

# What Were We Buying? Non-fiction and Narrative Non-fiction Sales Patterns in Australia in the 2000s

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## Introduction

Over the last decade interest in the use of quantitative methodologies has grown, particularly amongst book history scholars, with the Resourceful Reading symposium at the University Sydney in 2008, convened by Katherine Bode and Robert Dixon, providing a significant milestone for codifying the interests in and concerns about the ‘new empiricism’. Interest has also been spurred by investment in digital archives such as AustLit and the development of software programs and archives by individual scholars, which has enabled investigation of the interests of ‘everyday readers’ and the reassessment of Australian publishing histories.

The early 2000s also saw the introduction of a new source of commercial quantitative data. Nielsen BookScan (NB) collected book sales data from a range of book sales outlets and then weighted the findings to produce national sales figures. Its introduction was controversial for literary scholars and Australian authors, however it also provided a new source of information about Australian book buying. Within this context, two streams of discussion took place which are of interest to this essay. First, some scholars and authors expressed concern about the reduced opportunities for publishing literary fiction and non-fiction in the market-driven environment, and second, there was speculation about whether Australian book readers were turning in large numbers from fiction to non-fiction genres. Many of the bases for these latter claims were anecdotal and difficult to substantiate, and this essay treats them merely as a starting point for its investigation of narrative non-fiction sales trends.

This essay addresses both streams of commentary by examining NB non-fiction sales data from 2003-2008, and more specifically, narrative non-fiction patterns. The essay consists of four parts. First, some background about scholarly interest in the use of quantitative methodologies is provided and Nielsen BookScan is introduced as the empirical source of data for this study. The second part examines non-fiction sales trends to gain a broad overview of Australian non-fiction sales patterns. Third, the use of ‘narrative non-fiction’ in this research is explained. Finally, after further analysis of the NB data, the fourth section sets out narrative non-fiction sales patterns. These findings provide a rare snapshot of Australian book-buying patterns after the introduction of NB in 2001 (before the datasets were revised in 2002) and before the widespread popularity of online retail sites in the late 2000s and, more recently, ebook sales.

## 1. Quantitative methodologies and the use of Nielsen BookScan data

With the adoption by Australian book scholars of ‘new literary empiricism’, interest has grown in the insights to be gained from new quantitative methodologies. Library circulation records (Dolin, Lamond), Auslit data, (Ensor, Bode, *‘Publishing’*), and combined archival resources (Johnson-Woods) have presented new opportunities for data-mining and posed new challenges for contextualising the findings. Over the last decade scholars have reflected on the ways in which these methodologies fit with the interests of Australian literature as a discipline (Bode, *Beyond*) and on the need for reflexive approaches in their use (*Picture*, Ensor). Paul Eggert

proposes 'keeping the empirical and the theoretical in continuous tension' (61) and Jason Ensor rightly argues that 'new empiricism's strength is also its primary weakness and ...it should not operate too long without the support of archival and qualitative research' (*Still Waters* 4). This essay can be regarded as an experimental, early attempt to garner insights from Nielsen BookScan commercial sales data about broad Australian sales patterns; equally, the limitations of the methodologies are also acknowledged throughout. Nielsen BookScan was established in Australia just over a decade ago and scholars are still experimenting with the potential use of this commercial data. For readers who are unfamiliar with its operations, some background follows. Nielsen BookScan (NB) was established in Australia as a commercial service for the commercial book industry, with the first national data collections undertaken in 2002. Retailers provide book sales data using scanned ISBN numbers 'at the point of sale directly from tills and despatch systems of all the major book retailers... In a typical week BookScan Australia collects over 60,000 different titles representing more than \$14 million from over 1000 retailers' (Nielsen). The cost of NB subscriptions to publishers is offset by the value of commercial information about the sales performance of their titles, for use in planning and managing their publishing lists. Not surprisingly, NB's introduction has been controversial for a number of reasons. First, it has exposed the low sales figures of many books valued for their literary qualities, contrasted against high sales figures of popular genres and lifestyle titles. This has been a topic of concern, for example, on ABC Radio National's *Books and Writing* (Koval), and Mark Davis later echoes it, turning to independent publishers as a source of hope (*Literature*). Malcolm Knox raises a related charge that NB is changing the ways in which publishers commission books and support titles (or not) based on their initial performance in the market, both artificially boosting sales of titles that are briefly media sensations, and mitigating against the publication prospects for authors of midlist titles who have achieved track records of respectful literary reviews but with modest sales. In brief, it is fair to say that NB has been the subject of some criticism even as publishing scholars are attracted by the rich data sets.

