AAI&S 1993 the profile of the members

At the time of last year's conference, a questionnaire was sent out to all members of the association in order to gather information about the people making up the AAI&S.

The questions were very basic - for example - where people worked - for how long - types of illustration produced etc. The aim was to give AAI&S council a clearer idea of the make-up of the association and the variety within it. It was previously unknown as to how many of our members work on a freelance basis, or even how many are actually employed as illustrators. With a membership of just over 200, how much variety can there be?

After the initial input from participants at the 1992 conference, replies gradually arrived. In all, from 232 questionnaires sent out to all on the membership list in 1992, there were 93 responses. A percentage of just over 40%. Because there is no information on which to test the results, it must be remembered that they are based on partial information, and cannot be seen as averages, or be fully representative of the association. What it does do however, is to give a guide to the type of people who are members of the AAI&S and provides at least some information on which to build.

Male or Female?

42 male versus 51 female. A fairly even split, but what was interesting was that twice the number of female self-employed members replied than male. Is this a reflection of womens' need to find employment at home on the arrival of a family, or is it that in archaeology women are finding self-employment preferable to continual short term contracts?

Age Ranges

There is an even representation of ages in the replies, with only a slight bias on the 30-40 range. The membership of the association in this respect, therefore seems evenly balanced.

Employers

Who do AAI&S members work for?

There were eight categories given on the questionnaire, and most members were able to slot into one of them. There were only three replies who entered themselves into the `other' category, and they were all working in some way within archaeology.

More replies than any other single area came from self-employed members (27), closely followed by local government employees (25). After these two categories, which took up a large proportion of the replies, came independent Units/Trusts (14), Universities (13), Civil Service (12), Other (3), and then the two respondents working in museums.
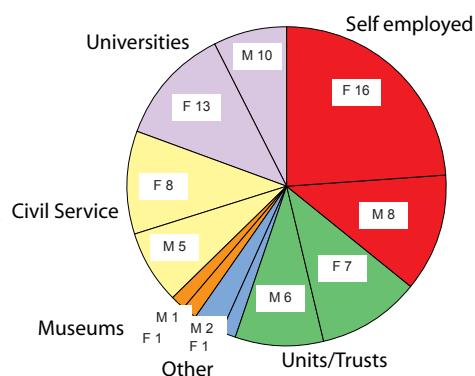

Figure 1

Types of Contract

For instance - permanent or open ended- fixed or short term- or casual. Archaeology is reputed to be an insecure profession - is this reflected in the employment of illustrators?

31% of replies were from freelance members - 35% on permanent contracts - 29% on fixed or short term contracts and 5% working on a casual basis.
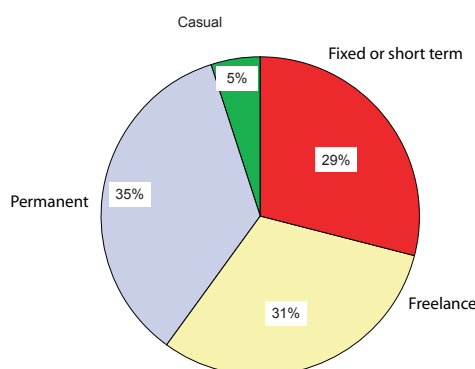

Figure 2

Years worked in current employment

The only test for security of employment is to find out how long people can stay in on place - hence the question.

Only 30% of those who were employed on fixed or casual basis had worked for their present employer without breaks for less than one year. For less than two years, the percentage of replies was 51-2% with 48-9% having worked for more than two years. The split is about half and half around the two year point, which in current employment legislation is the magic number entitling employees on no matter what description of contract to full employment rights - protection against unfair dismissal, or redundancy and maternity pay for instance.
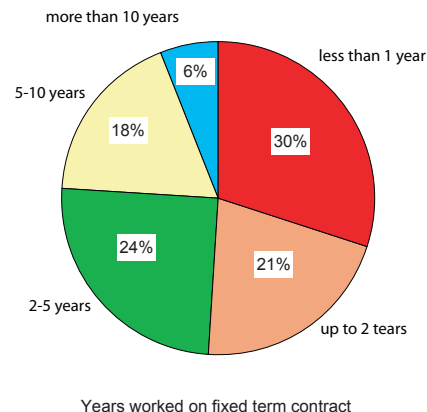
Years worked on fixed term contract

Figure 3

Members employed in other areas than archaeological illustration

33% of respondents were not presently employed as illustrators. This is a fairly large number and it is interesting to know that so many of what appears to be a very specialist association are not actively employed in the discipline. If not illustrating, but still working within archaeology, what do they do?

The categories on the questionnaire were derived from the IFA's areas of competence in order to keep the options to a recognised standard.

There were replies from members working in most categories with Finds/Pottery analysis being the most common area. Excavation was the next largest category - which may not be a complete surprise to illustrators who are everyday closely involved with both of these categories.

