

## Report: 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019

*New Naratif* is the trading name of and is published by Observatory Southeast Asia Limited, whose objectives are:

- Build a broader understanding and more diverse, complex view of the Southeast Asian region that helps contribute to solutions for important issues facing the people of the Southeast Asian region.
- Innovate on research, news, and culture publication in the Southeast Asian region, in content, form, and channel, and offer an outlet for talented Southeast Asian researchers, journalists, and artists.
- Promote the universal values of democracy, freedom of the media, and freedom of inquiry, information, and expression.

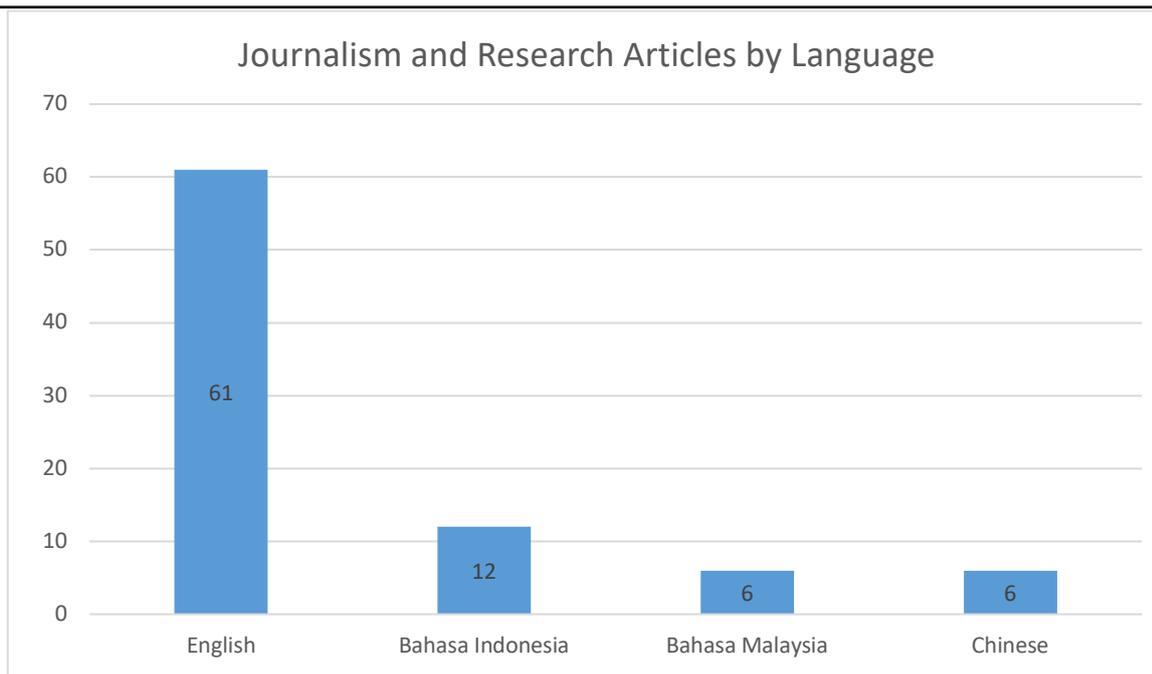
In its second year of existence, *New Naratif* has received praise in Southeast Asia and globally for our stories on the region. Despite numerous political and financial challenges, our membership is growing and we have a steady pipeline of stories which reflect growing impact on the political discourse in Southeast Asia.

### 1. Content

Between 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 (six months), a total of 97 pieces of content were published. The 97 pieces include:

- 71 total journalism articles, including:
  - 50 unique articles
  - 21 translations in Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia, and Chinese
- 14 Research articles, including:
  - 11 unique research articles,
  - 3 translations: 2 in Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia and 1 in Chinese
- 10 Comics
  - 7 unique comics
  - 3 translations into Bahasa Indonesia
- 3 Podcasts

Of the 85 prose articles, 61 are in English, 12 in Bahasa Indonesia (BI), 6 in Bahasa Malaysia (BM), and 6 in Chinese.



These prose articles cover a wide variety of subjects from across the region. Highlights include timely op-eds about brownface and racism in Singapore and LGBTQ representation in Brunei; an article on the legacy of violence in Poso, Indonesia; the first comic in our “NN Explains” comic series on political concepts and ideas; articles on the impact of religion on the lives of people Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar; articles on the impact of development across Southeast Asian countries; an article comparing hawker culture in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur; the launch of our “Citizens’ Agenda” initiative ([newnaratif.com/citizensagenda](https://newnaratif.com/citizensagenda)). Our articles and comics touched on every single country in Southeast Asia.

## Most Read Articles, Journalism (Unique Views)

- Brownface & Racism in Singapore: 18,976  
<https://newnaratif.com/journalism/brownface-and-racism-in-singapore/share/cwguh/z/cd18a8e0f4ac598650630bec7152d9ef>
- Penjelasan: Apa yang Terjadi di Papua?: 11,909  
<https://newnaratif.com/journalism/penjelasan-apa-yang-terjadi-di-papua-barat/share/cwguh/z/a9b87f5958fd8913eee9e58de86596b6>
- Our Silence Does Not Mean You Can Speak for Us: 4,949  
<https://newnaratif.com/journalism/our-silence-does-not-mean-you-can-speak-for-us/share/cwguh/z/af2709fa48f16a67ba208cbd9a755b57>

## Most Read Articles, Research (Unique Views)

- Singapore’s “Fake News” Bill: The FAQ: 5,756  
<https://newnaratif.com/research/singapores-fake-news-bill-the-faq/share/cwguh/8dcedd6884e553e55dfb6298a6f6cd94>
- Out of Bounds: Freedom of Expression in Singapore Revisited: 4,909  
<https://newnaratif.com/research/out-of-bounds-freedom-of-expression-in-singapore-revisited/share/cwguh/e008edf12132e41485fc702ed94c5943>
- If You Talk Like a Coloniser and Eat Like a Coloniser...: 4,876  
<https://newnaratif.com/research/if-you-talk-like-a-coloniser-and-eat-like-a-coloniser/share/cwguh/19c9103e4dff12924fa76c64b07874df>

## Most Read Articles, Comics (Unique Views)

- NN Explains: The Indonesian Presidential Elections: 2,995  
<https://newnaratif.com/comic/nn-explains-the-indonesian-presidential-elections/share/cwguh/2405ba88e8e5bd75e3002536290f431f>
- NN Explains: What is Politics: 1,994  
<https://newnaratif.com/comic/nn-explains-what-is-politics/share/cwguh/defda3da9cbf5cb1aa15ef8515063400>
- No One Should Have to be Super in Order to be Human: 1,716  
<https://newnaratif.com/comic/no-one-super-order-human/share/cwguh/dccb1c3a558c50d389c24d69a9856730>

As anticipated in the previous report, due to budget restrictions, we were unable to publish as many articles as we did in the previous 6 month period. However, overall, including all formats, *New Naratif* published 97 items over 26 weeks<sup>1</sup>, for an average of 3.73 items per week – still well above of our target of two articles per week. Excluding translations of the same article, we published 71 items, or 2.73 items per week.

Throughout this period, we focused on revamping and realigning our production schedule to better focus our output. We were careful in selecting our articles and the articles were published were impactful and contributed to our overall mission. We asked ourselves many hard questions about which articles were creating impact, and we made painful decisions about what to focus on, rather than simply commissioning anything which seemed promising. We were careful in selecting our articles and the articles were published were impactful and contributed to our overall mission. We are pleased with our output but are mindful that we still can improve further.

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<sup>1</sup> New Naratif only publishes 50 weeks per year, with the last two weeks off.

## 2. Our Members

As noted in the previous report, *New Naratif's* membership underwent a tricky period as the initial crowdfunding members had their memberships expire at the beginning of September 2019. As noted in the previous report, we anticipated that up to 50% of our crowdfunding memberships (around 270 people) would not renew their memberships.

In March 2019, we had 750 members. By the end of September 2019, we had 636 members. Over six months, we lost 114 members. Stretching back over the entire year since the September 2018 turning point, we had 380 renewals, a gain of 401 new members, and a loss of 339 members for an overall gain of 62 members. The losses included approximately 180 crowdfunders who never converted their pledges to full memberships, crowdfunders who did take up memberships but chose not to renew, and other members who chose to cancel their membership or let them lapse. We are satisfied with this rate of retention. The number of membership should be more stable going forward.