The extent to which Nielsen BookScan is willing to make available commercially-sensitive data to scholars is subject to negotiation, as is the cost. The founding Managing Director of Nielsen BookScan, Michael Webster, is now a Senior Lecturer in publishing at RMIT and serves as a consultant to NB, the first point of contact for scholars wishing to use NB data. Michael Webster is actively involved in promoting Australia's book culture (eg, as Chair of the Melbourne Writers Festival) but a note to interested scholars: his role necessarily requires defending the commercial integrity of the NB data and steps to ensure this should be thought through by scholars beforehand. Negotiations are on a case by case basis, and any requirements that include the value of sales as part of the dataset will be referred to the NB Sydney head office.

This research examines non-fiction sales from 2003-2008. An Excel spreadsheet is provided for each year of the study, with 5000 rows under the headings listed below.

Position [ranking by sales]	ISBN [ie, barcode]	Title	Author	Imprint	Publisher Group	Volume [number of sales]	Value [dollar figure for total sales]	RRP [Recommended Retail Price]	ASP [Average Selling Price]
Binding [hardcover or paperback]	Publ Date	Product Class [Nielsen Bookscan Categories]	Country of Publication						

Figure 1 The headings of a Nielsen BookScan sales report in the standard format

The first observation is the stark, clinical nature of the data: there is no emotional context, no conceptual framing in discourses evident in Australian literary studies, and no friendly user-guide for book history scholars. (Compare this to the richness of other forms of evidence when investigating the worlds of readers such as Martin Lyons and Lucy Taksa's work based on oral history, Elizabeth Webby's investigation of the minutes of reading groups and Tony Bennett, Michael Emmison and John Frow's surveys of and interviews with readers in the late 1990s.) The empirical material for this project, after combining six years of data, is an Excel spreadsheet with 30,000 rows. Other limitations of this methodology may immediately become apparent: it is not possible to discern *who* bought the titles, whether the books purchased are actually read, nor to identify other books that are read in conjunction with each title by individual readers. The ISBN sales are de-identified and aggregated by NB. (Perhaps an entrepreneurial scholar will be able to persuade Amazon or another ebook retailer to make available de-identified records which maintain the purchasing records of individuals.) It is possible to purchase NB data which break down the sales figures monthly or weekly but in the case of this research the data would have become unmanageable; the cost to the project is that sales trends within calendar years have not not identified.

Tim Dolin emphasises the ideological significance of methodological choices when investigating reading cultures: 'methodological decisions are important because they help to produce the cultural past that histories of reading purport to record: is it a history of democratic freedom, self-actualisation and political agency, or social and cultural degeneration?' (*Fiction*). The reliance on NB sales data foregrounds publishing business frameworks in the analysis of reading patterns in the 2000s in important ways, which must be acknowledged. If applied superficially it implies a 'rational choice model' rather than a contribution to thick description and mapping as part of the new literary empiricism. The equation of sales with reading patterns is problematic. Currie and Brien rightly observe that 'Whether book sales reflect what is actually read (and by whom), raises another set questions altogether.' Not all books which are purchased are read, and the nuances of individual responses or networks of readerships are unavailable using this methodology. A privileging may be implied that higher-selling books are more significant to reading cultures than low-selling titles, which is a gross simplification. The presence of bestsellers may be fleeting, while other titles with lower sales may have a more profound, longer term role in our literary culture, for example, through literary innovation, intellectual influence and by challenging and dismantling established genre divides, a point that shall be reinforced further on.