It is perhaps worth considering the absences. There were no replies from anyone working in Underwater Archaeology (although there are illustrators with experience of this), Computing, or in Sites and Monuments records.

Of the freelance members, if they were working in archaeological illustration, they were on the whole taking at least 75% of their work from archaeology. The majority of freelance members, however, did not describe themselves as actively working in Archaeological Illustration - the descriptions of the work varied, but included general artwork, photography, excavation, cultural resource management, publishing and child care.
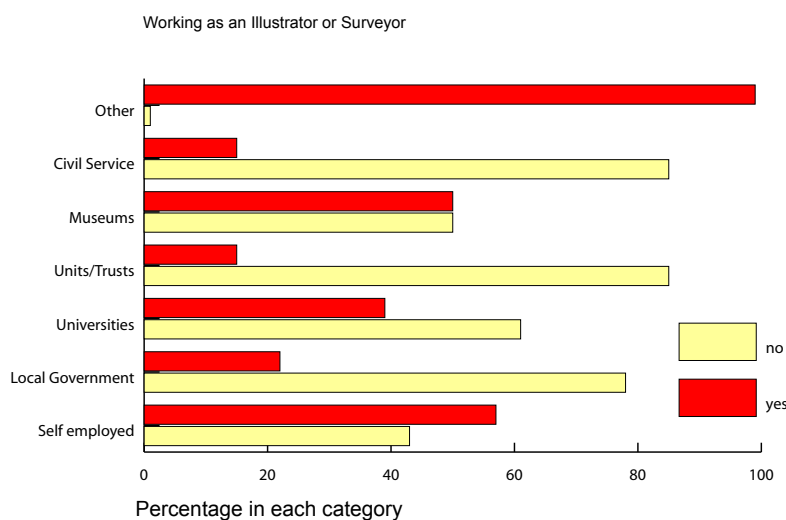
Working as an Illustrator or Surveyor

Percentage in each category

Figure 4

Areas of work of members
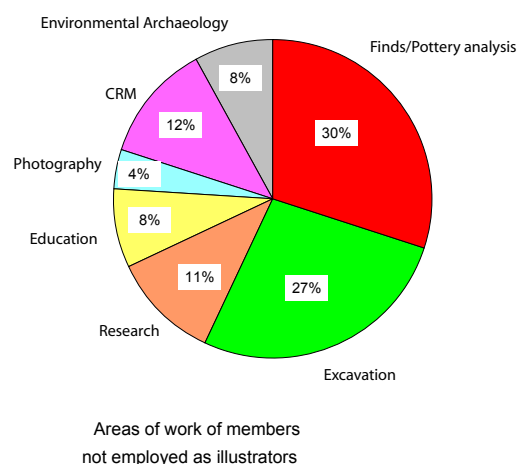not employed as illustrators

Figure 5

Illustration experience

Full members of the AAI&S have taken an assessment and it is known in which areas of archaeological illustration they have demonstrated most ability. It isn't clear, however, how much more experience of the field they may have, or how much (if any) other members of the AAI&S have. The league table of archaeological illustration experience shows that Plan/Section drawing is the winner - most respondents had done this kind of work and almost as many were able to include pottery and finds drawing. Right at the bottom of the experience table, is computer graphics. It will be interesting to see this again in a few years time to see what change may occur as machine generated images become more accessible and the effect of developer funded evaluations and desk top assessments reduce the amount of finds drawing.
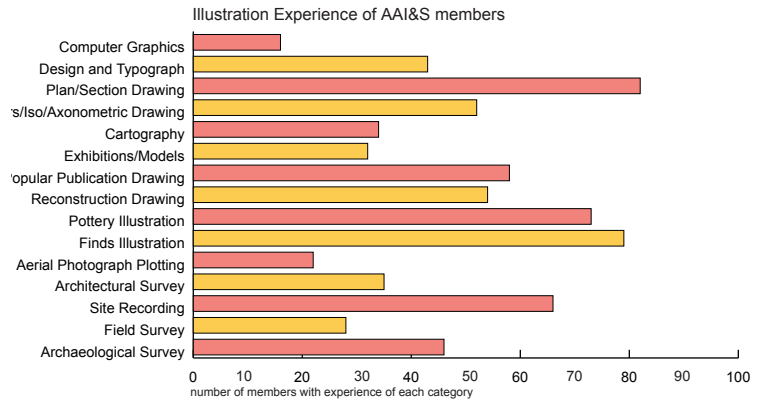
Illustration Experience of AAI&S members

