

## Proposition

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Dear Professor Pallard,

First, thank you very much for your contributions to the body of literature we call science fiction. This is mostly a form letter, but our organization, the Distributed Library of Science Fiction (DLSF), is staffed entirely by science fiction readers, and in the DLSF Office of Author Communications we do our best to know the work of the authors we work with. In your case this was not hard: when we decided to contact you, we realized we had all read and enjoyed your Nebula-winning novella "Snowfall."

I'll spare you further flattery. I'm writing to ask if you'd like to receive a monthly DLSF author payout. To explain what this means, I'll explain as briefly as I can what DLSF is and how it works.

DLSF is a membership organization. Reader members pay a yearly fee and receive unlimited access to our large, multilingual online library of science fiction. For reader members, DLSF is like Netflix for science fiction. Membership fees are location-adjusted — reader members in richer countries pay more — but reader members may apply for discounted access in cases of financial hardship. The average reader member pays EUR 15.00 per year, and we have approximately 1.1 million reader members, resulting in revenue of approximately EUR 16.5 million per year. Pre-tax salaries for our 14-person full-time staff average EUR 55,500 per year. Staff member salaries are location-adjusted living wages further adjusted for non-work financial responsibilities such as children and adult dependents; no DLSF staff person earns more than EUR 80,000 per year. We have additional technical, legal, accounting, and temporary staff expenses of approximately EUR 200,000 per year, leading to total annual operating expenses of approximately EUR 1 million.

Of the remaining EUR 15.5 million per year of revenue, approximately EUR 3.3 million is distributed to small presses with whom we have non-exclusive digital distribution agreements. The remaining EUR 12.2 million per year is distributed among our approximately 5,000 author members, who pay no membership fee. Authors are paid according to a formula that combines popularity among our reader members with our assessment of what we call, for lack of a better term, an author's "progressive cultural contribution." "Progressive cultural contribution" is assessed through an open deliberative process conducted by a committee of authors, scholars, and other readers. The Office of Author Communications selects this committee yearly — with input from reader and author members — with a view to materially supporting the development of feminist, antiracist, postcolonial, antifascist, and broadly "social" (we do not use the term "soft") science fiction, as well as with a view to materially supporting women authors, authors of color, and authors from other groups historically marginalized within science fiction. The process is of course imperfect, even for members who agree with these aims, but we believe it is preferable to allocating author payouts based only on popularity.

Author payouts are calculated yearly but issued monthly, as fees are collected from reader members on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The average author payout amounts to approximately EUR 2,440 per year. The distribution is however rather uneven, given that a few authors are much more popular than most other authors, and that many popular authors do not orient their work strongly toward the themes we prioritize in our assessments of progressive cultural contribution. Of our approximately 5,000 author members, about 750 earn a liveable income entirely or primarily from DLSF author payouts. Among these authors, about half owe the size of their payouts mainly to popularity, and about half to their progressive cultural contribution. Approximately two-thirds of these authors live in so-called developing countries. On the other end of the payout distribution, about half of our authors — about 2,500 — find that their DLSF payouts amount to less than 5% of their total income. For the approximately 1,250 in the middle, the DLSF payout is a "nice extra" or a supplement, amounting to between 5% and 50% of total income.

If you choose to receive it, your DLSF author payout for calendar year 2018 would be:

**EUR 3,702**

This amount would be divided into monthly payments disbursed throughout the remainder of calendar year 2019. If you enable payouts and provide payment information before 31 May 2019, you will receive your payout in eight monthly payments of

**EUR 462.75,**

disbursed on the 15th of each month beginning 15 June 2019. If you sign up later, your monthly payment will be adjusted upward accordingly. If you do not enable payouts by 30 November 2019, you will forfeit your 2018 payout and it will be distributed among other author members in the December 2019 payment.

Assessments of progressive cultural contribution are public and ongoing throughout the calendar year. All reader members may contribute to deliberation but the process is moderated by the committee, and the committee makes the final assessment. Final payouts for a given calendar year are computed during the first week of the following year and sent privately to authors on January 10. Authors may make their payout figures public, but DLSF does not publish individual author payout figures. We believe that transparency is important with respect to institutions and persons in positions of power — institutions and persons whose actions may have significant consequences for the life courses and livelihoods of others — but we do not believe, generally, that society benefits when information about private individuals is made public without their consent.

If you wish to receive your payout, we ask you to provide payment information through our secure website. We have taken the liberty of creating an author account for you. You may log in at

**<https://dlsf.ru/login>**

with the username

**dpallard**

Your password was sent to you in a separate letter, also cc'd to dpallard@westerncolo.edu. Once logged in, you may change your password at any time.

Once logged in, you may enable author payouts. To receive your payout, you must choose the method by which you wish to receive payment and enter the relevant information. Our system currently supports payments through PayPal, Gratipay, Patreon, Bitcoin, Western Union, and direct bank transfer without further action from us. If you prefer another method, please feel free to contact me by email or phone; my contact information appears at the bottom of this letter. If you are concerned about potential future exposure to copyright liability, please consider using Bitcoin. If you would like to use Bitcoin but are unfamiliar with it, please feel free to contact me.

If, on the other hand, you wish to destroy your account immediately, you may do so by visiting:

**<https://dlsf.ru/destroy/UtP3p5wn9r>**

The page will ask you to enter your password (sent in a separate letter, also cc'd to dpallard@westerncolo.edu) to confirm your identity and your intention to destroy your account. This action is irrevocable. If you destroy this account and later wish to receive your DLSF author payout, you will need to create a new account and verify your identity.

We understand that some people believe that DLSF should not exist. DLSF is a large online library of mostly copyrighted works. We are aware that our distribution

of many of these works — indeed, all those works whose copyright holders we have not negotiated distribution agreements with — is in violation of copyright law in most countries, and in violation of several international treaties. Our extensive use of Bitcoin and other digital currencies for financing, which enables reader members in countries with strong intellectual property enforcement to support our work and enjoy access to the library with relatively little fear of legal consequences, has been strongly criticized, along with our organization generally, both by the usual critics in government and the publishing industry and by a few prominent authors of science fiction. We are aware of these criticisms and take them seriously. DLSF is two years old, and is an experiment — a practical experiment, inspired by the thought experiments of some of our most respected social science fiction writers and by the field and laboratory experiments of our most beloved social scientists. Understood as an experiment, the goal of DLSF is to explore technologically supported alternatives to current arrangements in the publishing industry — alternatives that might create more sustainable livelihoods for more writers, support a greater diversity of voices in the field, and open up possibilities for more substantive democratic participation, by both authors and readers, in the operation of the institutions that shape what science fiction — our increasingly global, and increasingly important, literature of the imagination — is and can become.

With this understanding in mind, we as DLSF staff make the following commitment. DLSF is two years old. If DLSF survives to its tenth year, we will hold a year-long reflective process open to all members, followed by a month-long internal deliberation, to assess whether DLSF has benefited the international community of science fiction writers and readers and society at large. If it appears not to have done so, DLSF will cease operation.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

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