## 2. Broad Trends in non-fiction book sales

Given the pessimism expressed about the prospects for literary titles, the influence of the economic mechanics of the publishing industry and curiosity about the preferences of 'everyday readers', the first stage of investigation involves examining broad non-fiction sales. Publishers assign each title to a NB product category and the starting point is to investigate these categories. Here, another complication when using NB data arises. John Frow argues eloquently that texts do not belong to genres, they are assigned to genres by readers, critics and publishers, and these genres influence the ways in which we respond to texts. 'Genre in turn acts as a constraint upon—that is, a structuring and shaping of—meaning and value at the level of text for certain strategic ends; it produces effects of truth and authority specific to it, and projects a 'world' that is generically specific' (73). Frow's main interest is in investigating the ways in which genre can open up a multiplicity of worlds in books for readers, but he also refers to the uses of genre as 'At another level ... an industrial matter' (12). The NB product categories, then, must be acknowledged in this respect. They are a commercially effective means of organising a bewildering array of titles which are indifferent to many of the interests of Australian literary studies scholars. The researcher's task is to work within these constraints to find broad outlines of Australian book buying patterns in the 2000s.

With these provisos, next we turn to findings from the data itself. The prospect of constructing a broad overview of Australian non-fiction reading patterns is pursued by grouping NB categories in 'like' categories, discussed in this section. An Australian publisher, Elizabeth Weiss, has observed a shortfall in NB sales figures of up to 15 per cent for books which are more likely to be sold through 'independent, specialised and campus booksellers', especially in the early years of its operation and with this in mind, the following proposes a broad-brush view of non-fiction reading in this period.

Each year in the 2000s a handful of top-selling non-fiction books, narrative non-fiction or otherwise, sold over 100,000 copies. An exceptionally successful title may have sold close to 300,000 copies; a stellar performer indeed, such as the extraordinary and unexpected success of Jennifer Fleming and Shannon Lush's *Spotless: How to Get Stains, Scratches and Smells Out of Almost Anything*, which surprised even its publishers. However, sales of over 5,000 are generally considered successful for an Australian author (depending on the expectations of the individual work) and sales of 2000-3000 are a solid achievement for lower-profile works.

One way to draw a portrait of Australian non-fiction book-buying is to group related NB categories, as shown in Figure 2. If we combine all the sub-categories of biography and autobiography<sup>2</sup> this combined category is the most popular, outselling all books about food and drink.<sup>3</sup> To give an idea of the proportion of the top 5000 market, biographies and autobiographies comprise roughly 18.8-21.5 per cent of the total top 5000, and books about food and drink 12.5-18.5 per cent in this period. However, if we take into account Australians' love of sport and we take out all sports biographies and autobiographies to group them with the other books about sport, the combined categories of biography/autobiography and food/drink are roughly equal.