Figure 6

Archaeological Experience

It is often stated that in order to produce a successful archaeological illustration, a good knowledge of archaeological techniques is essential. The archaeological experience of members is of interest therefore. Considering that plan and section drawing came highest in the previous table, it isn't surprising that most had experience in excavation, but unlike the previous table, many more had experience of computing - although none are currently employed in this area or seem to be applying it to illustration.
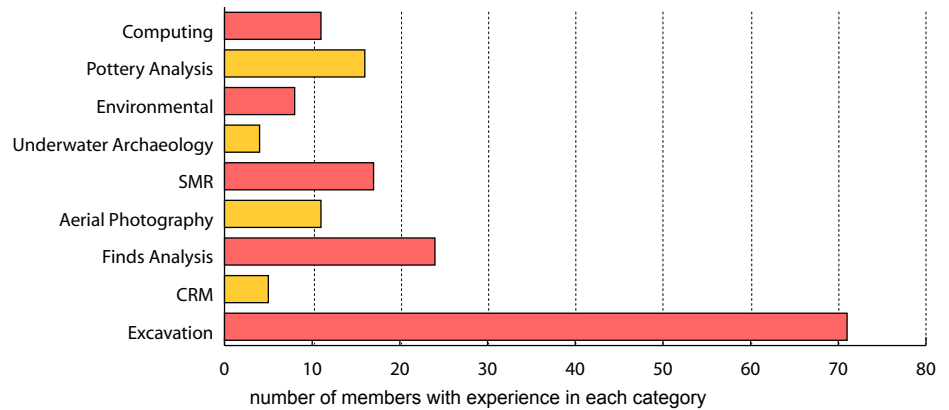
number of members with experience in each category

Figure 7

Pay

Again it must be stated very clearly at this point that due to the limited number of replies, these results can only be seen as a guideline, but of the ranges on the questionnaire, only one bracket was absent - there doesn't appear to be a member earning more than £25000 per year (put away your cv's!).
The top range was in fact £20-25000 (3 replies) and at the other end of the scale, there were 17 replies from members earning less than £5000 (about £100 a week, working in units/trusts, universities and 'others'). The less than £5000 bracket was in fact the largest for self-employed members. The majority of replies were between £8-14000 - averaging out at around £11000.
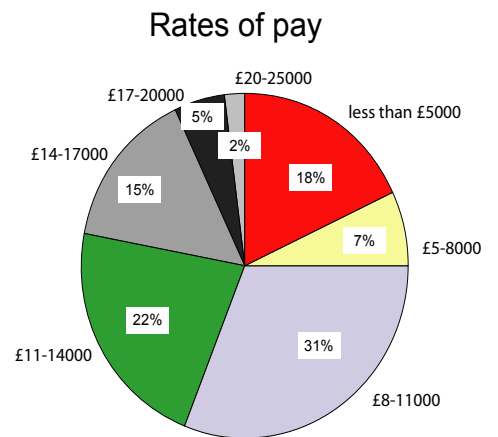
Rates of pay

Figure 8

Conclusions

There are a large number of illustrators working freelance, and on the whole the income of these is in the lower range. This raises further questions. How many of these are in fact working part-time or are the fees being charged kept low in order to keep work turning over?

If there are really this number of freelance members, why is there no longer a self-employed person on council? Local government also seems a large area of employment for illustrators - this group is made up of all types of local government - district and boroughs, city and county councils. The effect of local government re-organisation is liable to have a considerable effect, determining the future of many archaeological units, is an issue to watch for developments.

There is a thin dividing line between types of contract - for instance when is a casual employee actually working on a freelance basis or on a fixed term contract?

After two years continuous work with one organisation or in councils using the same employment conditions, a fixed term employee may as well be considered permanent - their employment rights are the same.

It seems odd that the different types of contract still exist - if it is no cheaper to employ someone on a fixed term or casual basis why persist? A casual worker with only a verbal agreement to their working conditions has as much a contract in current legislation as someone with a four page job description. If the intention is to make laying staff off easier or to avoid responsibility to employees, surely this is bad practice - and recent test cases, brought after redundancies of casual and temporary staff, have confirmed the rights of the employees.

The replies have shown the illustration and archaeological experience of members to be wide ranging, giving substance to archaeological illustrators claim of being specialists within the profession. Many are also members of other associations - is this because our membership needs that extra back-up with employers who may not have heard of the AAI&S?

Having seen the range of experience, it seems clear that more members could attain full membership status, or add categories to their listing with little problem.

This survey was as I have repeatedly said very general, but we can gather a little information from the replies we have had, and although it raises more questions than it answers, this is at least something to build on. It seems clear to me that we need more information from members, (not necessarily in the form of continuous questionnaires).

I would like to receive suggestions theories or just basic comments on the results shown here or questions I haven't asked which may need looking at.

What is the work situation really like for freelance members? Is there a good reason why it is better to work on fixed term contracts?

Answers, criticism, or responses please to AAI&S Council or better still in the form of letters to the newsletter.

Laura Templeton 1993