During this period, we launched a new initiative to engage with our members: The Citizens' Agenda. Through this process, we hope to better engage our members, meet their needs, and produce research and articles which are of value to them. For more information, please see [newnaratif.com/citizensagenda](http://newnaratif.com/citizensagenda).

We also commissioned a revamp of our website, with a focus on improving functionality, improving the user experience, and the ability to format and display content. It is anticipated that this process will be complete in April 2020.

Due to the high turnover in membership, we are unable to provide a breakout of membership numbers this period. We will bring it back in the next period when the membership numbers have settled down.

## 3. Staffing

*New Naratif* is proud to be an organisation which prizes diversity. Our staff are majority female, and come from a wide range of ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. They are all Southeast Asian (or permanently resident in Southeast Asia), intimately connected with their local communities, and passionate about telling important, meaningful, and relevant stories about our home region.

We are supported by a network of ~150 contributors across Southeast Asia. Our relationship with our contributors goes beyond just the publication of content. Our contributors are a valuable source of information, advice, and also function as eyes and ears on the ground to help us identify important issues which we can address.

*New Naratif* does not pay any salary to our Directors, who work on a pro bono basis.

Due to cost-cutting, in July 2019 we let go of several consulting editors. By the end of September 2019, our staff was as follows:

- Editor-in-Chief: Kirsten Han
- Deputy Editor, Editor (Bahasa Indonesia), Regional Editor, and Consulting Editor for North Sumatra and Aceh: Aisyah Llewellyn
- Membership Engagement Coordinator: Deborah Augustin
- Comics and Illustrations Editor: Charis Loke
- Design Editor: Ellena Ekarahendy
- Consulting Editor (Cambodia): Matt Surrusco
- Operations Coordinator: Chua Minxi
- Editor (Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia): Kelly Anissa

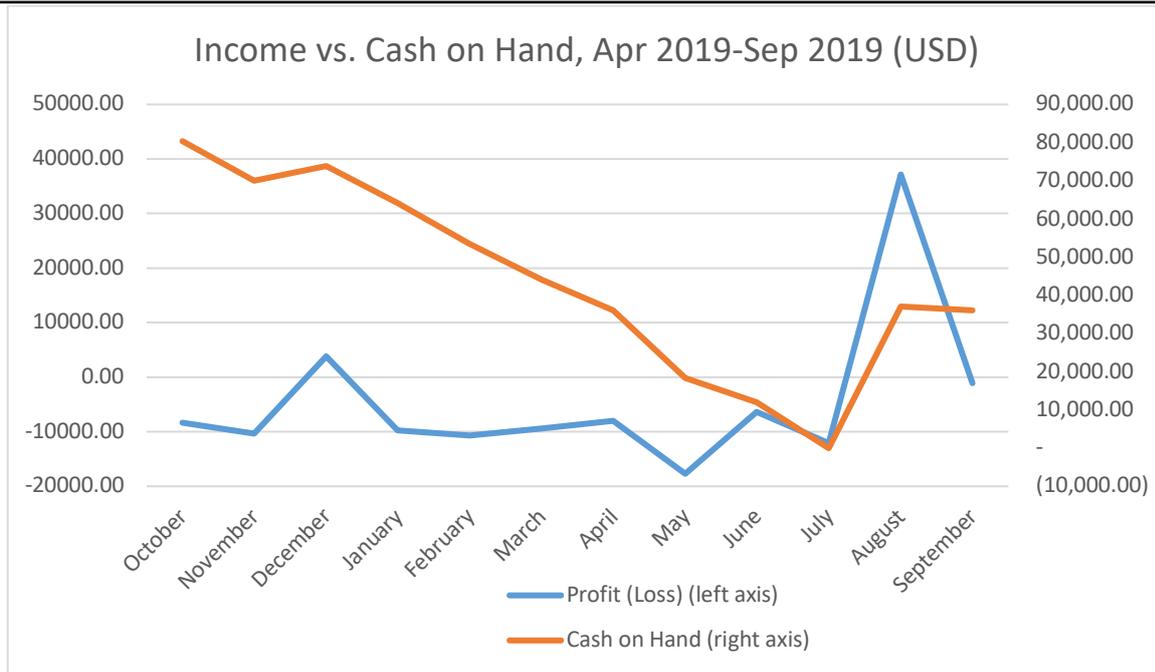
New Naratif is also committed to publishing in multiple Southeast Asian languages. Due to technological and funding limitations, we are currently publishing chiefly in English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia. We run a newsroom that works on articles in multiple languages simultaneously, with the Editor-in-Chief leading the English language output, and two Editors in Bahasa Indonesia (Aisyah Llewellyn) and Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia taking charge of content in those languages respectively.

