

Taking stock

The results of our first stock image survey are in... When it comes to buying photography, our respondents love microstock

SURE it has to be quality but you want it cheap and fast with no strings attached. Forty-six percent of the 275 designers who responded to our first stock photography survey selected price as their top concern when buying stock, the next was quality at 27%. When it comes to the type of image you most often purchase, readers responded overwhelmingly in favour of royalty-free, at 95% versus the 5% who buy rights managed. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that iStockphoto is your top choice when purchasing stock; it's where 53% of respondents buy the majority of their images. It seems our survey respondents have been seduced by microstock.

It all started when Calgarian Bruce Livingstone launched a site for photographers and designers to trade photos. Threatened with a \$10,000 hosting charge as his site grew in popularity, Livingstone began charging 5¢ per image. And so the micro-payment stock industry was born.

Microstock has become so popular the big three want a piece of the action. iStockphoto was acquired by Seattle-based Getty Images in February 2006 for \$50 million and Jupiterimages of Darien, Conn., followed suit by acquiring Hungary-based Stockxpert. Not to be left out, Corbis, also based in Seattle, launched its own microstock site this past summer called SnapVillage.

While many photographers worry the rise in cheap stock is devaluing professional photography, others claim microstock has created a new market of buyers who before could never afford stock photography.

While this is true, Getty Images financial results for the second quarter of 2007 show microstock is affecting the sales of traditional stock. Getty Images reported revenue gains of 6.5% to \$218 million over the same time last year thanks to growth in several areas, in particular editorial and microstock imagery, but experienced a decline in traditional creative stills imagery revenue.

What is certainly undeniable is the unprecedented choice now available to designers, only a click away.

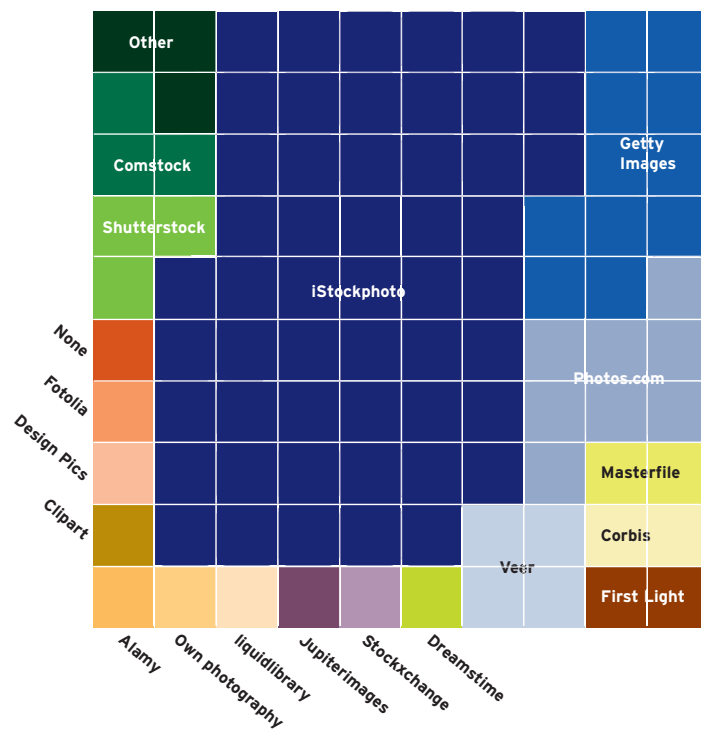
— Ann Meredith Brown, with files from Nancy Won

Who are you?

