is the purpose of the release event? (sell books, promote artists, etc.)

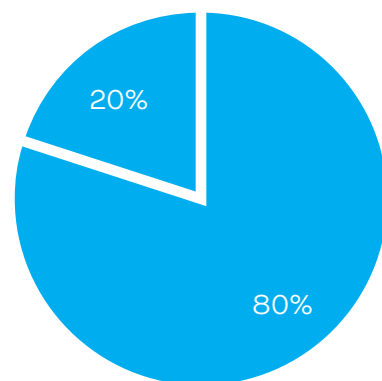
- “Increase an overall sense of community around small press publishing & local arts”
- “Promote the artists’ work and help them find likeminded folks”
- “Sell books and promote artists! I also had to have a public event to meet the requirements of a RACC grant that provided partial funding.”
- “To hear the writer read their work, hear other writers read their work, and also sell the new book.”
- “The zine and event are both part of a dynamic body of work. Contributors/performers use the release event to create performance elements for their zine piece. We also release the issue there.”

# Working As A Publisher

Independent publishing, as we have seen in this survey, is often a labor of love and survives on personal drive. This leads to an interesting dichotomy between passion and creating a sustainable work situation for professionals operating independently from large organizations or corporations.

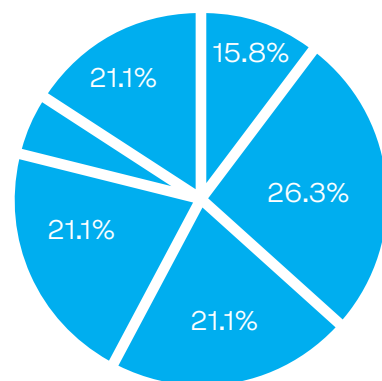
## Do you work as a publisher full time?

- 80% said **No**
- 20% said **Yes**



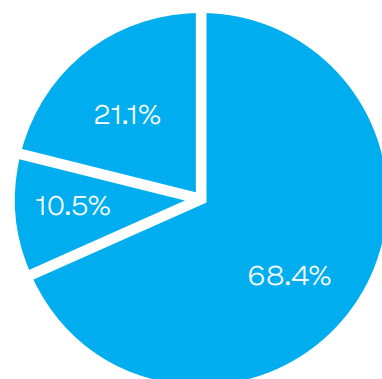
## How many hours per week do you work on publishing projects?

1-3 hours	10.5%
Less than part time	26.3%
Part time	21.1%
Between part time and full time	21.1%
Full time	5.3%
More than full time	15.8%



## Do you want publishing to be your full time job?

- 68.4% said **Yes**
- 10.5% said **No**
- 21.1% said **Maybe**

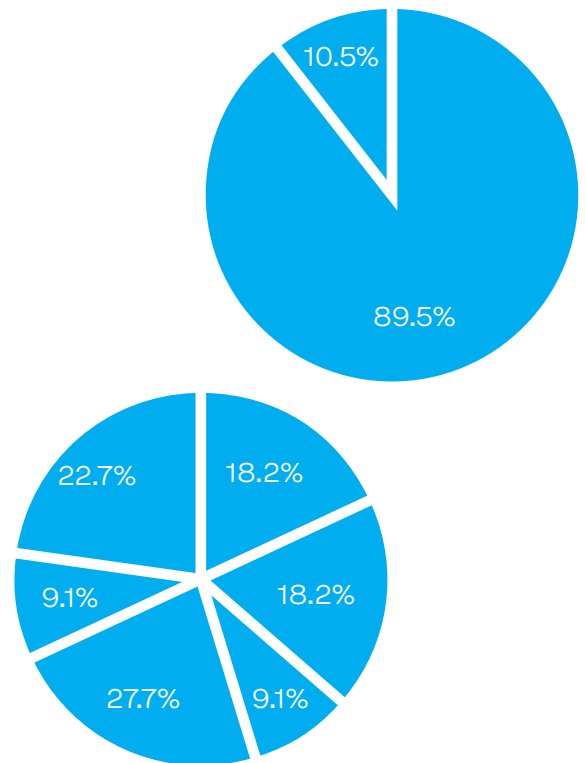


## Do you have full time team members?

- 10.5% said **Yes**
- 89.5% said **No**

## How long have you been publishing?

1-2 years	18.2%
2-4 years	18.2%
4-6 years	9.1%
6-10 years	22.7%
10-15 years	9.1%
15+ years	27.7%

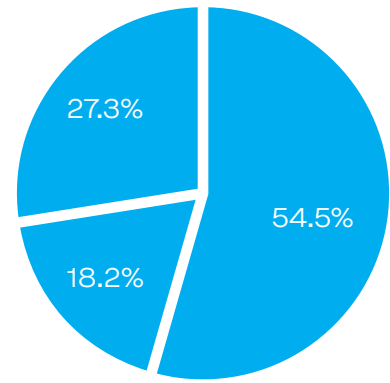


## How do you organize the roles of your team?

- “We have a tiered hierarchy”
- “There are only 2 of us and we collaborate based on interest and availability per project”
- “We try to be jacks of all trades, right now it’s just me. . . and I am a photographer, editor in chief, graphic designer, social media manager, accountant. The other current team member is . . . lead photographer, photo editor, and also helps with page design.”
- “There are three of us. We are friends. We make decisions according to the context, and a deep understanding and appreciation for each other’s strengths and insights.”
- “Informal structure. I do most of the admin/promoting/organizing/curating and folks fill in when they’re able based on their interest.”

## Did you have experience in design before starting your press/magazine?

- 54.5% said **Yes**
- 18.2% said **No**
- 27.3% said **A little**



## Wrapping It Up

### Anything else?

At the end of the survey, we asked if there were any other questions or areas respondents would like us to cover. Below are a few responses:

- “We have taken a long break due to our day jobs and needing to pay our bills! Not sure how publishing can be full time or even part time without real funding. But we are determined to help keep print alive and love collaborating with and supporting artists while doing it.”
- “As an artist, my work in publishing and printed matter ebbs and flows. To be honest, I am concerned about rising prices in the printing industry and the cost-effectiveness of publishing small runs. It was really nice to be able to work with a local printer for my book, but it meant that my book costs ~\$22/unit.”
- “We have been applying for some grants! We hope that we can pay our interviewees this next issue if we are given grants.”

## What is your favorite part of making a magazine or book?

- Seeing the artist's face when they look at a physical copy of their work in their hands for the first time, trimmed and finalized.
- Concept and design
- Fan mail
- Working with authors.
- Thinking through all of the design decisions is both exhausting and exhilarating. I also made an index for my book and found indexing to be very satisfying.
- Collaboration and getting the title in the world.
- Connecting with our niche community through events or online. Also seeing young people really resonating with it. Daydreaming concepts is honestly the most fun and exciting.
- Gathering content and the puzzle of the layout.
- Coming up with the idea, drawing, holding the book in the end and sharing it.
- Having it to validate what I do (oh you're a writer? That must be so fun, what's your job?)
- This is a really hard question to answer. I can't honestly say I have a favorite part. I love building an initial concept until it seems significant enough to create a book around. With one of my authors, the design process is an absolute riot, which I don't think I've

ever said about any design process with anyone ever. I enjoy designing my own publications a lot, especially if it's a collaborative process with other designers or artists. I love talking about / looking at books with other book artists, writers, designers, booksellers, and small press publishers.

- Getting to work with amazing artists and writers and collaborating to create something new
- Designing the zine pop ups or writing the poetry
- When the concept forms up
- The sequencing and image pairing.
- The element of collaboration, and then seeing it finished!
- Curating the issues and designing each print.
- Laying out all of the things. I also love the business side of things.
- My favorite aspect is collaborating with other creators and cultivating community through events, fests, etc.

## Independent Publishing Resources

Listed here are a few commonly recommended independent publishing resources in Portland.

### Education

- Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC)
- Literary Arts Oregon
- Outlet
- Sonny's House
- Zine Fairs or Events
- Books With Pictures Comic Fair
- Form.A
- Portland Book Fest
- Portland Indie Book Fair
- Portland Zine Symposium

### Printers

- Brown Printing
- Container Corps
- Minuteman Press
- Phoenix Media
- Secret Room Press

### Art Book Stores

- Benchmark
- Chess Club
- The City Reader
- Hi Books
- Indent
- Secret Room Press

### Book Stores

- Belmont Books
- Bishop & Wilde
- Broadway Books
- Lost Avenue Books
- Mother Faucolt Books
- Up Up Books

### Grants

- TheFordFoundation(Including: Critical Conversations)
- The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation
- MCCC Community Cultural Participation Grant Program
- Oregon Book Award - Publisher's Fellowship grants
- PICA Precipice Fund
- Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC)