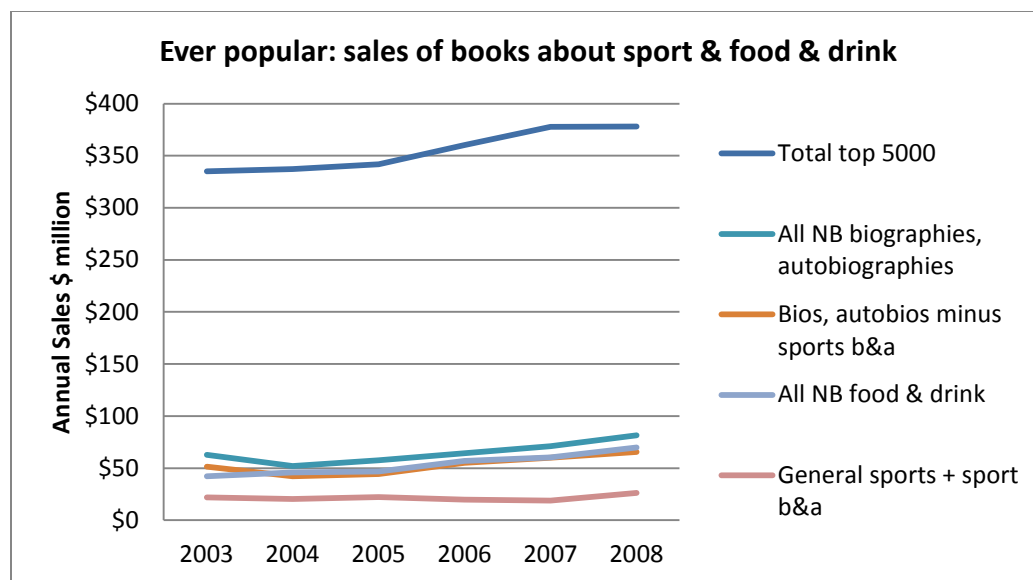


Figure 2 Sales of narrative non-fiction in relation to food, drink & sport (the results in this essay are adjusted for inflation, shown in 2009 Australian dollars)

Figure 3 (overleaf) shows that books relating to health, fitness and diet, parenting, coping with problems and illnesses comprise the next biggest combined category<sup>4</sup> (the spike in 2005 could partly be attributed to the success of *The CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet*), followed by travel guides combined with books about where to eat and drink.<sup>5</sup> This is followed by books about succeeding in business, improving one's wealth, being a motivational manager and investing in shares and real estate:<sup>6</sup> well-established genres but total sales decline during this period. Perhaps in the early years when Australia was experiencing strong economic growth these latter-mentioned books were particularly popular.

It appears that books centred upon home life: home improvement, crafts, hobbies and caring for pets<sup>7</sup> were already a mature set of categories. Sales decline overall (-5.8 per cent in volume and -20.8 per cent in sales value), although they experience a jump in 2006 with the success of *Spotless*.

Books about the arts also decline over this period but this set of categories encompasses a particularly mixed range of titles,<sup>8</sup> from coffee-table books of photography (collections of Australian landscapes, cutting edge architecture, and photos with sentimental captions are particularly popular) to how-to-draw guides, to art appreciation. Books relating to the performing arts which are bestsellers, such as autobiographies or biographies, are classified elsewhere.

