



Transcript from the Freelance Friday #EFAChat, May 27, 2016

Topic: Estimating Editorial Freelance Work

- @EFAFreelancers Welcome to the Freelance Friday tweet chat! Use hashtag #EFAchat to be included in today's transcript.
- @EFAFreelancers Today's #EFAchat is being moderated by @spencerProofs, a copyeditor from Northwest Indiana.
- @EFAFreelancers This #EFAchat will cover estimating editorial freelance projects.
- @EFAFreelancers #EFAchat We'll use Q1, Q2, etc. for questions; please use A1, A2, etc. for your answers to each question.
- @EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Let's introduce ourselves. Where are you from, and what do you do?
- @jamesfraleigh 7-yr+ freelance CE and proofreader based in NE NJ; mostly book editing and proofing, usually nonfiction. #efachat
- @WBEditor Freelancers! A good time to get answers to the eternal question of HOW MUCH. #EFAChat
- @Work_and_Words Joining #EFAChat, I'm Nicole--academic editor from Toronto and bringing greetings from @editorscanada . Mute me or join in :)
- @WBEditor #EFAchat Hello from Vancouver BC!
- @akmac_ed Hello! Freelance editor/writer here from Washington, DC area. #EFAChat
- @agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers I'm a full-time freelance editor (mostly books, mostly nonfiction) from Oakland, CA. #EFAchat
- @wisekaren @EFAFreelancers Freelance copyeditor/proofreader in Boston. Mostly trade nonfiction, especially cookbooks. #EFAchat
- @callwordsmith @EFAFreelancers Minnesota. I'm a freelance writer who specializes in content for small businesses and startups. :) #EFAChat
- @WBEditor #EFAchat Whoops—and I edit just about everything except mathy stuff: fiction, nonfic, academic, business, you name it.
- @chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers Chrissie, freelance editor in Calgary and co-ordinator @editorscalgary #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat More work for less money stinks. Learn best practices for estimating before you run into a difficult RFP.

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q1: Forget about simple articles and text-only documents for an hour. What was your most complicated project?

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers A1: Projects w uncooperative authors aside, the most complicated was an interactive map w/ essay & image components.#EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers Hello, @jamesfraleigh, @Work_and_Words, @agirlandaboy, @wisekaren, @callwordsmith, @WBEEditor, and @chrissie_mains ! #EFAchat

@jamesfraleigh A1 A massive genetics-textbook edit for which I had to redo all of the many citation numbers AND insert new cites. Manually. #EFAchat

@WBEEditor #EFAchat A1: Mine have been mostly text, with some visual elements that bring out the Evil Twin in Word.

@Work_and_Words #EFAchat most complicated project was combination content editing/writing for Med tech website. clients wouldnt talk specifics (\$, time, etc

@jamesfraleigh A1 There was precedent for simply adding them in using [lastnote+1], [lastnote+2], etc. Prod ed, managing ed both liked; AU nixed. #EFAchat

@jamesfraleigh A1 In retrospect, it was an exercise in bibliographic complexity not unlike the process of spinning DNA from base pairs. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Screwy citations, evil Word-ness, and nonspecific instructions - oh my! Good stuff.

@chrissie_mains A1 My most complicated project was my first: editorial assistant on a book project with 3 editors, lots of changes #EFAchat

@callwordsmith @EFAFreelancers An international video project to be directed and coordinated by me and put onto DVD to be sent to a celebrity. Ooofa.

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q2: What was your worst case of scope creep? Could you have estimated it differently to save your profits?

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat @chrissie_mains So were three editors better than one, or were there "too many cooks"?

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers Too many cooks! Senior editor couldn't get the hang of one master copy #EFAchat

@jamesfraleigh A2 An edit job for an ESL author's 400-pp book, which he'd electronically translated from French into tortured Academe/English. #EFAchat

@jamesfraleigh A2 I was editing AND translating impossibly tortured and overly formal Francophone-structured sentences into human-readable text. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains Q2 Scope creep: When the client thinks all editing is proofreading. Always clarify actual work expected, in detail #EFAchat

@wisekaren Q2: I'm currently up to my eyeballs in one! A new client offered an acceptable-sounding flat rate, but scope has crept...! #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q3: What do you look for when evaluating and estimating a project?