New Naratif continues to look to expand the team and we plan to hire a Marketing, Advocacy, and Outreach Coordinator.

## **4. Finances**

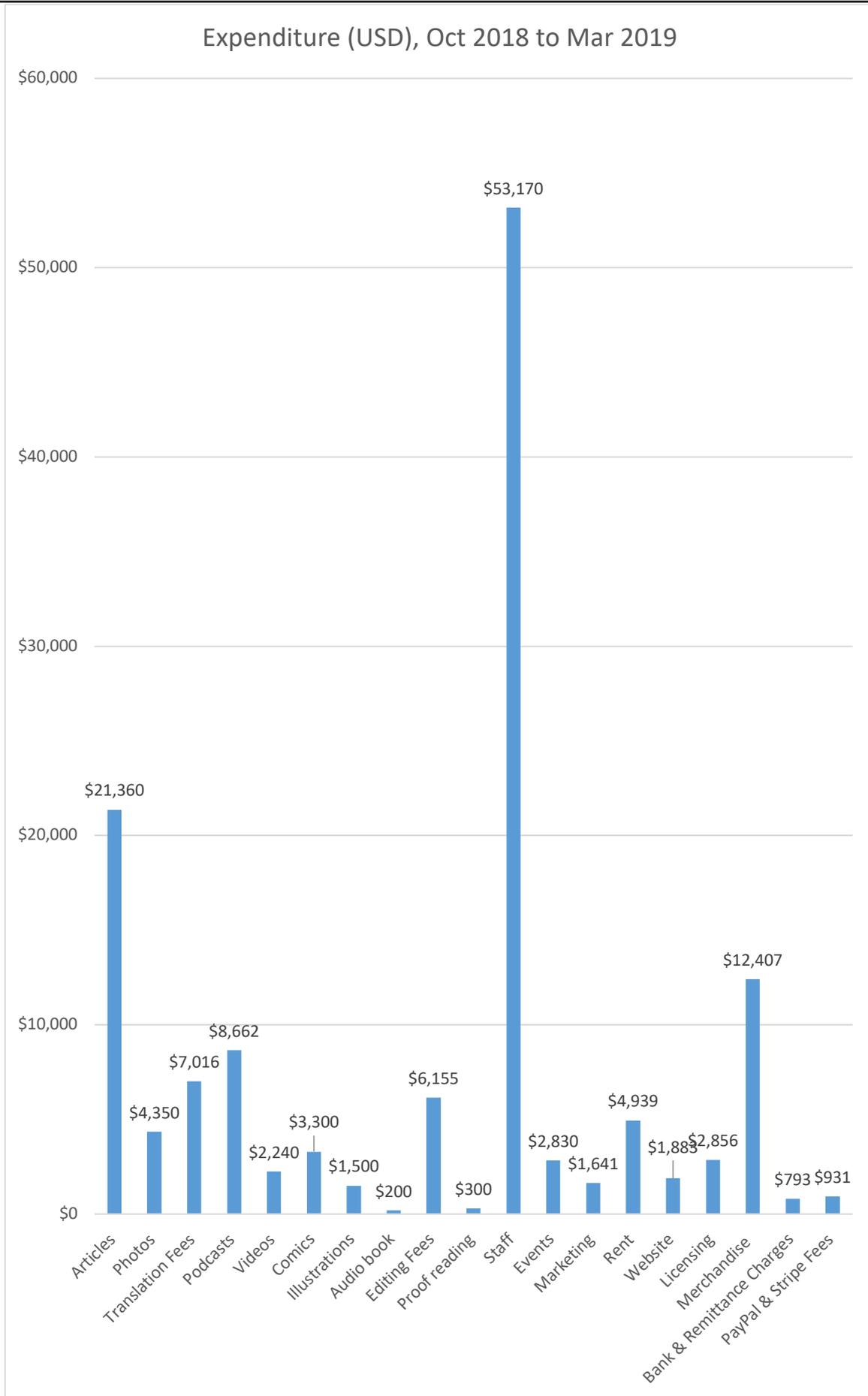
New Naratif is a non-profit organisation. We have adhered to the principle of sustainable funding, spending only what we have on hand. Thus, while we continue to lose money, we did not incur any debt. 2019 was anticipated to be a challenge as we would essentially be working largely from crowdfunding pledges the previous year, as crowdfunding members got a free year and did not have to pay for membership again this year.