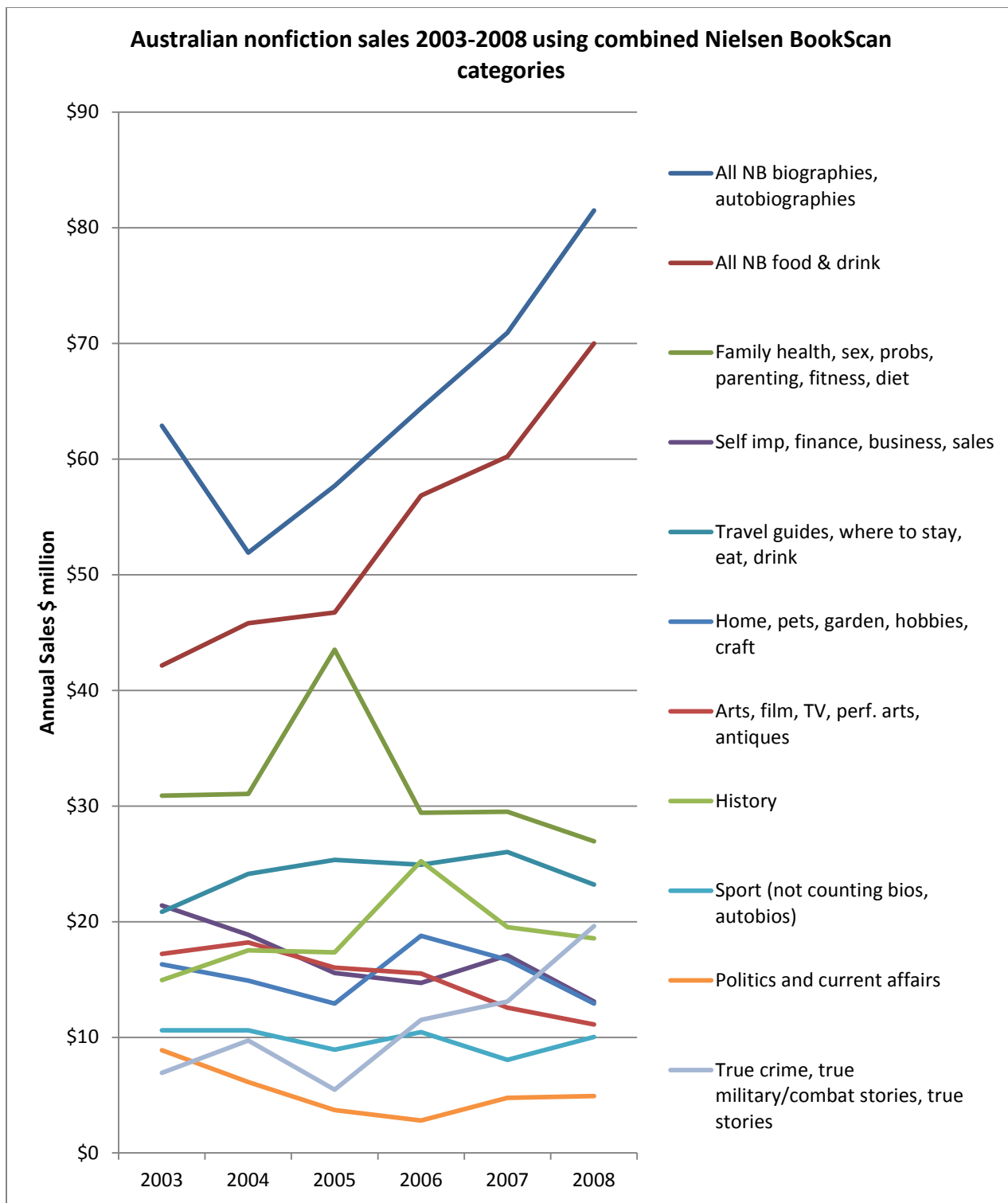


Figure 3 An overview of the top 5000 non-fiction sales

There is very strong growth in sales of books classified under history subcategories, which will be discussed further on.<sup>9</sup> A spike in 2006 includes several titles published by Pier 9: *History's Worst Decisions and the People Who Made Them* by Stephen Weir, *History's Great Untold*

*Stories: Obscure and Fascinating Accounts of Lasting Importance* by Joseph Cummins and *History's Greatest Scandals: The Salacious Stories of Powerful People* by Ed Wright.

Another combined category that experiences exceptionally strong growth comprises true stories, true crime and true military stories<sup>10</sup>, also discussed in later pages, as are books about current affairs and politics.<sup>11</sup> Other popular genres include puzzles and quizzes (it is the period in which Sudoku puzzles became popular) and joke books.

It's fair to say that sales of non-fiction books in this period reflect the lifestyles and preoccupations of Australians at the time: cooking, travelling, losing weight, getting rich, turning one's life around, predicting one's future and reading about other people's interesting lives. The patterns also reveal Australians as physically active and interested in the natural world around them. How-to books about sport are popular, as are books about bushwalking, bird-watching, fishing, camping and, closer to home, cooking, making one's home a more enjoyable place to live in (and a more valuable investment), and creative crafts and hobbies.

Peter Donoghue nominates romantic fiction and the non-fiction categories of 'self-help, travel, personal investment, [and] children's' as the 'traditionally profitable legs to publishing stools' and his observations relating to non-fiction are borne out by the data, at least in terms of sales. How-to books are classified in a surprising range of categories. For example, diet books can be found categorised under medical textbooks, and get-rich-quick books under sociology, business, economics, finance and consumer issues. Elizabeth Eisenstein and William St Clair address the popularity of how-to books in Europe and the UK in their historical studies of publishing and reading over several centuries, while Michael Korda observes that in the US their sales success dates back to the 1920s and even earlier.<sup>12</sup> Scholarly interest has now reached Australia: the popularity of self-help writing and its place in Australia's literary culture is the subject of a doctoral thesis by Walter Mason at the University of Western Sydney.

