How to survive Xmas

’TIS the season of compulsory holidays. But how are forcibly underemployed freelances supposed to survive the Christmas period?

Use the downtime to sign up to the Authors Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS: www.alcs.co.uk) if you haven’t already. The ALCS licences – for example – libraries to make photocopies of articles, and the fees from this are distributed to the articles’ authors: that’s us. Some LFB members earn sums approaching four figures from the annual “distribution” of income from re-uses of our copyright work.

If you’re already an ALCS member, now’s the time to update your ALCS records of articles you’ve written recently, via the ALCS website member’s area. If you’ve forgotten your password, ring them on 020 7264 5700 – before they close on 23 December – to be reminded of it.

Photographers can do the same for their photos illustrating books or articles that are likely to be photocopied or otherwise re-used, via the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS: www.dacs.org.uk).

And while you’re at it, does your NUJ Freelance Directory entry need updating? (If you’re not on the Freelance Directory, it’s free to NUJ members: www.freelancedirectory.org/register.php).

The holidays also leave you plenty of time to ensure your tax return is filled in online (www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa/file-online.htm) and sent by 31 January to avoid a fine.

More freelance Xmas survival tips are at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1012xmas.html.

New blood!

ELECTIONS to the London Freelance Branch Committee for 2012 take place at the Branch AGM on 9 January (see above). Full LFB members are encouraged to stand.

If you’re hesitating about standing for election, contact a current committee member (see www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/contact.html) for advice on what it entails. Committee members are on hand at December’s LFB party to chat about it.

Branch committee members are all working journalists – assisted by John Toner and Pamela Morton, the NUJ’s full-time Freelance Organisers. The Branch offers a free National Centre for Voluntary Organisations course in minute-taking, for members considering standing for Secretary, or supporting the Secretary with occasional minute-taking during Branch meetings.

For other support available to prospective committee candidates, see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1112ctte.html.

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A guide to submitting motions to Branch meetings is at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/business.html

This issue went to press on 22 November. Deadline for the February issue: 13 January.

To make sure you get email alerts of meetings and the electronic Freelance – just one message a month – visit www.londonfreelance.org/linkup

LFB meetings (with the exception of the December party) are 7pm to 9pm at Friends’ House, Euston Road, which is accessible to people who use wheelchairs. If you need the Branch to pay for care for a child or dependent so you can attend a meeting, call a Branch officer. For updates on meetings see the Branch calendar web page www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings