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Patterns of reuse: Towards a history of fiction in twentieth-century Australian newspapers

With few exceptions, Australian literary history would lead us to believe that periodical fiction in this country followed the pattern of the major Anglophone markets of Britain and the United States of America, where such publishing and the syndication agencies that largely enabled it are understood as nineteenth-century phenomena.¹ Key to this temporality, especially in Britain, were changes in the book trade, including the decline of expensive multi-volume editions (intended for circulating libraries) and the presence of cheap paperback books.² More specifically in these countries, periodical fiction is understood to have moved from newspapers to magazines in the twentieth century, becoming the province of experimental or avant-garde literary writers and readers.³ Accordingly, discussion of Australian newspaper fiction is almost entirely focused on the nineteenth century, including in the recently published *Cambridge History of the Australian Novel*.⁴ A small number of accounts of twentieth-century periodical fiction focus on literary magazines.⁵ This chapter examines the persistence of fiction in Australian newspapers until at least the 1950s and explores the position taken by works of Australian writers within the broader context of syndicated fiction imported mostly from Britain and America.

1 Graham Law and Norimasa Morita, 'The Newspaper Novel: Towards an International History', *Media History* 6, no. 1 (2000), doi:10.1080/713685376.

2 Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Palgrave, 2000), 80.

3 Patrick Collier, 'What is modern periodical studies?', *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015), doi:10.5325/jmodeperistud.6.2.0092; Matthew Levay, 'On the Uses of Seriality for Modern Periodical Studies: An Introduction', *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 9, no. 1 (2018), doi:10.5325/jmodeperistud.9.1.v.

4 This is true of chapters by Katherine Bode, Sarah Galletly and Carol Hetherington, 'Beyond Britain and the Book: The Nineteenth-Century Australian Novel Unbound/ed'; Paul Eggert, 'The Novel in the Late Colonial Period: The Book Trade, Readers and their Cultural Outlook', 81–82, 86–87; and David Carter, 'The Novel Nation: Critical Histories of the Australian Novel', 133–134, in *The Cambridge History of the Australian Novel*, ed. David Carter (Cambridge University Press, 2023); an exception is David Walker, 'When the Twain Meet: The Australian Novelist in Asia', which mentions a novel serialised in a Chinese-language newspaper in 1909.

5 Bruce Bennett, ed., *Cross Currents: Magazines and Newspapers in Australian Literature* (Longman Cheshire, 1981); Bruce Bennett, 'Literary Journals', in *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891–1945*, ed. Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (University of Queensland Press, 2001); David Carter and Roger Osborne, 'Periodicals', in *A History of the Book in Australia, 1946–2005*, ed. Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (University of Queensland Press, 2006).

The analysis is enabled by the National Library of Australia's Trove database of digitised historical newspapers. Trove's Application Programming Interface (API) supports the large-scale search functions used to create records for *To Be Continued: The Australian Newspaper Fiction Database* (TBC), the source of fiction records for this chapter. We begin by describing TBC's historical and technical background and show that some nineteenth-century trends in fiction circulation and reuse persisted well into the twentieth century, while others shifted.⁶ Although Australian newspapers continued to be dominated by British and, to a lesser extent, American fiction in the early twentieth century, from the late 1920s, Australian fiction played a larger part in this market than one would expect from diatribes against syndicated fiction in the press. The next part of the chapter concentrates on the patterns of reuse that inform these claims, using quantitative methods of analysis enabled by TBC's large-scale data. It concludes with case studies of fiction reuse, demonstrating how these patterns played out in instances of massively published titles and how some of the more prolific Australian authors exploited established and emerging networks of reuse within a market dominated by imported fiction.

As the first study of the scale and complexity of twentieth-century Australian newspaper fiction, this chapter contributes to a fuller understanding of how fiction circulated, how authors adapted to the changing publishing landscape and how newspapers remained a vital medium for literary culture in Australia beyond the nineteenth century. At the same time, this complexity and scale mean we offer these findings as a first step towards a fuller history of Australian newspaper fiction publishing, establishing important practices and relationships without exhausting the dynamics involved.

Introducing TBC

The history of TBC, itself, was shaped by the assumption that newspaper fiction in Australia was a nineteenth-century phenomenon. When Katherine Bode and Carol Hetherington began exploring Australian newspaper fiction in Trove's digitised newspapers in 2013, they accepted this prevailing understanding and only included the first decade and a half of the twentieth century in initial queries to Trove's API on the assumption the results would confirm that understanding. They did not and though Bode and Hetherington included the results of those initial searches in the version of TBC published in 2018, they were forced, by the scale of the fiction, to limit that earlier research to nineteenth-century newspapers.

The 2018 version of TBC, which formed the basis of Bode's book, *A World of Fiction: Digital Collections and the Future of Literary History* (2018), included approximately 21,000 publications: 15,000 from the nineteenth century and 6,000 from the

⁶ Katherine Bode, *A World of Fiction: Digital Collections and the Future of Literary History* (University of Michigan Press, 2018).

first decade and a half of the twentieth century (a publication is recorded for each individual story – whether a novel, novella or short story – in a particular newspaper, with some works having only one publication in the database and others many). When the authors of this chapter decided to explore twentieth-century newspaper fiction, we hoped to find an equivalent number of publications for that period: an additional 9,000 or so publications on what was already recorded in TBC. The results far exceeded those expectations. By early 2024, when we finished the three years of funding awarded for this work, TBC had grown to encompass over 51,000 fiction publications, with the growth all in the twentieth century.⁷

More so than for the nineteenth century, it is clear from manual searches of Trove that there is a good deal more fiction in twentieth-century Australian newspapers than TBC indicates, whether due to differences between the scale of fiction publishing and the funding we had to index it, or the continuing growth of Trove's digitised newspaper archive, or both.⁸ For this reason, and because this is the first time we are presenting results for the twentieth century, we begin with some precautions for interpreting the findings and some general trends, before focusing on the phenomenon of fiction reuse as a means of circulation.

Australian newspaper fiction publishing

Media archaeologies and other histories of mass-digitised library records show that multiple economic, social, legal, linguistic and cultural dynamics shape these collections, so they cannot be treated as reflecting historical publishing.⁹ Figure 1, plotting fiction publications indexed by TBC from 1820 to 1960, helps to illustrate this point. Some of its most noticeable features, including the 1915 peak and the sharp decline

7 For a description of the 'paratextual method' used to identify potential fiction publications – by searching for and exporting records where the article heading (defined as the first four lines of text) features words commonly used to introduce fiction – see Bode, *A World of Fiction*, 73–81. The most successful search term for identifying twentieth-century publications, as for nineteenth-century fiction, was 'chapter'. Indexing API results is a largely manual process, involving members of the research team working through csv files to remove records that are not fiction, identify title IDs for instalments of previously-recorded fiction and create records for stories not already in the database. The TBC database is also set up so that members of the public and other researchers can edit and add records to the database. To date, approximately 2,000 of the publications in TBC have been added by people who are not part of the core research team.

8 In future, we hope to compare the newspapers in Trove and TBC with those listed in selected editions of the Press Directory of Australia and New Zealand, published annually from 1914 until the end of the twentieth century to better understand potential emphases or omissions in the digitised historical newspaper collection.

9 An exemplary early example of such scholarship is by Bonnie Mak, 'Archaeology of a Digitization', *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 65, no. 8 (2014), doi:10.1002/asi.23061.

after 1955, relate to known emphases and restrictions in Trove's digitisation program: respectively, the focus on digitising newspapers published during Australia's involvement in World War One, for centenary commemorations; and Trove's decision to deal with copyright by ceasing newspaper digitisation at 1955, except by special arrangement with a publisher.¹⁰ These known factors do not preclude the presence of unknown ones, prompting questions about whether Figure 1's results – from the scale of twentieth-century newspaper fiction to its distinguishable three stages, of pre-World War One, inter-war and post-World War Two publishing – indicate publishing or digitising practices.

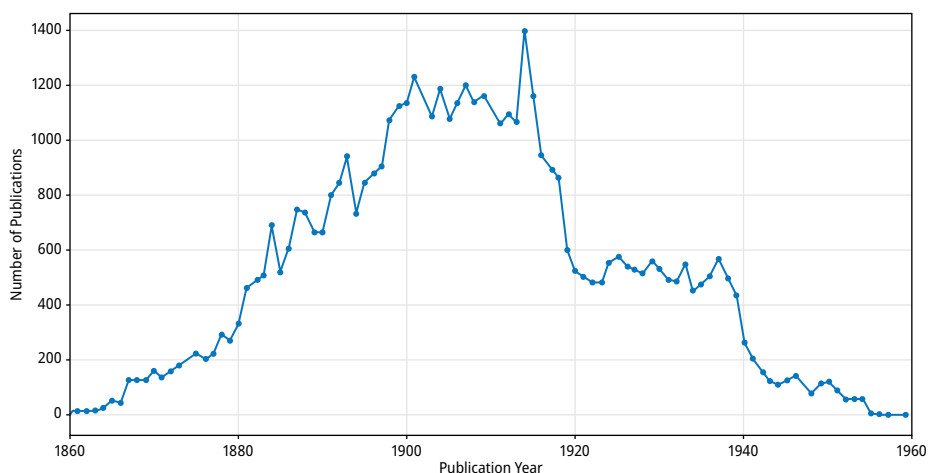


Figure 1: Australian newspaper fiction publications (TBC), 1860 to 1960.

The answer is almost certainly both, possibly in different ways and to different degrees for different times and places. Nonetheless, the capacity of TBC's records to enable study of twentieth-century Australian newspaper fiction publishing is supported by results in Figure 2, which presents this fiction as a proportion of all Trove's digitised articles.¹¹ The unevenness in this line prior to 1865 relates to the scarcity of fiction publications identified until this time. Meanwhile, its relatively smoothness from 1865 to 1955 suggests that, within the conditions of Trove's digitisation program, the methods used to identify fiction have not substantially altered the likelihood of titles being identified.

¹⁰ See Tim Sherratt, Trove Data Guide, <https://tdg.glam-workbench.net/home.html>.

¹¹ The comparison is somewhat complicated by the fact that newspaper stories in TBC can be comprised of anything from one to more than 400 articles, but as a rough measure of reliability the comparison works.

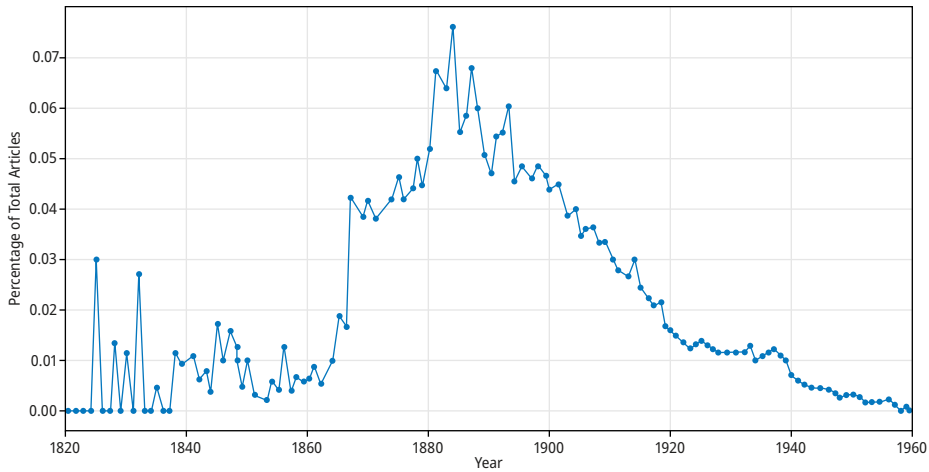


Figure 2: Australian newspaper fiction publications (TBC) as a proportion of all digitised newspaper articles, 1820 to 1960.

The profile of Australian newspaper fiction publishing suggested by Figure 2 is meaningfully different to the established view while also qualifying the impression one would have of this phenomenon if only the number of titles depicted in Figure 1 was considered. Figure 1 suggests that fiction in Australian newspapers peaked between 1900 to 1915. Although it is true that most (66 per cent) of the publications indexed by TBC appear after 1900 – when newspaper fiction has commonly been understood as absent – Figure 2 shows that, as a proportion of overall newspaper production, fiction was most prominent from the mid-1860s to the early 1890s, then gradually declined until 1940 and more rapidly thereafter. Taken together, these figures suggest that fiction had a substantial presence in twentieth-century Australian newspapers, without being as strongly present as in the previous century.

The smoothness of the line in Figure 2, across what were discussed above as three potential stages of twentieth-century Australian newspaper fiction publishing – pre-war, inter-war and post-war – makes it unlikely this result is an artefact of our indexing method. But it also suggests that these three stages probably had more to do with declines in newspaper numbers, or Trove’s digitisation coverage, or both, without helping to decide between these possibilities. The sharp drop in this line in the final five years of Figure 2 leaves open the possibility that fiction persisted in Australian newspapers after Trove’s 1955 copyright cliff, albeit at a lower rate.

Patterns of publication

With these conditions and cautions in mind, we can consider some patterns in twentieth-century Australian newspaper fiction publishing. Some nineteenth-century trends persisted, including the importance of provincial newspapers, male authors and British fiction to the Australian context. At the same time, twentieth-century publishing also departs, in notable ways, from earlier practices, challenging contemporaneous accounts, especially of the balance of local and international periodical fiction.

Figure 3 presents the overall results from Figure 1 in five-year moving averages, while dividing publications into two newspaper types: metropolitan/suburban and provincial. These newspaper types, devised by the research team, classify newspapers according to whether they were published in one of the state capital cities (metropolitan and suburban)¹² or elsewhere (provincial). The vast distances between settlements in Australia make this distinction an important one for understanding publishing practices. These results suggest that provincial newspapers not only continued to publish substantial amounts of fiction in the twentieth century but expanded their contribution. Compared with 57 per cent of fiction publications in the 1880s and 1890s, provincial newspapers were responsible for 68 per cent in the 1900s and 75 per cent in the 1910s, rising to 82 per cent in the 1940s (the question of how provincial newspapers acquired fiction is one we return to later, in the chapter's case studies).

Figures 4 and 5 present the results for gender and nationality, respectively, in five-year periods from 1880 to 1950, including unknown authors in overall trends while excluding them when dividing publishing into metropolitan/suburban and provincial newspapers. As the first panel of Figure 4 indicates, a substantial proportion of the authors of fiction published in Australian newspapers remain unknown, despite our best bibliographical efforts (albeit less so, overall, in the twentieth than in the nineteenth century).

Regarding gender trends, results suggest that the relative male-dominance of Australian newspaper fiction publishing in the nineteenth century – especially relative to descriptions of female-dominated authorship of newspaper fiction in British and American newspapers – continued in the twentieth century.¹³ With the exception of late 1930s and 1940s, a time when global conflict seems likely to have reduced the

¹² These two categories are differentiated based on whether the place of publication for the newspaper is within five kilometres from the Central Business District or more than five kilometres while still being in a current suburb of a state capital city. The 'suburban' category has different implications at different times in this study but encompasses relatively few fiction publications compared to the metropolitan and provincial categories (1167, 16411 and 33600, respectively).

¹³ For example, Anne Boyd, "What! Has She Got into the *Atlantic*?" Women Writers, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the Formation of the American Canon', *American Studies* 39, no. 3 (1998): 5–6; Laurel Brake, 'Writing, Cultural Production, and the Periodical Press in the Nineteenth Century', in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J. B. Bullen (Longman, 1997), 64; Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *Victorian Publishing and Mrs. Gaskell's Work* (University of Virginia Press, 1999), 103.

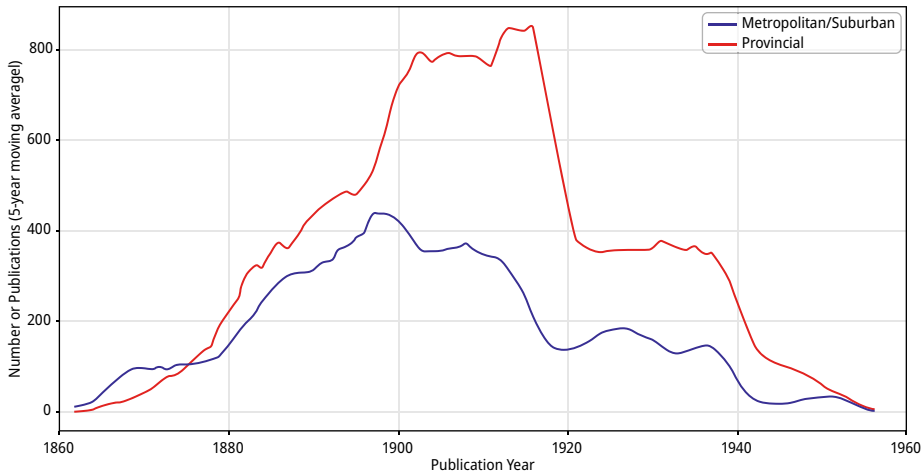


Figure 3: Australian newspaper fiction publications by type (5-year moving averages), 1860 to 1960.

numbers of men writing fiction, most stories published in both metropolitan/suburban and provincial newspapers are by men: approximately two thirds by known authors, both before and after 1900.

By comparison, results for author nationality shift substantially between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and between different newspaper types in the twentieth century, in ways that align with and challenge contemporaneous and subsequent commentary on periodical fiction publishing in Australia.¹⁴ As shown in Figure 5, publication of British fiction in Australian newspapers expanded considerably in the twentieth century, from around a quarter of all such publications at the end of the nineteenth century to almost half (47 per cent) by the 1920s.

Essentially all of this British fiction would have been reused from earlier publications, as would all of the fiction circulating in Australia from America and other countries (including close neighbour New Zealand and places much further afield, from Belgium and Brazil to South Africa and Sweden). Though the influx of British and other international fiction is arguably later than has been proposed, these results accord with contemporaneous and subsequent scholarly accounts of Australia as Britain's largest export market for reading matter, especially fiction, prior to World War Two.¹⁵ The overall growth in British fiction corresponds with a decline in the presence

¹⁴ As might be expected, nationality results are more complex than for gender: not only are there many more types of records, but authors often spent substantial amounts of time in more than one country, leading in some cases to them being classified as, for instance, 'British-Australian' or 'British-American'. Such cases are counted as both of these nationalities in Figure 5.

¹⁵ Martyn Lyons, 'Britain's Largest Export Market', in *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891–1945*, ed. Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (University of Queensland Press, 2001); A. Bremer and M. Lyons,

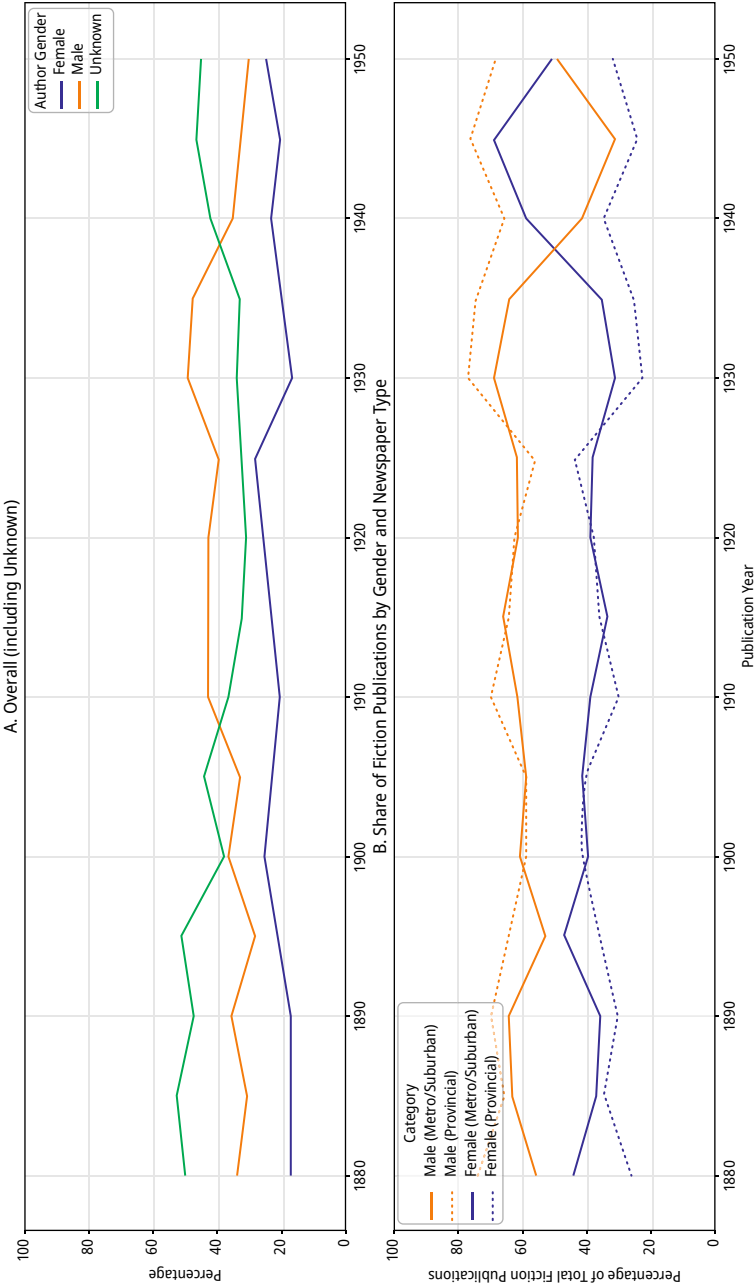


Figure 4: Proportions of newspaper fiction publications by author gender: A. overall (including unknown); B. share of fiction publications by gender and newspaper type.

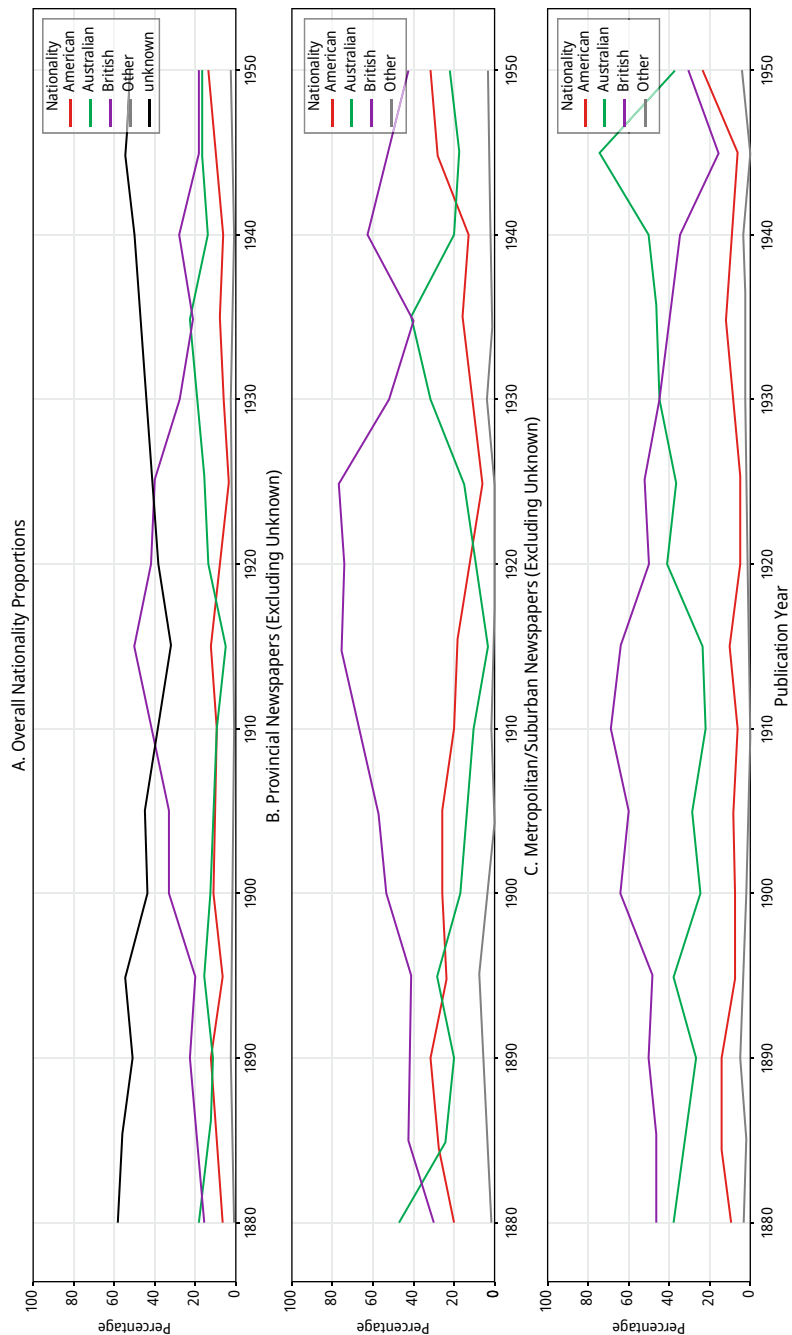


Figure 5: Proportions of newspaper fiction publications by author nationality: A. Overall nationality proportions; B. Provincial newspapers (excluding unknown); C. Metropolitan/suburban newspapers (excluding unknown).

of local fiction in Australian newspapers in the 1900s and 1910s and in American fiction in the 1920s and 1930s.

Considering the different newspaper types, local fiction was scarce in both metropolitan/suburban and especially provincial newspapers at the start of the twentieth century. But it increases through the 1920s and 1930s, in both. The growth corresponds with inter-war initiatives to promote Australian writers and create publishing opportunities in a marketplace dominated by British fiction. This includes the first Australian Authors' Week, held in October 1927 and promoted in newspapers across Australia. Australian fiction falls again in provincial newspapers after the 1930s but remains prominent – then dominant – in metropolitan/suburban publications. Such publishing of local fiction would have also involved reuse, in that individual works might appear in multiple newspapers. But in contrast to the international writing, these Australian stories were first – and in many cases only – published in newspaper form.

This survey of trends in twentieth-century Australian newspaper fiction publishing suggests that, as in the nineteenth century, provincial and metropolitan/suburban newspapers continued to operate in distinct ways, a contradiction of established understandings of Australian print culture as involving the movement of reading materials from metropolitan centres to their respective provinces. Yet the orientation of metropolitan/suburban newspapers to local fiction reverses the nineteenth-century pattern of provincial newspapers being the main publishers of Australian stories. That the more prestigious metropolitan publications would take up this mantle suggests changing attitudes to literary and cultural value.

Distribution – reuse patterns

While fiction from overseas was reused in being published in Australia, there is also evidence of widespread fiction reuse among Australian newspapers, for both international and local writing. Analysis of patterns in reuse suggest that this practice was more important to the circulation of fiction in Australia in the twentieth century than the nineteenth, occurring in some cases by continuing and expanding earlier practices and in others by developing new approaches.

Before 1900, 43 per cent of fictional works in Australian newspapers were republished at least once between 1850 and 1899; for 1900 to 1950, this figure increases to 69 per cent. Figure 6 charts reuse over time, in five-year moving averages, overall and in metropolitan and provincial newspapers. To avoid inflating later counts, results in this section treat reuse in 'episodes': a reappearance within five years belongs to the

'Mechanics' Institute Libraries – the Readers Demand Fiction', in *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891–1945*, ed. Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (University of Queensland Press, 2001).

same episode; a reappearance after five years begins a new, potential, episode, counted only if followed by another appearance within five years.

By this measure, reuse is consistently higher in provincial than in metropolitan newspapers, especially in the twentieth century. Figure 6 thus shows relatively flat rates of fiction reuse in the nineteenth century, followed by growth in this practice in the first couple of decades of the twentieth then a decline, though not returning to nineteenth-century averages until the mid- to late-1940s (the 1915 peak needs to be understood in the context of intensive digitisation efforts for newspapers in this period).

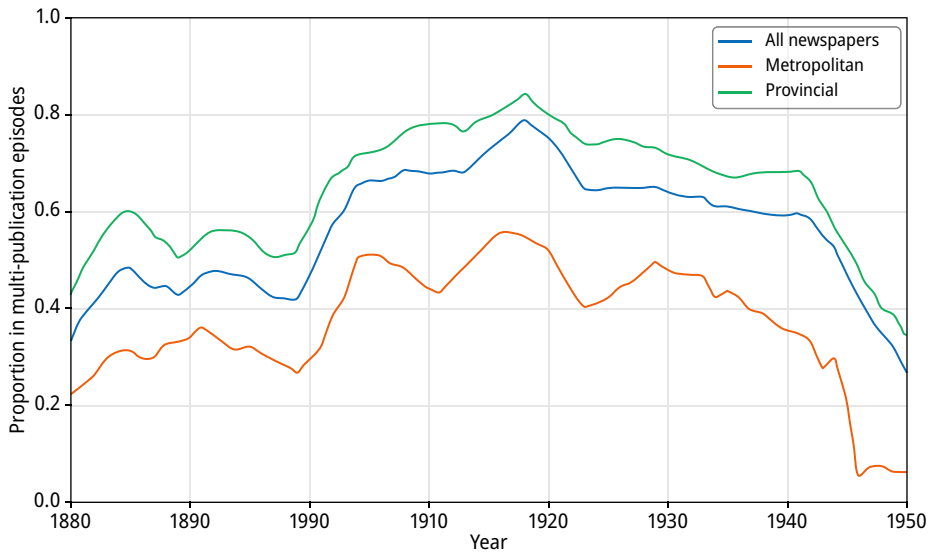


Figure 6: Episodes of reprinting over time, 1880–1950 (5-year moving averages).

Figure 7 examines gendered reuse. As noted above, both metropolitan/suburban and provincial newspapers published more fiction by men than women. That provincial newspapers reused men’s and women’s fiction at similar rates reinforces the sense that this practice was fundamental to how fiction circulated in this context. Metropolitan newspapers, by contrast, more often reused men’s fiction, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, implying that gender differences mattered. Without more archival and bibliographical evidence, however, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of this tendency. What we do know is that particular women writers such as Ethel Turner, Mabel Forrest and Hilda Bridges wrote prolifically for single periodicals like Melbourne’s *Weekly Times* and the *Australasian*, though their work was rarely republished in other metropolitan newspapers.

Adding nationality suggests that this difference in metropolitan publication particularly related to local fiction. As Figure 8 shows, for American and British fiction, gendered reuse aligns with newspaper type: metropolitan newspapers were less likely

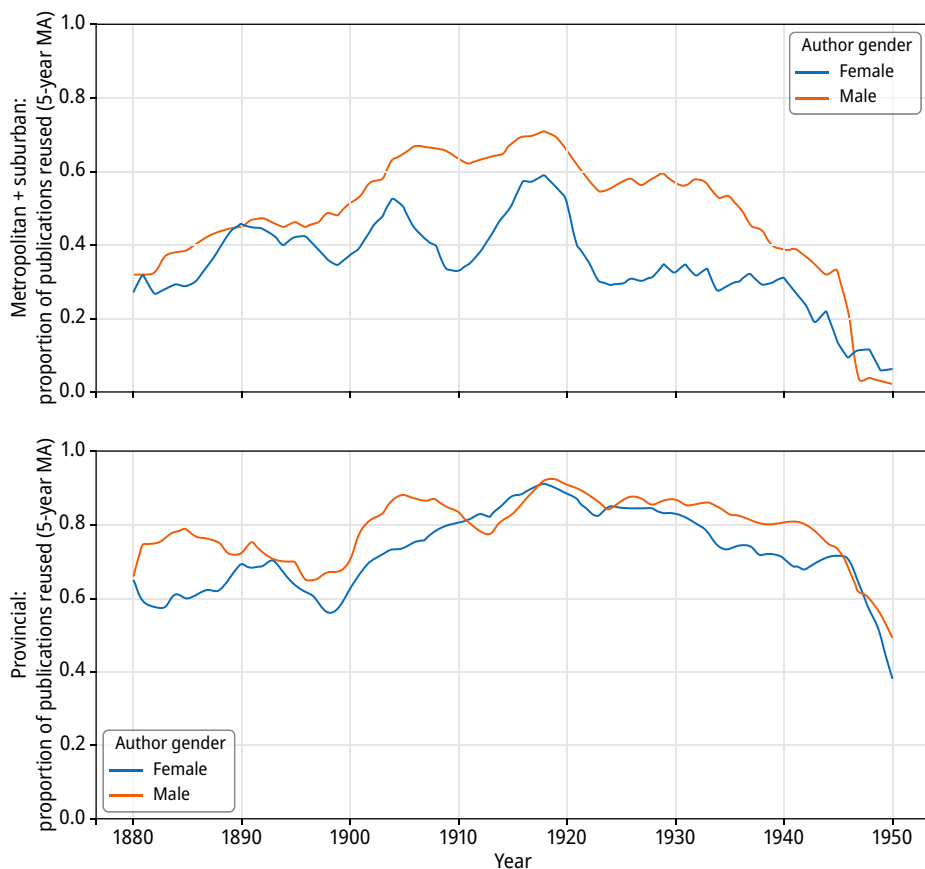


Figure 7: Fiction reuse by gender of author, 1880–1950 (5-year moving averages).

to reuse fiction than their provincial counterparts, but it makes little difference – for this overseas writing – if the authors were male or female. With Australian writing, however, there is a notable gender difference. In provincial newspapers, men’s fiction dominates reuse of local writing in the nineteenth century; but this trend reverses in the twentieth century, when the likelihood of Australian women’s fiction being reused grows to overtake their male counterparts in the 1920s and 1930s, before declining again. By contrast, metropolitan newspapers are consistently less likely to reuse women’s fiction than men’s. As noted already, we have a substantial amount of bibliographical and archival research ahead of us to test and interpret these trends. To begin, we try and establish what dynamics were enabling republishing.

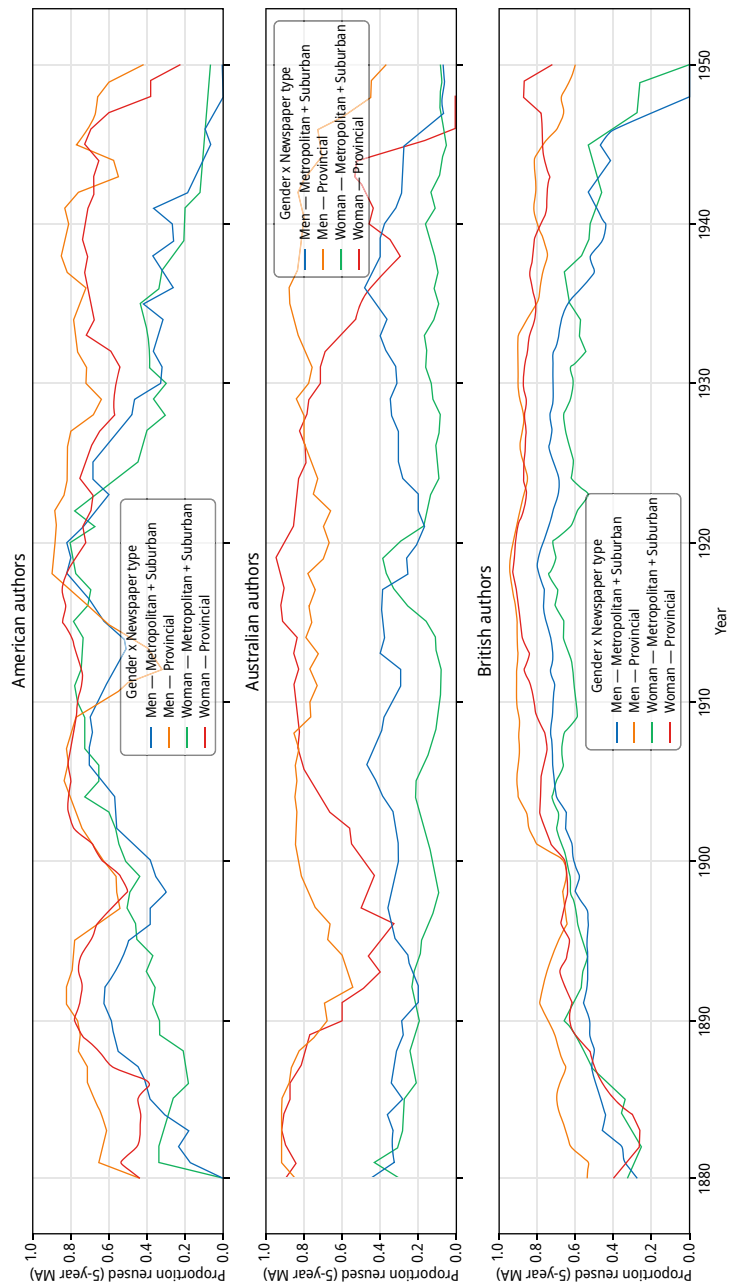


Figure 8: Fiction reuse by author gender and nationality, 1880–1950 (5-year moving averages).

Methods

We know that most fiction published in twentieth-century Australian newspapers was reused but not what this involved. For asking such questions, network analysis can seem the obvious method, since its nodes and edges (or entities and relationships) readily suggest publications linked to each other – or not – depending on whether they share the same stories. Yet it also brings particular challenges for historical publishing research.

Network analysis assumes that all entities and relationships are identified, which is rarely the case for historical datasets such as TBC. It also works on the basis that nodes are structurally comparable, when manual analysis of the smaller dataset of nineteenth-century fiction reuse, and our case studies, suggest considerable variation in practices. Metrics such as clustering or betweenness assign significance to nodes or groups based on inferred relationships, while the graph's visual form can imply a concrete, objective mapping of relationships. For these reasons, network analysis may over-determine or obscure historical relationships.

Instead, we developed an approach anchored in historical understanding of publishing practices, which incorporates adjustable thresholds for exploratory analysis and avoids common network over-generalisation as well as false temporal connections. This pair-based grouping method begins by removing records that are not re-published, and fiction published prior to 1895, before iterating through four stages:

1. Pair identification. Find the two newspapers that share the largest number of works in common, above a set threshold. Publications must be within one year and ties go to the pair with the earliest publication years.
2. Group formation and expansion. Iteratively add the newspaper that shares the next-largest number of titles, again above a particular numerical threshold. The one-year temporal constraint remains and the earliest and latest appearances of a work across all current group members must be three years or less, to avoid long drifting chains. Shared titles must be at least 5 per cent of the group's current title set (a small coherence rule that stops groups getting pulled off course by new additions).
3. Title-set rebuild. When a new newspaper is added to the group, the process returns to the TBC dataset to identify any additional shared titles (within one year) not yet captured.
4. Group finalisation. Expansion stops when no further newspapers qualify, with groups classified as companions (pairs of newspapers with large numbers of titles in common) and syndications (large, dense groups with multiple shared titles), with the remainder classified as loose/incidental fiction reuse.

The threshold for inclusion in the group is an important part of this approach. Textual analysis indicates that a newspaper can be part of a syndication network, based on the appearance of the page (which is standardised due to ready-print supplements),

even when it publishes very few of the titles included in that network. Such sparsity might arise from a newspaper's short-lived involvement in a syndicate or missing editions (not digitised by Trove or not identified by our method or both). For this reason, we avoided methods that would exclude a newspaper simply because most of its total fiction was not reused.

As Table 1 indicates, lower thresholds tend to categorise more reused works into groups, but the groups tend to be 'companion' pairs; higher thresholds reduce coverage and favour larger, denser syndicates. For instance, a threshold of five to seed a group and five to add new members produces 117 groups formed covering 70.3 per cent of reused titles (ninety-six companions, twenty-one syndications). A 20/20 threshold yields twenty-eight groups covering 53.5 per cent of reused works (twenty-three companions, five syndicators).

Table 1: Thresholds for forming newspaper groups for fiction reuse.

Seed min.	Add min.	Groups num.	Companion num.	Syndicator num.	Unique reused works included	% reused works included	Uncategorised unique reused works remaining
5	5	117	96	21	3341	70.3	1409
10	5	33	17	16	3042	64.0	1708
10	10	48	36	12	2995	63.0	1755
15	10	26	15	11	2877	60.6	1873
15	15	35	26	9	2828	59.5	1922
20	15	16	9	7	2713	57.1	2037
20	20	28	23	5	2543	53.5	2207

The analysis below uses a 10/10 threshold, as this seems to balance coverage and interpretability. Forty-eight groups are identified, covering 2,995 unique works (63 per cent of the reuse in this period), while preserving a mix of companion and syndicator groupings (thirty-six and twelve, respectively). Future inquiries could employ different thresholds for different analyses: stricter ones when exploring large, long-running syndication networks; looser ones to explore smaller or incidental patterns of reuse.

Groups

A striking outcome of this method is the large share of reused works that remain uncategorised, even at low thresholds. Although some proportion of these uncategorised instances of reuse will relate to undigitised or unidentified publications, this outcome also suggests that fiction reuse in the twentieth century occurred more often outside

of the companion and syndicate networks that predominantly facilitated this practice in the nineteenth century.

Examining the groups that form through this process suggests that companion publication remained important to fiction reuse for both metropolitan and provincial newspapers (see Figure 9). In the nineteenth century, this phenomenon mainly involved co-owned daily and weekly newspapers, serving city and rural readers. Some of the twentieth century companions fit this description, including the *Adelaide Chronicle* and the *Express and Telegraph* (which shared twenty-four titles between 1899 and 1914) and the *Kalgoorlie Miner* and the *Western Argus* (twenty shared titles between 1896 and 1936).

But in the twentieth century, these instances of companion reuse were more likely to involve co-owned newspapers in different cities or towns, or newspapers that made these arrangements outside of ownership structures. Instances of the former groups include the *Melton Express* and *Bacchus Marsh Express* (twenty-four titles, 1915–1935), the Sydney *Sun* and Newcastle's *Northern Times* (also called the Newcastle *Sun*, thirty-six titles, 1937–1941), and the *Kalgoorlie Sun* and Perth's *Sunday Times* (twenty-nine titles, 1903–1912).¹⁶ The general cessation of companion printing in the 1930s occurred at a time of improvements in transportation networks that extended the reach of major metropolitan dailies and reduced the appeal of such reuse practices.¹⁷

Another continuity from the nineteenth century is fiction reuse among metropolitan newspapers. For instance, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and Brisbane *Courier Mail* published the same stories twenty-six times from 1901 to 1937; Perth's *Western Mail* shared fiction seventeen times with the *Adelaide Observer*, from 1896 to 1915, and twelve times with Brisbane's *Queenslander*, from 1897 to 1923. Yet unlike the nineteenth century, when fiction syndicates were almost exclusively formed from provincial newspapers, in the twentieth century, metropolitan newspapers are also part of these networks.

Table 2 summarises syndicates identified using 10/10 thresholds. A third (four out of twelve) are dominated by metropolitan/suburban newspapers. These groups have relatively small memberships but relatively substantial publication counts. For example, the five member syndicate that runs from 1895 to 1939, with 225 titles, includes three newspapers from state capital cities – two from Adelaide (the co-owned *Adelaide Observer* and *Evening Journal*) and one from Sydney (the *Sun* newspaper) – along with two co-owned daily/weekly newspapers from the small central Queensland town of Rockhampton (the *Morning Bulletin* and the *Central Queensland Herald*). Another third is made up of exclusively provincial newspapers. These syndicates are relatively short lived (from 1912 or 1913 to 1919 in three cases, and 1907 to 1913 in another), with a moderate number of members (between five and eighteen). Compared

¹⁶ The distances of these cities from each other are approximately 20, 180 and 600 kilometres, respectively.

¹⁷ Peter Dowling, 'Weekly Newspapers', in *A Companion to the Australian Media*, ed. Bridget Griffen-Foley (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014).

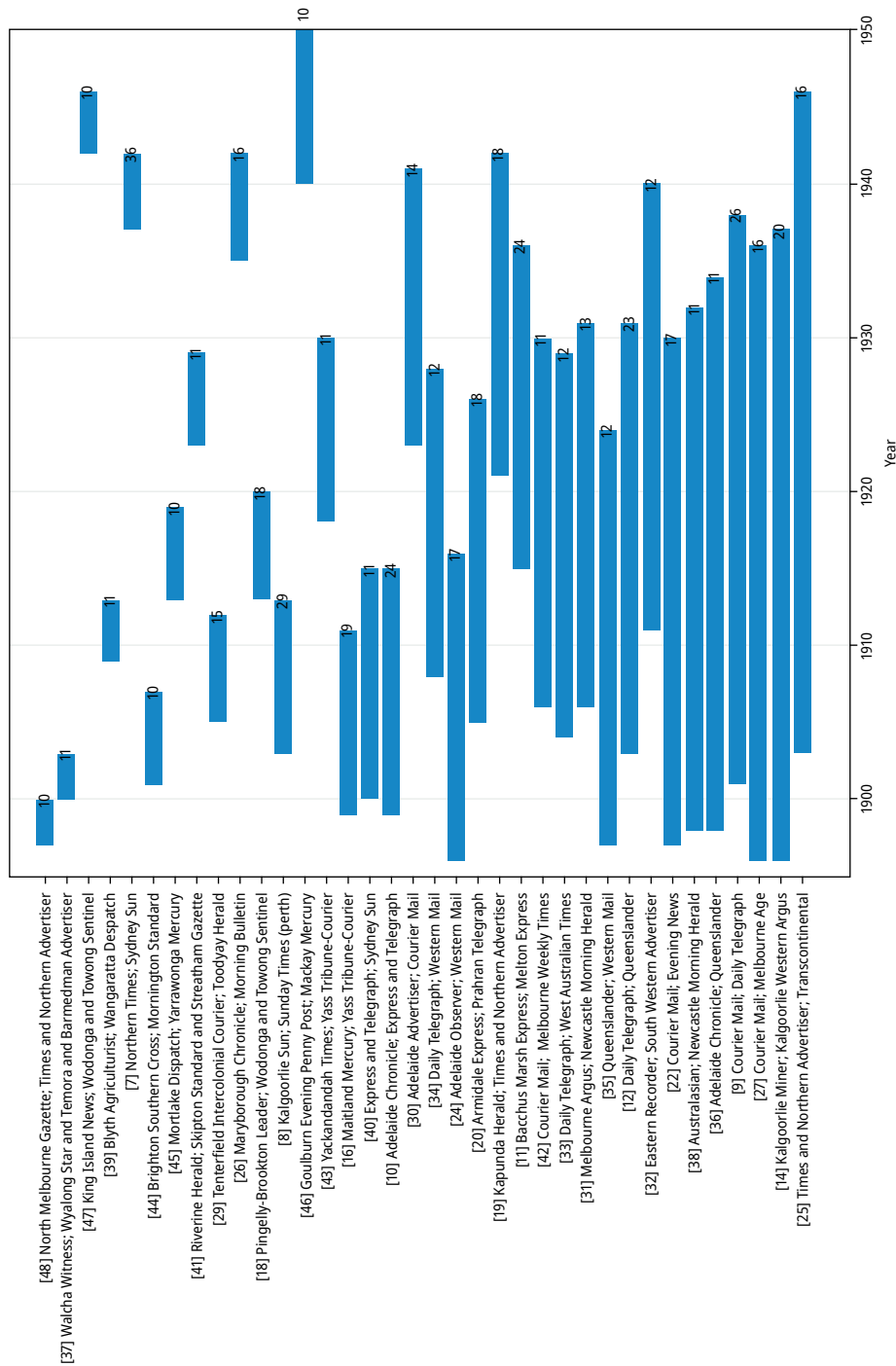


Figure 9: Companion fiction reuse (bar length = active years; number = shared titles).

Table 2: Syndicated fiction reuse, 1895 to 1950.

Syndicate	Num. member newspapers	Earliest year	Latest year	Num. shared works	Num. states	Prop. Metro- suburban	Prop. Provincial
1	60	1895	1950	1004	5	2	98
2	13	1895	1940	685	6	46	54
3	60	1895	1950	666	4	3	97
4	15	1899	1950	311	4	7	93
5	5	1895	1939	225	3	60	40
6	4	1903	1916	107	3	75	25
7	18	1912	1919	35	2	0	100
8	12	1913	1919	35	2	0	100
9	11	1913	1919	30	2	0	100
10	8	1906	1928	28	5	12	88
11	5	1907	1913	26	3	0	100

to the other syndicates their geographical spread tends to be smaller: involving only a single state in one of these instances and two in most others. The number of titles published is also moderate: between twenty-six and thirty-five.

The largest syndicates involve newspaper of all types (metropolitan, suburban and provincial), but most of the members are provincial. The scale of these enterprises is considerable. The two sixty-member newspaper syndicates in Table 2 published 1004 and 666 shared titles and operated across the period studied: from 1895 to 1950. That these largest syndicates include newspapers from four to six states emphasises the national significance of syndication for fiction reading in Australia in the first half of the twentieth century, as in the nineteenth.

New South Wales newspapers are prominent across almost all syndicates, suggesting collection in Sydney and distribution along train lines. Examination of individual newspaper pages suggests that, as in the nineteenth century, this distribution of fiction often occurred via the production of pre-printed supplements, which were inserted into newspapers published in diverse locales. Another clue as to the networks through which this fiction travelled is given by the dominance of British fiction among the syndicated publications. Of the works where authorship is known, British fiction makes up approximately 44 per cent of TBC's fiction in this time, compared with 57 per cent of reused titles generally and 63 per cent of fiction published by syndicates. As with the nineteenth century, very little evidence survives about these syndicates, and even less about how they sourced and distributed fiction to metropolitan and provincial newspapers. The case studies below go some way to fill those gaps.

What these general trends show is that fiction syndication maintained a strength in Australia that was diminishing elsewhere. Both Charles Johanningsmeier and Christopher Hilliard describe a decline in syndication practices in the first half of the twentieth century. In the American context, Johanningsmeier notes that, from 1917, only one 'pro-

vider of readyprint and plate service' continued to operate.¹⁸ The decline can be attributed to competition for content from mass-market magazines, which emerged in the 1890s, paid authors more generously and provided them with a more prestigious profile than newspaper serialisation. Such competition increased the value of literary content, making it more difficult for syndicates to compete.¹⁹ Because most syndicates lost money on fiction, and because it was only a small part of a total suite of syndicated content, fiction was a dispensable part of the syndication business.²⁰

In the British context, Hilliard traces Tillotson's fiction department into the 1930s. Even though the fiction department 'still paid its way [. . .] in 1935 the directors sold it off, accepting an offer from a Fleet Street syndicating firm whose main product was features'.²¹ Because the Australian marketplace for newspaper serials relied heavily on imported fiction, it was not immune to these developments. But the broader impact of these effects might have been delayed. Printing technologies and transportation systems were keeping pace with the United Kingdom and the United States of America, but, well into the 1930s, regional and remote areas still relied on the services of others to provide content and efficiently and economically produce local newspapers. The unique geographical conditions of the Australian continent meant that re-printed syndication fiction remained a mainstay for many provincial newspapers in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The following case studies show how this occurred in more specific contexts.

Case studies: Massively published titles:

B. L. Farjeon's *The Mesmerist's Crime* and *Almaz*

E. Stout's *Master of All*

The twentieth-century continuation of nineteenth-century patterns of syndication and reprinting, suggested by the trends discussed above, is confirmed by close examination of newspaper pages, particularly in cases of large-scale reprinting. B. L. Farjeon was a British novelist who spent his formative years as a writer and journalist in Australia and New Zealand. His late nineteenth-century novel, *The Mesmerist's Crime*, offers a useful case to describe continuities in syndication practices, because of its position at the tail-end of Farjeon's career and because of the evidence of two distinct phases of reprinting, the latter occurring almost a decade after the author's death.

¹⁸ Charles Johanningsmeier, *Fiction and the American Literary Marketplace: The Role of Newspaper Syndicates in America, 1860–1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 206–207.

¹⁹ Johanningsmeier, *Fiction and the American Literary Marketplace*, 218.

²⁰ Johanningsmeier, *Fiction and the American Literary Marketplace*, 213.

²¹ Christopher Hilliard, 'The Provincial Press and the Imperial Traffic in Fiction, 1870s–1930s', *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 657, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27752574>.

One of the many popular authors associated with the major nineteenth-century syndication agencies, Farjeon would have been well-known to the editors of metropolitan and provincial editors and the readers of their newspapers. In the case of *The Mesmerist's Crime*, the prevalence of Australian provincial publication of newspaper fiction is clear. The novel's first appearance in Australia was as a metropolitan companion publication through its serialisation in the state of Queensland during February and March 1899 by Brisbane's daily *Telegraph* and the weekly *Week*. The novel was serialised the following March by the *Gympie Times*, the *Warwick Daily News* and then, in June 1901, by the Charters Towers *Evening Telegraph*. The first two of these serialisations share the same page layout and content – the 'melange of reprinted material' in Elizabeth Morrison's terms – suggesting a common source, which is further emphasised by the publication of more shared titles, later in 1900: R. E. Francillon's *An Obstinate Blockhead* and Richard Marsh's *In Full Cry*.²² In Charters Towers, the *Evening Telegraph* printed the same three columns of the serialisation, finishing the third column with the same content as the other newspapers but filling the remaining five columns with local material. The reuse of the three columns with *The Mesmerist's Crime* and three short items – 'Queen and Friend', 'Duty Before All Things' and 'Helping the Servant' – are important to note, because they provide a link to the serialisation of the novel in neighbouring New South Wales. The same three columns appear in those newspapers in two periods of time, 1900 and 1914, suggesting that the Queensland provincial newspapers received their copy from New South Wales rather than their own capital city.

In New South Wales, the novel was first published in Sydney, in March 1899, by the metropolitan *Australian Star*, but most of the subsequent reprints in this state were published in November 1900, differing in column format from the metropolitan newspaper by installing the three columns of content published in the three provincial Queensland newspapers. With the source of pre-printed material likely produced in Sydney and distributed along the rail networks that radiated from that capital city to provincial newspapers across the state, it is also possible that the Queensland newspapers received their belated copy in the same way (see Figure 10). The vast majority of the New South Wales newspapers that printed *The Mesmerist's Crime* are included in Syndicate 3, suggesting a common distributor located in the capital city (see Table 2). Most of the provincial newspapers printing this first serialisation of *The Mesmerist's Crime* were located in regional and remote areas to the south of Sydney, with a few as far away as Maclean in the north of the state.

²² Elizabeth Morrison's description of a 'melange of reprinted material' is found in Elizabeth Morrison, 'Serial Fiction in Australian Colonial Newspapers', in *Literature in the Marketplace: 19th-century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, 2nd ed., ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 317.

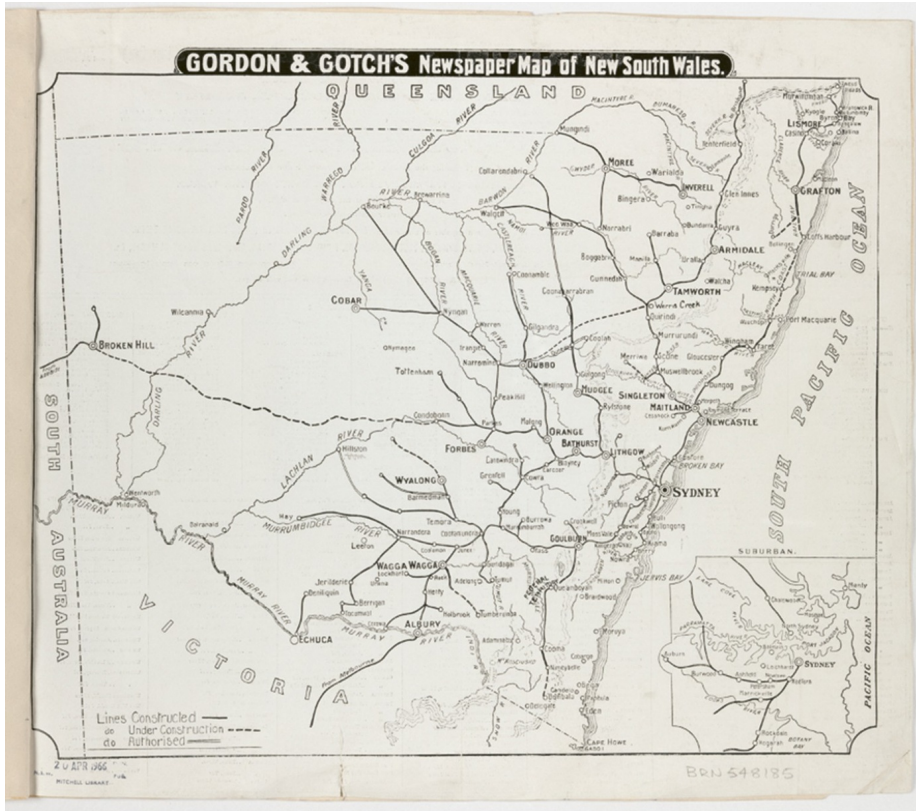


Figure 10: Map of the railway lines and newspapers in New South Wales. *Gordon and Gotch's Newspaper Maps of Australia and New Zealand* (1923).

Farjeon's novel continued to be in demand well after his death in 1903, returning to provincial newspapers in New South Wales during 1914.²³ This time it was published

²³ Publications in 1900: *Bombala Times*; *Cowra Guardian and Lachlan Agricultural Recorder*; *Delegate Argus*; *Dungog Chronicle*; *Jerilderie Herald*; *Murrumburrah Signal and County of Harden Advocate*. Publications in 1914: *Braidwood Express*; *Campbelltown News*; *Clarence River Advocate*; *Grenfell Record and Bland Advertiser*; *Blue Mountain Gazette*; *Nowra Colonist*; *Queanbeyan Observer*; *Tumut and Adelong Times*; *Wyalong Star and Temora and Barmedman Advertiser*; *Molong Argus*; *Grenfell Record and Bland Advertiser*; *Mittagong Express*; *Picton Argus*; *Cowra Free Press*; *Dungog Chronicle*; *Forbes Advocate*; *Guyra Argus*; *Illawarra Mercury*; *Jerilderie Herald*; *Lachlander and Condobolin and Western Districts Recorder*; *Manilla Express*; *Gwydir Examiner*; *Murrumburrah Signal and County of Harden Advocate*; *Queanbeyan Age*; *Carcoar Chronicle*; *Cobar Herald*; *Corowa Free Press*; *Gundagai Times*; *Richmond River Express*; *Muswellbrook Chronicle*; *Riverine Grazier*; *Scone Advocate*; *Scrutineer and Berrima District Press*; *Nowra Colonist*; *Bowral Free Press*; *Wialda Standard*; *Western Herald*; *Tocumwal Guardian*.

by at least twenty-six provincial newspapers, including six of the same newspapers from the earlier period. The same three columns used in the earlier serialisations were also used here, indicating that the syndicator continued to send pre-printed sheets to provincial newspapers. In this instance, the novel was accompanied in the additional columns by miscellaneous notes and stories, and 'Agricultural and Pastoral Notes' contributed by the New South Wales Minister for Agriculture. Perhaps reflecting the development of transport networks since the turn of the century, residents of remote towns as far west as Bourke and Cobar and Hay were able to read Farjeon's novel in their local newspaper. Overwhelmingly, this syndicate supplied provincial newspapers in New South Wales but, on one occasion, supplied sheets with Farjeon's novel to the *Yackandandah Times*, located in the far north of the neighbouring state of Victoria.

While cases like *The Mesmerist's Crime* suggest state-based concentrations of re-published novels, with only minimal cross-border publications, this was not always the case, particularly with some of the most frequently printed titles. British-born Almaz E. Stout's novels had been appearing in Australian newspapers since 1912, none of these as popular as *Master of All*, which was published in more than fifty newspapers from 1914 until as late as 1933.²⁴ Before this expansive run in 1914, it was first published on Wednesdays and Saturdays during 1912 as a supplement in the metropolitan Brisbane daily *Courier Mail*. Two years later, during November 1914, the novel began to be distributed across provincial Victoria. The vast majority of these were 'Published by Arrangement with Cassell's Colonial Press, Melbourne' and distributed on pre-printed sheets with a miscellany of columns that indicate two separate production cycles. One of these cycles, starting on 5 November, began with the columns 'Members of Parliament' and Andrew Carnegie's 'Why I am the Happiest Man Alive'. In the second cycle, beginning a week later, these opening columns had been replaced by 'Aeroplanes in the War' and 'The Fall of Four Great Heroes'. Neither of these production cycles fall within a particular geographical area, but they can be aligned with Syndicates 1 and 9 in Table 2. The serial was dispersed across provincial Victoria and in two cases extends to newspapers located in the neighbouring states of New South Wales and South Australia. Nevertheless, these patterns of publication

²⁴ Published in NSW: *Urana Independent*; *West Wyalong Advocate*; *Shoalhaven Telegraph*; *Yass Tribune-Courier*; *Singleton Argus*; *Gloucester Advocate*; *Burrowa News*; *Tumut and Adelong Times*; *Cessnock Express and Mining and Farming Representative*; *Muswellbrook Chronicle*; *West Wyalong Advocate*; *Delegate Argus*; *Bombala Times*. Published in VIC: *Berringa Herald*; *Bruthen and Tambo Times*; *Camperdown Herald*; *Clunes Guardian and Gazette*; *Euroa Advertiser*; *Foster Mirror and South Gippsland Shire Advocate*; *Gippsland Times*; *Gippslander and Mirboo Times*; *Great Southern Advocate*; *Kyabram Guardian*; *Lismore, Derrinallum and Cressy Advertiser*; *Mount Wycheproof Ensign and East Wimmera Advocate*; *Numurkah Leader*; *Pitfield Banner and Hollybush Times*; *Shepparton News*; *St Arnaud Mercury*; *Swan Hill Guardian*; *Broadford Courier*; *Casterton News and the Merino and Sandford Record*; *Elmore Standard*; *Horsham Times*; *Toora and Welshpool Ensign and South Gippsland Observer*; *Trafalgar and Yarragon Times*; *Tungamah and Lake Rowan Express*; *Upper Murray and Mitta Herald*; *Wan-*

combine to identify a common source in the production of sheets and two syndication agencies, possibly Victorian syndicates identified in *A World of Fiction*.

At least two other distinct distribution syndicates can be identified by examining the newspapers themselves. One of these syndicates supplied an instalment of the novel on one page with space to fill with local advertisements. This version of the serial was published in New South Wales by the Shoalhaven *Telegraph* and the *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, in the far north-west of Western Australia by the *Nor'West Echo* and in Victoria by the *Sunshine Advocate*. The longevity of this syndicate is seen in the range of supply: the serialisation in the Shoalhaven *Telegraph* and the *Nor'West Echo* occurred in October 1917; and the other two were published in 1924 and 1925.

A similar longevity is seen in another manifestation of the serial, which stretches from 1917 to 1933. In each of these cases, the newspapers print the same three columns with a final line such as '(To Be Continued) MA.1' to indicate to compositors the stage of the serialisation. This version was used by the *Border Chronicle* (1917), *Yass Courier* (1917), *Gloucester Advocate* (1921), *Beautesert Times* (1922), *Delegate Argus* (1929) and *Bombala Times* (1933). The location of the latter three of these in New South Wales suggests a Sydney-based syndicator, but the *Border Chronicle*, located in provincial South Australia, and the *Beautesert Times*, located in provincial Queensland, call this into question or indicate the geographical reach of that syndication agency. How this version of the serial was distributed is open to speculation, but, in addition to the provision of sheets, syndicators might have provided stereotype plates or lighter flongs, enabling each paper to create their own plates. The flexibility and efficiency of the latter might be more likely, because the *Delegate Argus* used the first two instalments to print six columns divided by a centre column of advertising.

Of the fifty-three republications of Almaz E. Stout's *Master of All*, at least twenty-one were set and distributed by a central syndication agency located in Victoria, delivered either in printed sheets, stereotype plates or papier-mâché flongs. A minority of the republications were probably printed on location by the newspaper themselves. What this shows is a concentration of serialisation in New South Wales and Victoria, which reflects the high number of newspapers in those states in comparison with other Australian states and territories. This example also demonstrates how far the nineteenth-century practices of syndication continued into the twentieth century. While reuse declined gradually from the 1920s, fiction syndication continued to be important, especially to provincial newspapers with economic and technological challenges. While it is too early to say when this practice finally ended, it is safe to say that it continued in one of the forms we have discussed well into the 1940s and, perhaps, beyond.

This aspect of Australian newspaper fiction publishing provided opportunities and challenges for Australian writers trying to capture the attention of Australian

garatta Chronicle; *Avoca Mail*; *Dandenong Advertiser*; *Grenville Standard*; *Minyip Guardian* and *Sheep Hills Advocate*; *Stawell News* and *Pleasant Creek Chronicle*; *Brimbank* and *North West Star Weekly*.

readers within a marketplace dominated by imported British and American fiction. With the worldwide emergence of the modern genre system in the 1890s, Australian newspaper readers of the twentieth century consumed a steady diet of light romance, historical romance, adventure, thrillers, science fiction, detective fiction and crime fiction, only occasionally encountering an Australian version of such genres, which had been appearing in magazines and newspapers since the nineteenth century.²⁵ In the twentieth century, many Australian authors, professional and amateur, aspired to make a living by writing fiction for this competitive marketplace, despite the barriers imposed by the competition from the likes of Almaz E. Stout, B. L. Farjeon and many others. The following section provides an account of a few Australian writers who succeeded in reaching similar numbers of readers across Australia.

Case studies: Making a living as an Australian author

Published protests from Australian organisations such as the Cultural Defence Committee depicted imported and/or syndicated content as a menace to the health of Australian culture.²⁶ According to the critique presented by cultural nationalists, the flood of such content and the dumping of this material into the Australian marketplace had a deleterious effect on readers and created unfair competition for Australian authors. In the less than lucrative Australian market, during the middle decades of the twentieth century a novelist might hope to be offered 100 Australian pounds for a serial in an Australian newspaper or magazine. But periodical editors could acquire imported novels offered by English and American syndication companies for twenty pounds. In the 1920s, experienced Australian author Vance Palmer received seventy-seven pounds from *The Bulletin* for serialisation of *Men are Human* but only twenty-one from the monthly *Australian Journal* for *Dubonnet's Daughter*.²⁷

R. G. Campbell, editor of the monthly *Australian Journal* for more than twenty years, defended such rates in Australia: 'The *Australian Journal*, with its very limited revenue and circulation, [in comparison to English and American magazines] was in a particularly unfortunate position. To pay [the American] *Saturday Evening Post* rates for serials would have put the Journal out of business in a few months.'²⁸ Nevertheless, Australian authors and their advocates continued to complain about the situa-

25 David Glover, 'Publishing, History, Genre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*, ed. David Glover and Scott McCracken (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15–19; Toni Johnson-Woods, 'Popular Australian Writing', in *A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900*, ed. Nicholas Birns and Rebecca McNeer (Boydell and Brewer, Incorporated, 2007), 389.

26 'Mental Rubbish from Overseas: A Public Protest', Cultural Defence Committee, June 1935.

27 Roger Osborne, 'Vance Palmer, Short Fiction and Australian Magazine Culture in the 1920s', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* 6 (2007): 57–58.

28 R. G. Campbell, 'An Editor Regrets', R. G. Campbell Papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

tion into the 1940s. When the widely published William Hatfield was evicted from his home in 1939, the *Labor Call* pleaded the case to its readers: 'Many a yarn whose English serial rights have paid the author to the tune of several hundred pounds [. . .] has been printed in Australia [. . .] for as little as twenty pounds. [. . .] Obviously no Australian writer could afford to produce a serial for so paltry a fee.'²⁹

Despite the reality of the competition faced by writers in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, aspiring writers maintained a conviction that they could make a living from writing with perseverance and appropriate instruction. In the wake of the inaugural Australian Authors' Week in 1926, and a 1927 'Popularity Plebiscite' in the pages of the Melbourne *Argus*, instruction manuals and marketplace guides were issued regularly throughout the following decades, including *Why Editors Regret (First Aid for the Freelance)* (1929) and *Australian Writers and Artists' Market, Including New Zealand: A Practical Selling Guide for the Freelance* (1946). Imported from England, Michael Joseph's widely cited *Complete Writing for Profit* (1928) included a section on 'How to Write Serial Fiction'. From the 1920s onwards, the Australian School of Journalism offered correspondence courses in freelance writing with taglines in their advertisements such as 'From the Ranks of the Plain Folk – Come the Great Authors of Today' and 'Make Money With Your Pen: Let These Famous Authors Teach You How to Write'. After a career in journalism in Melbourne during the 1920s and early 1930s, Bernard Cronin, the widely published author of short stories, novels and serials, set up a manuscript assessment agency and distributed his own instructional materials, adapting these courses in the 1950s for delivery by the Melbourne Technical College. Whether any of this promotion and instruction had a direct effect on aspiring serial novelists is difficult to determine, but it does suggest the possibility of an amateur or freelance sector of Australian authorship that provided more content to newspapers and magazines than is recognised by literary history.

In the 1929 edition of the *Australian and New Zealand Writers' and Artists' Year Book*, the journalist W. E. Fitz Henry contributed a section on serials in his 'Field for the Freelance in Australia'. Giving his readers some hope in the late 1920s, Fitz Henry suggested a rise in interest amongst newspaper editors for serials from Australian authors, indicating that twenty-five to fifty pounds might be expected for a single serial, because newspapers could not pay more with American and English syndicates offering serials 'from £5 to £20 apiece'. In reality, Australian writers could only expect payment in the lower range, because '£25 is almost the fixed rates of dailies, which are the most constant buyers'.³⁰

Aspiring writers leafing through the pages of the various issues of the *Australian and New Zealand Writers' and Artists' Year Book* could see a selection of daily or weekly publications that were accepting serials. In 1929, these included the monthly

²⁹ 'The Vanishing Australian Author', *Labor Call*, 7 December 1939, 2.

³⁰ W. E. Fitz Henry, 'Field for the Freelance in Australia', in *Australian and New Zealand Writers' and Artists' Year Book*, ed. C. V. Ringstad and W. E. Fitzhenry (Cecil Ringstad, 1929), 74.

Australian Journal, the weekly *Sydney Mail* and *Australasian*, *Australian Women's Mirror*, the *Capricornian*, the *Catholic Press*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Launceston Examiner*, the *Leader*, the *Queenslander*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Western Mail* and the *World's News*. Such requests for fiction from Australian writers correspond with the high rates of publication of local writing in metropolitan newspapers from the 1920s and in provincial ones, in the 1930s especially.

The 1946 edition of the *Australian and New Zealand Writers' and Artists' Year Book* suggests that serials were in much less demand in a post-war marketplace: no Victorian dailies are listed in search of serials; the *Sydney Morning Herald* refused to provide details; the *Australian Woman's Mirror* was the only weekly seeking serials. In Queensland, only the *Sunday Mail* was listed as seeking short serials, and the *Adelaide Mail* in South Australia. No West Australian newspapers actively sought serials. The lack of interest in serials seen in the 1946 edition suggest a changing landscape but one still not complete without closer inspection. Interest in, and awareness of, serialised fiction was fostered by novel competitions, especially in metropolitan newspapers.

Ongoing novel competitions, which included serialisation as part of the award, were run by the *Bulletin* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In the 1920s and 1930s, winners and placegetters whose novels were serialised by the *Bulletin* include *A House is Built* by 'M. Barnard Eldershaw' (a pseudonym employed by Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw), *The Passage* by Vance Palmer and *Coonardoo* by Katharine Susannah Prichard. In the 1940s, prize-winning novels serialised by the *Sydney Morning Herald* included Ruth Park's *A Harp in the South*, adding to the considerable roster of authors whose work was serialised on a regular basis. Ruth Park is a good example of an author who made the most of their literary property by publishing in book as well as in serial form. The second prize winner, Jon Cleary, also published in book form as well as receiving subsidiary payments for serialisation when those rights were sold in Australia or overseas.

The long duration of serialised fiction in Australian newspapers is clearly demonstrated by the example of Jon Cleary whose work was frequently serialised by newspapers in the 1950s and by the *Australian Women's Weekly* as late as 1977. While serialisation in Australia was never the lucrative outcome offered by the major English and American periodicals in the nineteenth century, the proceeds from such publications often supplemented the income Australian writers made as freelance writers. For others, serialisation provided a supplementary income to other modes of primary employment. Some of these were journalists such as Aidan de Brune and A. E. Yarra. They are not recognised in any mainstream literary histories, but they play a prominent part in the history of serial fiction in twentieth-century Australian newspapers.

Aidan de Brune

Aidan de Brune was the most syndicated Australian writer in the twentieth century, surpassing many of the most popular imported novelists and clearly dominating in the 1930s. Famous in the 1920s for circumnavigating Australia on foot and reporting on his travels in the *Sydney Daily Mail*, he had worked as a journalist and occasional writer of serial stories for several newspapers before that trek. After completing the trek, he built on his fame and embarked on a career as a writer, publishing *The Carson Loan Mystery* with Bookstall in 1926, *The Dagger and Cord* with Cornstalk in 1927 and *The Shadow Crook* with Angus & Robertson in 1930. The latter was praised in a *Sydney Morning Herald* review for having the mystery ‘unwind in Sydney instead of London and New York’, and for making ‘the fingerprint system his keynote through a cleverly contrived story, in which comes the mystifying discovery that apparently there are two persons whose prints are exactly the same’.³¹

In 1933, the author and instructor Bernard Cronin listed Aidan de Brune amongst a group of mystery and crime writers ‘who compare very favourably with the majority of overseas writers of this class of fiction’.³² With more than twenty Aidan de Brune mysteries published in newspapers across Australia, de Brune maintained a significant profile as an author, supporting a creative output that continued until 1938 when new titles ceased to appear in the press. In 1932, a contributor to the *Hobart Voice* reported that ‘Edgar Wallace, the Robot of fiction, has an Australian rival in Aidan de Brune, whose novel-making machine worked with more than usual celerity upon a serial for the Melbourne *Argus*’.³³ This serial was likely *Douchard’s Island*, which ran in the *Argus* during 1931, but also in a range of provincial newspapers in Queensland, New South Wales and West Australia, indicating the extent to which de Brune’s fiction was syndicated across Australia. Most of his novels have never been published in book form.

Taking de Brune’s *Unlawful Adventure* as an example, a network of syndicated distribution emerges that has little or nothing to do with metropolitan areas. In New South Wales, where de Brune resided, the serial appeared in the *Cessnock Eagle*, the *Corowa Free Press*, the *Forbes Advocate*, the *Deniliquin Independent*, the *Manning River Times*, the *Musswellbrook Chronicle* and the *Uralla Times*. In Queensland, the serial was published in the *Pittsworth Sentinel*, the *Rockhampton Evening News*, the *Longreach Leader*, the *Toowoomba Chronicle* and the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*. Less widely distributed in other states, the serial was published three times in Victoria, twice in South Australia and twice again in West Australia.

³¹ ‘Novels of the Day’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 1930, 8.

³² Bernard Cronin, ‘Some Modern Australian Novelists’, (Melbourne) *Advocate*, 26 October 1933, 4.

³³ ‘Aidan de Brune: Our Own Edgar Wallace’, *Voice*, 9 January 1932, 3.

An entrepreneur from early in life, de Brune might have been his own syndicator. While there is no archival evidence of this, he was named as the syndicator of Miss Mary Tallis's 'Let's Go Gossiping', which was published in Queensland's *Moreton Mail* in 1933, the only occasion in which this byline was included in this widely published piece. If this was the case, de Brune might have syndicated his own serials from Sydney by distributing galley proofs from newspapers that purchased first serial rights, while also acting as an agent for others. These activities might also explain his ability to live in the salubrious Astoria flats in Kirribilli, as described by Colin Choat.³⁴ As a literary agent, Aidan de Brune was not alone in the Sydney marketplace. Napier, Gardiner & Co operated from Pitt Street in Sydney, offering a variety of services, including manuscript assistance and arranging publication for freelance output, including serials. The presence of such agents might explain the distribution to country newspapers of Australian serials, especially when one considers the railways within the transportation networks of supply and Sydney's Central Station as a hub. The output of A. E. Yarra, another prolific distributor of serial fiction in the 1930s, makes this clear.

A. E. Yarra

Just behind de Brune in terms of syndication networks is the Grafton-based journalist A. E. Yarra, whose novels were widely syndicated in the late 1930s. A Gallipoli veteran, Yarra worked as a journalist and newspaper editor in Deniliquin before moving to Brisbane to join the *Courier Mail* and then south to Grafton to work for the *Daily Examiner* until his retirement in 1943. Yarra published verse and short stories in the *Bulletin* and was reportedly runner-up in the first Bulletin novel competition, revising and publishing that work in London as *The Vanishing Horsemen*.³⁵ Disappointed with the financial return from book publication after expenses were subtracted from the small return on an Australian edition, Yarra pursued a career in journalism and continued to write novels of the Australian outback and occasional detective fiction.

Yarra's output continued until the middle of the 1930s when his appointment to the *Daily Examiner* coincided with the simultaneous appearance of several titles in newspapers across Australia. In 1937, the *Gloucester Examiner* wrote that 'Few Australian writers have achieved the distinction of having three serials running simultaneously in a total of forty metropolitan and provincial newspapers'.³⁶ These serials

³⁴ Colin Choat, *The Amateur Tramp: A Walk of Ten Thousand Miles Around Australia* (Project Gutenberg, 2018), <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks19/1901261p.pdf>.

³⁵ N. E. Gledhill, 'Novel in Australia: Plea for Recognition', *West Australian*, 5 April 1930, 4.

³⁶ A. E. Yarra, 'Author Goes Bush', *Gloucester Advocate*, 25 June 1937, 1. This feature appeared in many of the newspapers that published Yarra's novels.

were *The Vanishing Horsemen*, his 1930 novel of western Queensland cattle-duffing, *The Valley of Lagoons*, a history of settlement on the mid-North Coast of New South Wales, and *The Man From the Gulf*, a murder mystery again set in outback Queensland. Throughout 1938 and 1939, Yarra continued his run, publishing detective fiction with titles such as *Lone Hand Laracy* and *Laracy's Pot of Gold*, *Dinner-Suit Dan*, *Easy Money*, and *I Believe in Knights*. In the 1940s, he completed his run of serials with *A Horseman in the Sky*. Except for *The Vanishing Horsemen*, none of these novels were published in book form, but with serialisation in provincial newspapers across all states, he probably reached more readers than book publication would have provided.

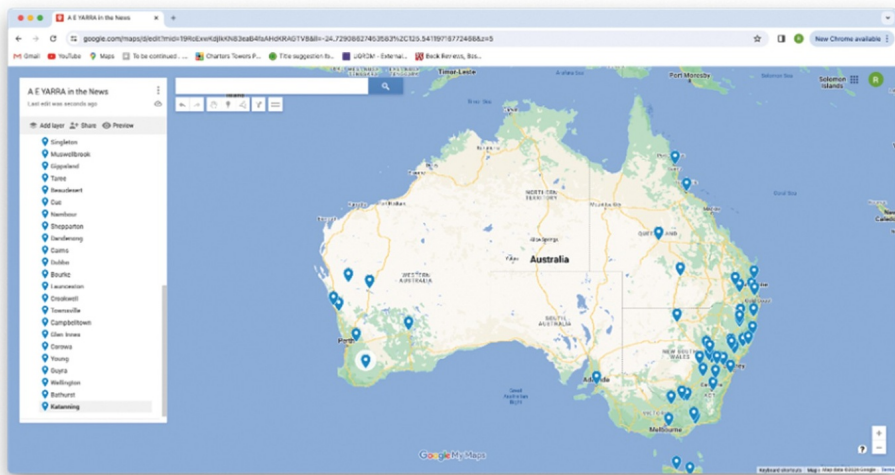


Figure 11: Map of Australia with locations of newspapers serialising fiction by A. E. Yarra. Google (n.d.).

Like Aidan de Brune, A. E. Yarra's novels were spread over a significant network of country newspapers, with only a few appearances in metropolitan spaces (Figure 11). In several cases (*The Vanishing Horsemen*, *The Valley of Lagoons*, *The Man from the Gulf* and *Laracy's Pot of Gold*), Grafton's *Daily Examiner* published first, suggesting that Yarra might have called in a favour with the pressroom and collected sets of galley proofs for distribution to other newspapers. With most of the New South Wales newspapers situated in towns with busy train stations connected to Sydney, the rail system supported the distribution of galley proofs, and with most newspapers operating with faster linotype machines and modern presses, little time was necessary for setting up from issue to issue.

Comparison of the various issues of *The Vanishing Horsemen* shows that columns are closely related but never exactly the same, confirming that they would have been reset at each newspaper rather than set from stereo plates as was common in earlier

periods and described above in the first two case studies. And so, for A. E. Yarra, Grafton and the *Daily Examiner* was a likely centre for the author's self-syndication, not a metropolitan centre, perhaps trading on his position as a veteran journalist with contacts across New South Wales, Queensland and beyond. Like Aidan de Brune, Yarra's fiction reached a considerable audience. Whether he received payment, or how much, may never be known, but, along with Aidan de Brune, the case of A. E. Yarra makes it clear that some Australian writers had a considerable presence in country newspapers across the country, reaching every state and territory.

Conclusion

This initial analysis of overall trends and specific case studies relating to twentieth-century Australian newspaper fiction shows that, contrary to prevailing opinion, periodical fiction was not a nineteenth-century phenomenon but remained a feature of Australian newspapers until at least the 1950s. This persistence was facilitated by companion and incidental fiction reuse but especially by extensive syndication networks. While these syndication networks published substantial international writing, they also enabled Australian authors to play a larger role in the market than previously recognised. From the 1920s, Australian writers gained increased visibility, especially in metropolitan newspapers. The careers of prolific authors such as Aidan de Brune and A. E. Yarra highlight the ways in which local writers adapted to the constraints and opportunities of the syndication market, sometimes even managing their own distribution networks. As newspaper fiction continued to play a vital role in shaping Australian reading habits, exploring this overlooked history offers new ways to understand the intersections of literature and print culture in Australia and its position within a global literary system.

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