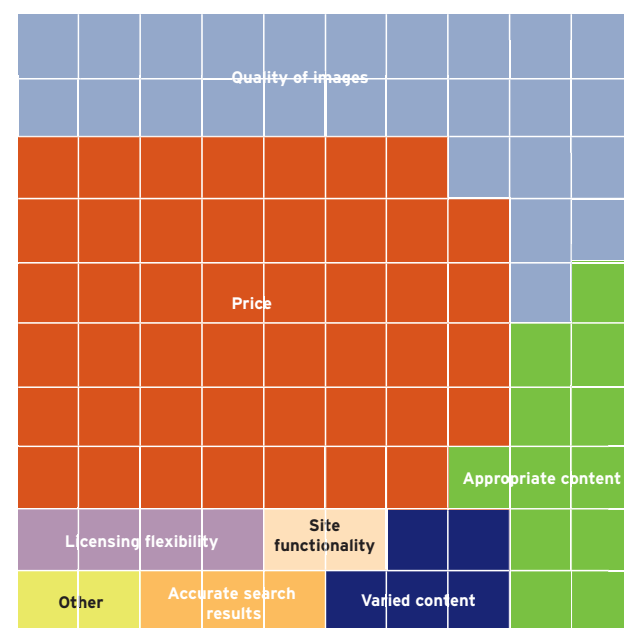
Principal/partner	16%
Creative director	7.6%
Art director	15.3%
Graphic designer	50.6%
Production manager	6.9%
Web designer/developer	3.6%

Where do you buy the majority of your stock images?

* Each square represents one percent out of 100



What is your number one concern when buying stock?



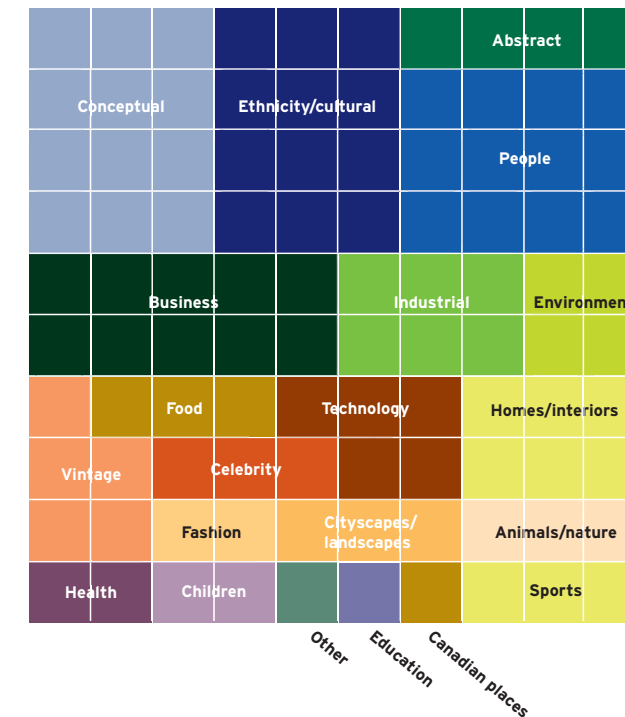
Where you buy what

We asked you to name the first agency that comes to mind when shopping for stock in the following categories

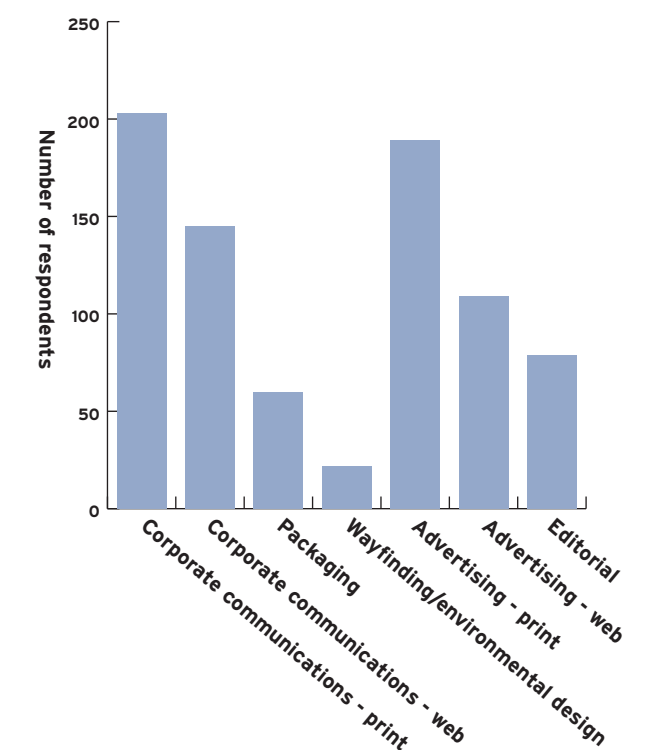


Category	1	2	3	4	5
Abstract	iStockphoto	Getty Images, Veer	Comstock, Photos.com	Veer	Jupiterimages Masterfile
Animals/nature	iStockphoto	Getty Images	Comstock	Veer	Masterfile
Business	Getty Images	iStockphoto	Corbis	Comstock, Veer	Masterfile
Celebrity	Getty Images	iStockphoto	Corbis	Veer	Photos.com Comstock
Children	iStockphoto	Getty Images	Veer	Corbis	Comstock
Conceptual	iStockphoto	Getty Images	Veer	Comstock	Corbis, Masterfile Shutterstock
Environment	iStockphoto	Getty Images	Veer	First Light	Comstock, Corbis
Ethnicity	Getty Images	iStockphoto	Veer	Corbis	First Light
People	iStockphoto	Getty Images	Veer	Corbis	Photos.com
Vintage	Getty Images	Veer	iStockphoto	Masterfile	Corbis

The categories in which you have the most difficulty sourcing quality affordable stock images



Where are you using stock photography?



Stock options

What you need to know before you purchase stock

Rights managed

Rights managed content is licensed for a specific use. Fees are based on the usage requested. Factors include print run, size, placement, duration of use and geographic distribution. **Pro:** You can purchase exclusive rights to an image to distribute it globally, nationally or within a specific industry. **Con:** It'll cost you.

Royalty-free

RF images can be purchased once and used multiple times for various uses without additional fees. The higher the resolution required, the more expensive the license. **Pro:** RF images are generally cheaper than RM. **Con:** No exclusivity means the image could pop up anywhere.

Rights ready

Pro: This new middle-of-the-road purchasing model from Getty Images is based on fixed price points for a wide range of image uses. **Con:** There are some restrictions. Purchasers get unlimited usage of the image within its chosen use category (i.e. print, online) for 10 years.

Subscription

Pro: There are different subscription models available at various agencies where you can download a certain number of images within a certain time period for a flat fee. **Con:** Unlike royalty-free, however, once the subscription period runs out, those images can no longer be used for new projects. Or in some cases, images can only be used for a certain number of clients during your subscription period.

model's face can be used in any context. If your project deals with sensitive issues, such as certain medical or social situations, a secondary clearance may be required, says John McDonald, vice-president of marketing at Masterfile in Toronto. This is regardless of whether the image is royalty-free.

76%

of respondents prefer a pay-as-you-go purchase model rather than subscription-based

Australian ad agency Host recently learned this the hard way. It downloaded images from Flickr for a Virgin Mobile Australia ad campaign under a Creative Commons license, which granted permission from the photographers but not the ordinary folks in the photographs. With copy that reads: "People who talk in lifts have bad breath" and "Dump your pen friend," Host now has a lot of angry people on its hands. If you're not sure whether you require a secondary release, ask your stock agency customer service agent. "The price of an image is trivial compared to the loss of future credibility and future business," says McDonald. **Pro:** It's a small amount of work considering the damage you could incur.

Editorial

Not all stock images are model released. Some of these photographs, including images of celebrities, landmarks or professional athletes, fall under the editorial-use-only category. **Pro:** Images can be used for editorial purposes, such as a daily news publication, without the need for a model or property release.

Con: If you want to use an editorial image for commercial purposes, third-party clearance is required, which your stock agency may be able to obtain.

Copyright

Con: You can run into serious trouble if you attempt to replicate images that you see on stock sites. All images are copyrighted. **Pro:** It's not against the rules if you take an idea or concept from an image, add your own creative elements and make it uniquely your own so that it is different from the original.

If you like the style of a certain stock photographer, Laurie Near, director of sales and research at First Light in Toronto, suggests asking your agency to arrange a photo shoot that meets your requirements, rather than hiring a photographer to duplicate someone else's style.

of respondents purchase royalty-free versus rights managed images

Extended license

Sometimes standard licensing is too restrictive for your needs. You may want an image for multiple clients, for a larger print run or to use for a longer duration of time. **Pro:** Extended licenses are often available to cover a variety of special requirements. **Con:** They cost extra.