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers So there were three different versions of the book on the go, and no one knew which was the best #EFAchat

@wisekaren Q2: I greatly prefer being paid by the hour for this very reason: I know I will be paid for my time regardless of scope creep! #EFAchat

@Work_and_Words #EFAchat Word count, deadline, and I also ask for a writing sample to see the quality of writing

@chrissie_mains @wisekaren I'm coming around to that way of estimating, definitely. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat @jamesfraleigh ESL can be challenging to estimate! You must have run into a rash of Franglish.

@Work_and_Words #EFAchat A3: If writing needs a lot of work I estimate <5 pgs/ hr. If it's pretty good, more pgs per hour. Try to base my estimate on that

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers A3: The personality of the people I'll be working with definitely influences my fee. "Difficult" authors = \$\$\$\$\$\$. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains Q3 I agree with @Work_and_Words about seeing a writing sample first. #EFAchat

@jamesfraleigh A3 A completed project. Fully written book, completely typeset proofs. I only take serial/partial work from institutional clients. #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers A3: I also ask myself what it's worth to me. I might charge more for something I'm not excited abt. Keeps resentment at bay.

@jamesfraleigh @EFAFreelancers It was early in my FL career, so I was partly hungry & partly incautious. But I did well enough to get repeat biz! #EFAchat

@jamesfraleigh @chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers Oh, this is one of my nightmares.
#EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat @jamesfraleigh How did the ESL project go? Did your quote cover the extra time or did you lose money on that one?

@callwordsmith @EFAFreelancers A3: Any time-consuming elements that will cause an average project to take longer. I weigh those with my base price.
#EFAChat

@WBEditor #EFAchat A3: Complete manuscript. Quality of writing. Word count. Au competency with Word, Au personality. Au understanding of process.

@jamesfraleigh @EFAFreelancers Quoted a flat rate that should've been higher. My effective hrly rate was...low. Should've dug further into the book.
#EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q4: What types of projects are the hardest to estimate?

@WBEditor #EFAchat A4: Anything I haven't done before in format, subject, industry.

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers Q4: Ones with incomplete text! #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @WBEditor Yes, author understanding of the process and the tools makes such a big difference: less hassle=better value #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q4 part 2: What are your red flags that tell you to take extra time with the estimate?

@jamesfraleigh A4 Auxiliary products for books, such as tests, summaries, online extras, and the like. Little experience with those. #EFAchat

@WBEditor #EFAchat A4: also. in retrospect, the ones where I gave the au the benefit of the doubt only to have them become awful to work with.

@jamesfraleigh A4 (But often it makes the most sense for the editor to take them if they've just been absorbing their book, so I always say yes.) #EFAchat

@callwordsmith A4: Projects with extensive research, especially medical articles. It's hard to estimate when some resources may be lengthy. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers A4: I'm finding it hard to estimate for new authors of e-pub fiction: not much appreciation of the value of editing #EFAchat

@WBEditor #EFAchat A4 pt2: Au's urgency esp if unexplained or illogical. Slow response from au.

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q5: Levels of editing: do you charge differently for proofreading, heavy editing, fact-checking, etc?

@Work_and_Words #EFAChat A4 I find it difficult to give good estimates in a consultation over phone, versus email. I'm likely to 2nd guess/ undercut myself

@callwordsmith @EFAFreelancers A4: When the buyer is vague on the details. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth to get specifics. #EFAChat

@chrissie_mains @Work_and_Words A4: Good point: Email gives you time to think, the phone feels rushed #EFAchat

@wisekaren I don't often do books w/ lengthy bibliographies/references, so when those suddenly show up, I know things will slow down big time. #EFAchat

@WBEEditor #EFAchat A4 pt 2: also frequent au assertion of the quality of their work and words.

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers A4: Lack of organization usually means I end up putting in extra time for project management, so I charge for that. #EFAchat

@callwordsmith A5: Most definitely! More work means more pay and added value to the process. #EFAChat

@jamesfraleigh A5 Yes indeed for different levels of edits. Proofing I charge more for reading against MS or for larger/denser pages. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat @Work_and_Words @chrissie_mains Email estimates also give written proof of who said what, and when!

@chrissie_mains @agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers That's a great tip, thanks. #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers Learn from my mistakes! :)

@WBEEditor #EFAchat A5: Not so far. The variable in my equation is speed, usually. Proofreading usually goes faster, dev edit slower.

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers I have, but it's another reason I'm considering an hourly rate. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat @callwordsmith Great point about getting specifics. Ask as many questions as you need to before giving a firm quote!

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q6: Some editing tasks take longer than others. What's your Achilles heel? References? PDFs? Proofreading on paper?

@wisekaren My favorite setup is when client pays hourly rate but tells me how many hours they expect it to take. Then we're all on the same p. #EFAchat

@WBEEditor #EFAchat A6: References, tables, figures, charts, captions.

@wisekaren Q6 I LOVE proofing on paper—it's faster than PDF markup & nice to get away from the screen! I don't do refs much, so I LOATHE them. #EFAchat

@Work_and_Words @wisekaren #EFAChat but how do the clients know how long the editing process or your personal work pace will take?

@wisekaren .@Work_and_Words I work mostly with traditional publishers, so this is all they do. :) #EFAchat

@callwordsmith A6: Language barriers. #EFAChat

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers A6: Checking references takes longer if the author wasn't careful; I have to check them myself, much more time #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers @wisekaren Excellent advice: always ask about time limits when using hourly rates. Be respectful of the client's budget. #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers Q5: Historically, yes, but I'm at the point now where my time is worth X amount, so in some cases I charge that regardless.

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q7: How do you mark up text that you can't edit directly (images, PDFs, etc.)?

@jamesfraleigh A6 Proofing poorly edited references on paper. So many marks...so little space. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @wisekaren The tech makes some tasks easier, but complicates others, definitely. #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers Q5: This helps guard against "proofreading" projects that turn out to be heavy edits with fact-checking. #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers Q5: Charging hourly means I'll get paid more for harder work anyway because it will take longer. #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers A6: Having to collaborate with a team instead of a single author. #EFAchat

@wisekaren Q7 For PDFs I use Adobe Acrobat Reader DC. It is SO much better than Acrobat Pro. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers Yes! Back to the too many cooks problem. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q7, part 2: Different techniques take longer than others. What's the fastest way to edit text in images or PDFs?

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q8: What's the best way to estimate project management duties (coordinating docs/people)? Hourly? Flat rate?

@jamesfraleigh A7 For PDFs: Stickies, text boxes, and comments directly on markup elements. Sometimes stamps with marginal marks for clarity. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @wisekaren Just getting used to this but yes, so far, much better! #EFAchat

@wisekaren Q7 I've gotten pretty good at "writing" with the mouse in Acrobat; I have a tablet & stylus but am still not great with it! #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers Q7: I prefer to print things out and mark the hard copy.

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q9 Estimating: what do you wish you had known when you first started freelancing?

@callwordsmith @EFAFreelancers A9: That my writing is worth more than I was selling it for. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers A9: I wish I had known the importance of contracts and explaining to clients how valuable my time is #EFAchat

@agirlandaboy @EFAFreelancers A9: Build in hours for all the stuff that's not strictly editing: author wrangling, coordinating with the publisher, etc.

@jamesfraleigh A9: Charge enough to cover intro emails, the estimate itself and all the other elements of the job besides edits—turn the meter on! #EFAchat

@WBEditor #EFAchat Ditto @jamesfraleigh.

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat Q8 part 2: Be prepared to quote on project management if needed - don't just "throw it in". This is billable time!

@wisekaren A9 You spend a good amount of time running your business—and not getting paid for it. #EFAchat

@chrissie_mains @@EFAFreelancers @jamesfraleigh Yes, another thing I wish I'd thought of earlier! Don't just think of the word-wrangling part. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat @chrissie_mains It's not always easy to justify the extra value to clients, is it? What's your secret?!

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers So far, I don't have a secret! Lots of queries, lost when I quote. #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat We didn't get specific on the mechanics of estimating, but we did highlight a lot of red flags to watch for!

@EFAFreelancers #EFAchat And that's the key to estimating difficult projects - pay attention to potential time-eaters.

@chrissie_mains @EFAFreelancers Thanks, everyone. Great chat! #EFAchat

@EFAFreelancers A full transcript of this #EFAchat will be available on the EFA website soon.

@EFAFreelancers It's time to end today's #EFAchat. The written transcript will end here. Thanks for a great discussion! See you next time.