



Dymocks Melbourne
© 2008 Tim Riley
Licensed under Creative
Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0

Genre Worlds: Australian Popular Fiction in the 21st Century

Australian Research Council
Discovery Project DP160101308
2016-2018

Genre Worlds is the first systematic examination of contemporary Australian popular fiction, the most significant growth area in Australian trade publishing since the turn of the century.

Focusing on genre publishing, genre communities and the novels themselves—selected from the fantasy, crime, and romance genres—the project provides answers to pressing questions about the publishing industry, writing careers, and reading practices in Australia.

In doing so, we examine the complex and rapidly changing mechanisms of popular fiction creation, publication, and circulation. This approach challenges the rhetoric of decline and crisis that so often frames discussion of Australian books.

The project's broad objective is to generate new knowledge regarding the contemporary production of popular fiction in Australia, its economics, and the cultures surrounding it.

The project examines genres not individually but comparatively and systemically. It will extend knowledge of the history of Australian popular fiction; focus on the specifics of popular fiction's place in Australian publishing; and, last but by no means least, read the texts closely.

METHODOLOGY

The project combines methodologies from literary studies, cultural studies, and publishing studies to investigate contemporary Australian popular fiction as a sector of the publishing industry, as a social and cultural formation, and as a body of texts.

These approaches include:

- **Close reading** of 30 selected case study novels from the crime, romance, and fantasy genres
- **Interviews** with authors and industry professionals involved in the production of popular fiction genres and texts
- **Collation and analysis** of industry data relating to Australian popular fiction and the discourse surrounding the primary genres

PROJECT AIMS

(1) TO INVESTIGATE THE PUBLICATION OF AUSTRALIAN POPULAR FICTION

What role does popular fiction play in small, medium, and large publishing houses? What is distinctive about publishing protocols, such as publication schedules, acquisitions, and rights sales, for popular fiction? How is popular fiction driving the digital shift in Australian publishing? What are the relationships between national and international markets and industries?

(2) TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF GENRE COMMUNITIES IN THE PRODUCTION OF AUSTRALIAN POPULAR FICTION

How are Australian genre communities, including communities of writers, readers, critics, and industry figures, constituted? How far do they act as 'research and development' spaces for Australian popular fiction? What is the function of local genre conventions and online reading communities? What role do international genre communities play in the Australian popular fiction field?

(3) TO IDENTIFY AND ANALYSE THE ASPECTS OF WRITING CRAFT PARTICULAR TO THE CREATION AND PUBLICATION OF AUSTRALIAN POPULAR FICTION

What are the aspects of craft particularly associated with popular fiction, both within and across genres? What is the relationship between the professional and the amateur writer in genre communities? What does popular fiction do on the page that makes it popular fiction?

RESEARCH TEAM

Dr Kim Wilkins, Senior Lecturer in Writing at the University of Queensland and popular fiction author: k.wilkins@uq.edu.au

Professor David Carter, FAHA, Professor of Australian Literature and Cultural History at the University of Queensland: david.carter@uq.edu.au

Dr Beth Driscoll, Lecturer in Publishing and Communications at the University of Melbourne: driscoll@unimelb.edu.au

Dr Lisa Fletcher, Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Tasmania: Lisa.Fletcher@utas.edu.au

 <http://www.genreworlds.com/>

 [popficdoctors](#)