Secondary release

Read the fine print. **Con:** Not all model releases offer blanket coverage; some don't stipulate whether a

95%

Stock pics

We entered five random keywords into various stock agency search engines. Here are the first images that popped up

Search word	Getty Images	iStockphoto	Veer
ethnic	 i	 ii	 ii
exuberance	 iii	 iii	 iii
high	 iii	 iii	 iii
mosaic	 iii	 iv	 v
retro	 vi	 vi	 vii

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STOCK AGENCIES. SPECIFICALLY (i) GETTY IMAGES/CHRISTOPHER ROBBINS; (ii) VEER/DIGITAL VISION; (iii) FIRST LIGHT; (iv) GETTY IMAGES/DIGITAL VISION; (v) VEER/FANCY; (vi) PETER MINTZ/FIRST LIGHT; (vii) GETTY IMAGES/ANNABELLE BREAKEY

Stock tips

With millions of images available, searching for stock can be exhausting. We've collected tips from agency pros to help you find the perfect photograph faster

■ Prevent search fatigue. If you know what you're looking for, be specific. Use more than one keyword; this will render more accurate results than using only one generic term at a time.

■ Be creative but not too creative. Too many keywords can trip you up, says Andrew LaBonte, search metadata manager at Corbis. Jon Feinstein, photography editor at Shutterstock in New York, agrees that too many words trick the search engines. Avoid elaborate sentences, limit your use of adjectives and think as literal as possible.

■ The space between search terms is an implied "and" so the search "man dog cat" will produce images of men with dogs and cats. Type "or" between the search terms if you're not looking for all three subjects in the same image.

■ If you're searching for a two-word phrase put quotes around it, e.g. "pizza box" in quotes will help filter out

images of actual pizzas and separate images of boxes.

■ Each agency offers different tools to help you find the perfect image. Use the filters provided. Depending on the site, you can search by colour, category, copy space, age group, image orientation (i.e. horizontal or vertical), visual similarity to other images (such as SimSearch at Masterfile), alternate keywords provided, editors' choice, people's choice, most recently updated content, image type (i.e. illustration, photo) or purchase model (i.e. royalty-free, rights managed, editorial) and the list goes on.

■ To layer your filters for the same search, select "search within." Search Path is a new feature at Getty Images that allows you to go back to an earlier result without having to start your search all over again.

■ "Keep refining your searches," advises Kelly Thompson, executive VP of iStockphoto. Looking for shots of still life or interiors? Add "nobody" or "not people" to your keywords. Your search for cats yielded 200,000 results? Try "cats, not lions" to narrow it down. If you need to find images to close crop, type "cut out"

or "white background." Other useful terms include "candid," "studio," or "portrait."

■ If you know what you want but you don't know how to describe it, Chris Porter, Getty Images vice-president of search, recommends looking at your stock agency's vocabulary list. Getty's new Refine Search tool gives users additional keywords to help narrow their searches.

■ Many sites let you download low-res comps (composites) that are digitally watermarked so you can mock-up your project for a client presentation with a non-obscured image before you commit to buy.

■ If you're constantly hunting for the same subjects, try saving your searches. The Save Search feature at Veer will notify you by email when it uploads new images that match your search terms.

Top 3 survey search terms:

People, business, children

ONLINE EXTRA

The big three: Getty Images, Corbis and Jupiterimages

Find out who owns what and how much they're worth at www.designedgecanada.com

■ A cost-saving way to purchase multiple images of a similar theme is to buy a royalty-free CD, suggests Laurie Near, director, sales and research at First Light in Toronto. "It can be very good for your budget." Jon Parker, director of brand communications at Calgary-based Veer, agrees RF CDs can save you a lot of money; 70 to 100 shots on disc will cost approximately \$700.

■ Worried rights managed photographs are too expensive for your design budgets? Many sites offer an RM calculator to help you figure out how much a certain image will cost for your particular needs.

■ To take advantage of all the tools and features that photo sites offer, such as light-boxes and comps, most require you to register for free on the site.

■ Still can't find what you're looking for? Get the image research team at your favourite stock agency to do the searching for you. Who better to ask as no one knows the collection as well as they do? They can save you time and money as this service is typically free of charge.