Although there can be no direct comparison, Eisenstein describes many phenomena which have antecedents in this study: the plethora of texts published which range from scientific to mystical and nonsensical content; the popularity of how-to books; the concern with 'getting ahead' in life; the cult of the individual; interest in authors' personal lives and scandals; and the recycling of tropes, allegories and symbols in various accounts and genres. These are all recognisable in some form in the contemporary data, and it is helpful to understand that these trends originated early in (and even prior to, in the case of handwritten manuscripts) the print age.

### **3. Writing that privileges the 'experiential and the real'**

The next stage in this investigation involves looking more closely at narrative non-fiction writing. Frow's central argument is that 'genres create effects of reality and truth which are central to the different ways the world is understood' (19) and as such distinctions between fiction and non-fiction are themselves constructed. Frow refers to 'implicit realities which genres form as a pre-given reference, together with the effects of authority and plausibility which are specific to the genre' (19). Genres change over time as do the truth-claims and truth status associated with them, but over the last decade interest has grown in non-fiction genres that employ narrative techniques previously associated with fiction writing. Scholars in this field seek to identify the particular characteristics that differentiate their work from fiction genres.

There are many terms associated with these forms of writing with the best-known including creative non-fiction, literary non-fiction, literary journalism, and narrative non-fiction. Keri Glastonbury and Ros Smith refer to ‘kinds of writing that privileged the experiential and the real’ to indicate what is shared by them’. They and other Australian academics (for example Eisenhuth and Macdonald x-xi) view the multiplicity of terminologies and approaches positively as a characteristic of the field and as a source of creative renewal and richness encompassing creative writing practices and critical approaches. Glastonbury and Smith characterise this activity as ‘a productive shared interest in the much-documented turn towards ‘reality’ that has been identified as a phenomenon since the late 1990s’.

So far this has indeed been a productive situation; however in order to identify patterns in NB data, a firm definition is needed so that book titles can be retained for further analysis or not. Spurred on by this incentive, a brief survey of the terms in use reveals their associations with different disciplinary and industry perspectives. For example, ‘creative non-fiction’ is widely used in creative writing university departments and Australian journalism teaching, although in US schools of journalism ‘literary journalism’ is more prevalent. There are also differences in emphasis. Journalism teachers emphasise their students’ requirement to report truthfully while creative writing teachers permit more latitude with facts provided that a higher truth is conveyed, if this is appropriate to a particular literary work.

The first Australian national creative non-fiction conference in 2008 cleverly avoided difficulties of terminology and was called ‘The Art of the Real’.<sup>13</sup> However, one of the dilemmas in this quantitative research is the implicit suggestion that if ‘creative non-fiction’, the most widely-used term in Australian scholarship, is applied in the process of deleting or retaining titles for analysis, the researcher is in some way imposing a judgement about whether each title is creative or not. It makes for an uneasy, if not faintly ridiculous situation and ultimately a solution is found by drawing on scholarship about creative non-fiction but adapting it under the term ‘narrative non-fiction’.

A definition of creative non-fiction by Molly Blair, a journalism academic, serves as a starting point (59). This essay builds on Blair’s extensive survey of the field to adapt her definitional work and to adapt it under the umbrella of ‘narrative non-fiction’ to encompass genres of interest in journalistic, creative writing, and literary studies disciplines. Narrative non-fiction is defined as follows, with my amendments to Blair’s work in italics.

- A. It is based on facts and does not fabricate places, people or events *within the conventions of the particular narrative non-fiction genre.*
- B. It uses fictional techniques including theme, action-oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation, point of view.
- C. It includes personal and/or private moments with the intent to both provide readers with an understanding of the significance of the event and affect them emotionally. *This may occur through the direct presence of the author in the narrative writing, or it may occur through the use of skilful writing in the third person.*
- D. *There is an emphasis on fine storytelling and fine writing.*



Therefore, narrative non-fiction genres based on journalistic forms have no license to fabricate information which the writer knows to be false, although it is acceptable for the author to fictionalise or recreate scenes based carefully on the information available. Narrative non-fiction literary forms such as memoir and autobiography are different genres and more flexibility is acceptable within their conventions but these stylistic literary devices are not intended to deceive the reader. Similarly, narrative non-fiction forms which are centred on humour, for example works by David Sedaris or Bill Bryson, are understood as part of the implied contract with the reader to contain embellishment or exaggeration for humorous effect, as Sedaris acknowledges.<sup>1</sup>

From this definitional basis, our attention now turns to public discussion about growth in the popularity of these genres. Brigid Rooney refers to Helen Garner's *The First Stone*, published in 1995, as being 'in the first wave of non-fictional prose that would dominate literary publishing for the next decade (141). Mark Mordue, in 2003, interviews booksellers who comment on Australians' willingness to buy non-fiction books by unfamiliar authors after the World Trade Centre attacks in 2001, in contrast to a preference for fiction written by authors with whom they were familiar. Jeremy Fisher proposes that 'the nineties were rewarding for writers of literary fiction; the "noughties" are not. Ivor Indyk, interviewed by Ramona Koval, refers to a collapse in the publication of literary fiction, and suggests that readers are looking for 'a more disciplined kind of writing' in non-fiction (*Transforming*).

Katherine Bode uses AustLit data to examine recent increases in the publication of Australian autobiographies and biographies, with a particular interest in counterpointing the increase in publication of auto/biographies against a decrease in the publication of novels, which she argues could be temporary (*Publishing*). Susan Currie and Donna Brien, as part of broader research, examine Nielsen BookScan 2006 and 2007 data, counting the number of life-writing texts, a subset of narrative nonfiction genres, in the top 10, top 100 and top 5000 lists. Based on this, they conclude that life-writing represents four percent of the top 5000 titles in those years 'and there was no significant growth'. However it's unclear whether they have analysed the sales numbers. Perhaps, importantly, they did not have access to this data. If the same proportion of titles is responsible for a larger proportion of sales, there would be evidence of an increase in popularity.

Moving the lens to publishing, it's worth noting that in the 2000s individual publishers also develop narrative non-fiction lists motivated by their personal interest. Susan Wyndham reports that Morry Schwartz, the publisher of Black Ink Press, was inspired by the *New Yorker* and the *Atlantic Monthly* to launch *The Monthly* and the *Quarterly Essay*. According to Mordue, Michael Heyward of Text Publishing refers to these US magazines and also to *Harper's Magazine* and *Vanity Fair* as inspiration from the US non-fiction literary scene. Likewise, Henry Rosenbloom at Scribe describes his long-standing interest in 'serious non-fiction' to Noel King. Another development has been the annual publication of *Best Australian Essays*, which outsold *Best Australian Short Stories* each year and which, along with strong sales of the *Quarterly Essay*, indicates the new popularity of the long essay form.

Sally Jackson reports that increasing numbers of books of extended journalism are being published, and lastly, in the 2000s non-fiction writing becomes consolidated as a serious area of study in creative writing and journalism departments in universities. As such, growth in the

visibility and stature of narrative non-fiction writing is perhaps most the most significant aspect of these developments overall. This study cannot draw conclusions about sales of fiction versus non-fiction (it only has half the data) and the commentary serves mostly as a trigger for mining the NB data to investigate evidence regarding sales, discussed in the next section.

#### 4. Sales of narrative non-fiction books

The final part of this essay focuses on sales of narrative non-fiction books. Separating out these titles is based on marketing information and not surprisingly, drawing boundaries pose a set of conundrums. Exploration of the sales figures reveals the extent to which narrative non-fiction techniques are blended with other genres, for example, *Sustainable House*, an account by Michael Mobbs of building a house in Sydney which is almost completely self-sustainable in electricity and water is also a how-to guide. (According to Blair, nearly all definitions of creative non-fiction exclude how-to books) (15-30, 57-59). Further, there is an overlap between books which are marketed as reference works and books incorporating reference material in which the writer seeks to enliven the content using narrative techniques. Some books of photography, for example about landscape, wildlife, art, and architecture, are essentially intelligently-ordered compilations of photography with brief captions while others are accompanied by brief passages of narrative non-fiction writing. The most noticeable example is *Down to Earth: Australian Landscapes*, a book of photography published by Freemantle Arts Press with text by Tim Winton. In this research, if the narrative writing in a how-to book is an important, separate component from its instructive function, it is coded positively. In other cases, a judgment is made based on product descriptions as to whether titles contain more than simply reference information or captions. In a painstaking process taking over a year, the top 5000 titles have been coded as narrative non-fiction or not (a process known as ‘cleaning the data’).

