



'Read the Books, Talk to the People' is part of the Genre Worlds team mantra

Genre Worlds: Australian Popular Fiction in the 21st Century

Australian Research Council
Discovery Project DP160101308
2016-2018

Project Update: End of Year One

Genre Worlds is the first systematic study of contemporary Australian popular fiction—the most significant growth area in Australian trade publishing.

Genre Worlds studies Australian romance, crime, and fantasy fiction. Our project mantra is simple: "Read the books. Talk to the people. Track the data." These principles guide our research. They are what allow us to investigate the texts, the communities, and the industry practices that shape popular fiction.

In 2016 our focus was on consolidating and confirming the concepts and knowledge that underpin our project. We developed connections with genre communities around Australia, and began interviewing authors and publishers. We collected and cleaned up publication data. We held public events, wrote essays, and presented research to academics and industry stakeholders. And we read many, many books. One year into the project and we are now even more convinced that popular fiction is a forerunner of publishing industry change in Australia.

Our early data has confirmed our three-part definition of popular fiction, and highlighted the vibrance and dynamism of each dimension—text, community, and industry. It has also suggested trends in the development of genre-specific imprints of multinational publishers, in the uptick of self-publishing, and in the economic, cultural, and social changes in the worlds of digital genre publishing and communities. In years two and three of the project, we will zero in on the more distinct patterns shaping these broader trends.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

This year we were able to provide funding to AustLit, to enable them to address gaps in their existing datasets of Australian romance, crime, and fantasy works. The new data directly supports our project—and will help facilitate better work on Australian popular fiction publishing in the future.

We are pleased to announce that Genre Worlds chief investigator Dr Beth Driscoll, along with colleagues at the University of Melbourne and University of Newcastle, has been awarded Australian Research Council funding for the Discovery Project **New Tastemakers and Australia's Post-Digital Literary Culture**.

Congratulations as well to one of the Genre Worlds research assistants Dr Jodi McAlister, who has been awarded an Associate Investigator fellowship by the ARC Centre for Excellence in the Study of the History of Emotions.

EVENTS & COMMUNITIES

In October 2016 we presented two days of events based around our project. Co-hosted by the University of Melbourne's Australian Centre, these events brought together academics, authors, editors, bloggers, reviewers, and readers to discuss **The State of Play: Australian Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century**.

Genre communities' enthusiastic take-up of these events emphasised the value of exploratory scholarly research to practitioners. The events were well-subscribed in person—and even more so online. Online conversations pushed the event hashtag #popfic16 to the number one spot on Twitter's Australian trend chart.

PUBLICATIONS & MEDIA

In 2016 the research team published four journal articles; one edited special edition; one monograph; one edited book; and nine book chapters.

Some highlights include:

- Lisa Fletcher's edited book **Popular Fiction and Spatiality: Reading Genre Settings** (Palgrave). Further detail available from [the Palgrave website](#).
- Chapters from three of the four chief investigators in **New Directions in Popular Fiction: Genre, Reproduction, Distribution** (Palgrave, ed. Gelder). Further detail available through [the Palgrave website](#).
- Chapters from all four chief investigators in **The Return of Print: Contemporary Australian Publishing** (Monash University Press, ed. Mannion & Stinson). Further detail available through [the Monash University Press website](#).
- Journal articles in [Media International Australia](#), [Logos](#), [Journal of Popular Romance Studies](#), and [Post 45](#).

We were also interviewed for **The Age** and **Australian Bookseller and Publisher**, and on stage at The Wheeler Centre as part of their **The F-Word** series, talking about romance publishing.

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

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