It is of utmost importance that we continue to expand our membership base, and find new grants and donations.



A chart showing a general breakdown of New Naratif's expenditures is overleaf.

For a full report of New Naratif's financial position, please see the attached State of Income and Expenses.



## 5. Challenges

### a) Political

The political and regulatory environment for independent media remains overwhelmingly hostile and is getting worse. As outlined in the previous report, Southeast Asian journalists are on the receiving end of state-sponsored intimidation and harassment. They face regularly face obstacles in reporting, such as the lack of freedom of information laws, politically appointed editors, and widespread self-censorship. All ASEAN countries are in the bottom 60 of the World Press Freedom Index, and many have introduced legislation that is easily abused to curb free speech (please see the previous report for more details).

In summary, there is a very difficult legal, regulatory, and political environment for independent media in Southeast Asia. *New Naratif* mitigates much of this risk by being incorporated as a private company limited by guarantee in the United Kingdom. Avoiding any Southeast Asian jurisdiction shields our work from political interference in Southeast Asia.

Consequently, we are taking great care to protect our contributors. This includes using pseudonyms and minimising any potential exposure. We are constantly reminded that our contributors face threats to their safety across Southeast Asia, and we will continue to do what we can to help our contributors and staff remain safe while they do their jobs.

### b) Financial

Long-term financial sustainability remains a major challenge. While our membership has steadily grown every month, we are a long way from sustainability. As planned (and noted in our previous report) we are operating at a conservative level this year that we feel confident is sustainable and are continuing to apply for grants from various funding bodies. Overall, as anticipated our membership has fallen this year, but all remaining members will be on auto-renewing plans and we can be more confident of their support going forward.

### c) Internal

As New Naratif has grown, it is clear that our organisation needs to further professionalise and stabilise. Amongst other problems, this report was severely delayed due to internal issues: the regulatory and financial report burden on the Managing Director had grown to the point where he was unable to cope with all the requirements of managing legal and regulatory reporting in the UK and Malaysia, along with bank accounts in seven currencies as well as three online financial services (Stripe, Transferwise, and PayPal). We are trying to distribute responsibilities and improving internal processes, and will aim for future reports to be issued within a month of the end of the reporting period. Another priority will be to ensure that our staff are paid a living wage for full-time work.

## 6. Looking Forward

New Naratif needs to be put on a sound financial footing. We have built a good product but we need to create a long term sustainable basis for the organisation. To do so, we will need to ask ourselves a lot of difficult questions about how we operate, what we need to do to grow, and how we can transform our scrappy start-up into a more sustainable institution.

Statement of Income and Expenses for Oct 2018 to Sept 2019

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Members Gained	27	41	44	35	28	17	33	30	32	33	43	38	401
Members lost	2	4	5	4	0	1	7	14	11	9	0	282	339
Total Memberships	599	636	675	706	734	750	776	792	813	837	880	636	
<b>INCOME</b>													
Membership fees	1,242.26	1,900.58	4,378.71	1,980.89	2,304.68	776.46	1,704.00	1,400.00	1,533.00	1,502.00	2,615.69	9,053.00	30,391.27
Merchandise sales	-	-	7,437.40	550.00	867.00	60.00	111.60	51.50	79.70	37.20	-	384.38	9,578.78
Donations & Others	-	-	-	5,102.68	28.00	1,777.77	-	30.00	10.00	280.00	108.00	1,060.00	8,396.45
Grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,000.00	-	50,000.00
Total Income	1,242.26	1,900.58	11,816.11	7,633.57	3,199.68	2,614.23	1,815.60	1,481.50	1,622.70	1,819.20	52,723.69	10,497.38	98,366.50
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>													
<b>EDITORIAL</b>													
Articles	2,125.52	2,100.00	1,270.00	1,078.52	2,900.00	2,011.00	1,750.00	2,450.00	850.00	2,885.00	800.00	1,140.00	21,360.04
Photos	250.00	600.00	150.00	150.00	550.00	750.00	350.00	500.00	100.00	850.00	-	100.00	4,350.00
Translation Fees	1,287.90	889.56	981.45	688.86	1,051.90	322.00	161.00	853.11	127.00	379.00	-	274.29	7,016.07
Podcasts	962.00	1,000.00	800.00	750.00	750.00	1,360.00	-	-	-	-	1,240.00	1,800.00	8,662.00
Videos	-	200.00	300.00	200.00	300.00	440.00	40.00	300.00	120.00	150.00	-	190.00	2,240.00
Comics	-	200.00	300.00	300.00	-	300.00	500.00	450.00	300.00	-	600.00	350.00	3,300.00
Illustrations	-	-	-	-	-	-	400.00	300.00	500.00	100.00	-	200.00	1,500.00
Audio book	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	200.00	-	-	-	200.00
Editing Fees	582.00	200.00	200.00	704.00	755.50	428.00	402.60	612.80	520.00	900.00	50.00	800.00	6,154.90
Proof reading	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.00	50.00	-	-	-	150.00	300.00
Total	5,207.42	5,189.56	4,001.45	3,871.38	6,307.40	5,611.00	3,703.60	5,515.91	2,717.00	5,264.00	2,690.00	5,004.29	55,083.01
<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT</b>													
Staff	2,900.00	3,300.00	3,400.00	4,100.00	4,600.00	4,100.00	4,500.00	5,270.00	4,350.00	5,950.00	5,700.00	5,000.00	53,170.00
Events	144.00	131.14	-	-	-	25.00	30.00	-	-	-	2,400.00	100.00	2,830.14
Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78.00	1,462.60	-	100.00	1,640.60
Rent	-	286.37	224.33	170.81	172.46	172.17	452.10	452.10	452.10	852.10	852.10	852.10	4,938.74
Website	1,256.00	-	36.49	37.45	36.23	36.52	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	1,882.69
Licensing	20.91	54.31	63.18	76.78	994.33	87.91	873.70	137.00	137.00	137.00	137.00	137.00	2,856.12
Merchandise	-	3147.52	-	7,485.20	1618.28	-	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	12,407.00
Bank & Remittance Charges	40.33	65.57	68.93	60.63	115.55	94.39	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	793.40
PayPal & Stripe Fees	55.76	77.12	179.05	111.05	71.19	58.42	63.00	63.00	63.00	63.00	63.00	63.00	930.59
Total	4,417.00	7,062.03	3,971.98	12,041.92	7,608.04	4,574.41	6,082.80	6,086.10	5,244.10	8,628.70	9,316.10	6,416.10	81,449.28
Total Operating Expenses	9,624.42	12,251.59	7,973.43	15,913.30	13,915.44	10,185.41	9,786.40	11,602.01	7,961.10	13,892.70	12,006.10	11,420.39	136,532.29
Operating Income/ (Loss)	(8,382.16)	(10,351.01)	3,842.68	(8,279.73)	(10,715.76)	(7,571.18)	(7,970.80)	(10,120.51)	(6,338.40)	(12,073.50)	40,717.59	(923.01)	(38,165.79)
Incorporation/Admin	-	-	-	1,485.33	-	-	-	7,588.90	-	-	-	200.00	9,274.23
Website Development	-	-	-	-	-	1777.77	-	-	-	-	3,552.00	-	5,329.77
Total Income/ (Loss)	(8,382.16)	(10,351.01)	3,842.68	(9,765.06)	(10,715.76)	(9,348.95)	(7,970.80)	(17,709.41)	(6,338.40)	(12,073.50)	37,165.59	(1,123.01)	(52,769.78)
Cash on Hand	80,393.87	70,042.86	73,885.54	64,120.48	53,404.72	44,055.77	36,084.97	18,375.56	12,037.16	(36.34)	37,129.25	36,006.25	