Figures 4 and 5 suggest that in the first years of this study there are already strong sales of narrative non-fiction books (led in 2003 by sales of books by Michael Moore, Norma Khouri and Bill Bryson), there is a slight dip in the middle years and then overall sales increase strongly again in 2008 (with *Underbelly: The Gangland War* by John Silvester and Andrew Rule, *True Colours: My Life* by Adam Gilchrist, and *Eat, Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert proving particularly popular). To generalise, one could summarise narrative non-fiction sales as nearly 40% of the volume of trade non-fiction book sales and slightly more (41.5%) in terms of value.

	2003 Volume '000	2004 Volume '000	2005 Volume '000	2006 Volume '000	2007 Volume '000	2008 Volume '000
Top 5000 non-fiction	11,572	11,577	11,623	12,525	13,663	14,081
Narrative non-fiction	4,688	4,639	4,421	4,817	5,291	6,163
Proportion NNF/5000	40.5%	40.1%	38.0%	38.5%	38.7%	43.8%

Figure 4 Top 5000 non-fiction and narrative non-fiction trade in books by volume.

	2003 (\$)'000	Value 2004 (\$)'000	Value 2005 (\$)'000	Value 2006 (\$)'000	Value 2007 (\$)'000	Value 2008 (\$)'000	Value
Top 5000 non-fiction	333,938	337,342	342,306	359,844	379,711	377,312	
Narrative non-fiction	139,212	138,623	134,500	146,858	153,528	173,376	
Proportion of NNF/top 5000	41.7%	41.1%	39.3%	40.8%	40.4%	46.0%	

Figure 5 Top 5000 non-fiction and narrative non-fiction trade in books by value (adjusted for inflation to 2009 dollars)

There are several caveats to these totals. The first is the aforementioned weighting towards sales in department stores and book chains and away from independent bookstores, especially in the early years. This means that the nuances of low-volume title sales are lost (sales of less than 600 copies in a year would usually not make the NB top 5000 in this period). Second, although most books appear on the top 5000 list for one or two years at most, some books have extremely long 'tails' (or sales lives). Low sales figures may belie the enduring appeal of a title which has been selling for decades. *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and *The Art of War* by Sun Tsu are two examples. Also, sales to Australia via the Internet are estimated at between 1-5 per cent towards the end of this period according to Michael Webster, which is not included in the data.

In order to obtain a broad view of narrative non-fiction book sales, the titles are once again combined in Figure 6; however this time more NB categories are combined and in some cases a new category is created to produce a smaller number of broad categories. Therefore, the categories in the two parts of this essay are not directly comparable. This is, of course, problematic and the results should be viewed as general indications only. However, the intent is to move a small step beyond the broad industrial categories in the earlier part of this essay to try to put some parameters around the Australian book buying public's interest in narrative non-fiction themes and topics. So, for example, subsections in biographies and autobiographies, very popular categories, have been reallocated to broad thematic categories. Also, NB categories containing a very small number of or no narrative non-fiction titles have been deleted, including family, health, motor vehicles, cars, planes, trains, food and drink, and mind, body, spirit. The final broad categories are:

- History (including related biographies & autobiographies)
- Biography & Autobiography (general)
- The Arts & Literature (including related biographies & autobiographies)
- Sport (including related biographies & autobiographies)
- Travel
- Politics & Current Affairs (including related biographies & autobiographies)
- True Crime, True Life, Military Stories
- Philosophy, Ethics, Social Studies & Law
- Science, Medicine, the Environment (not including books about popular psychology)
- Religions
- Humour
- Business and Economics
- Other<sup>13</sup>
- Popular Psychology

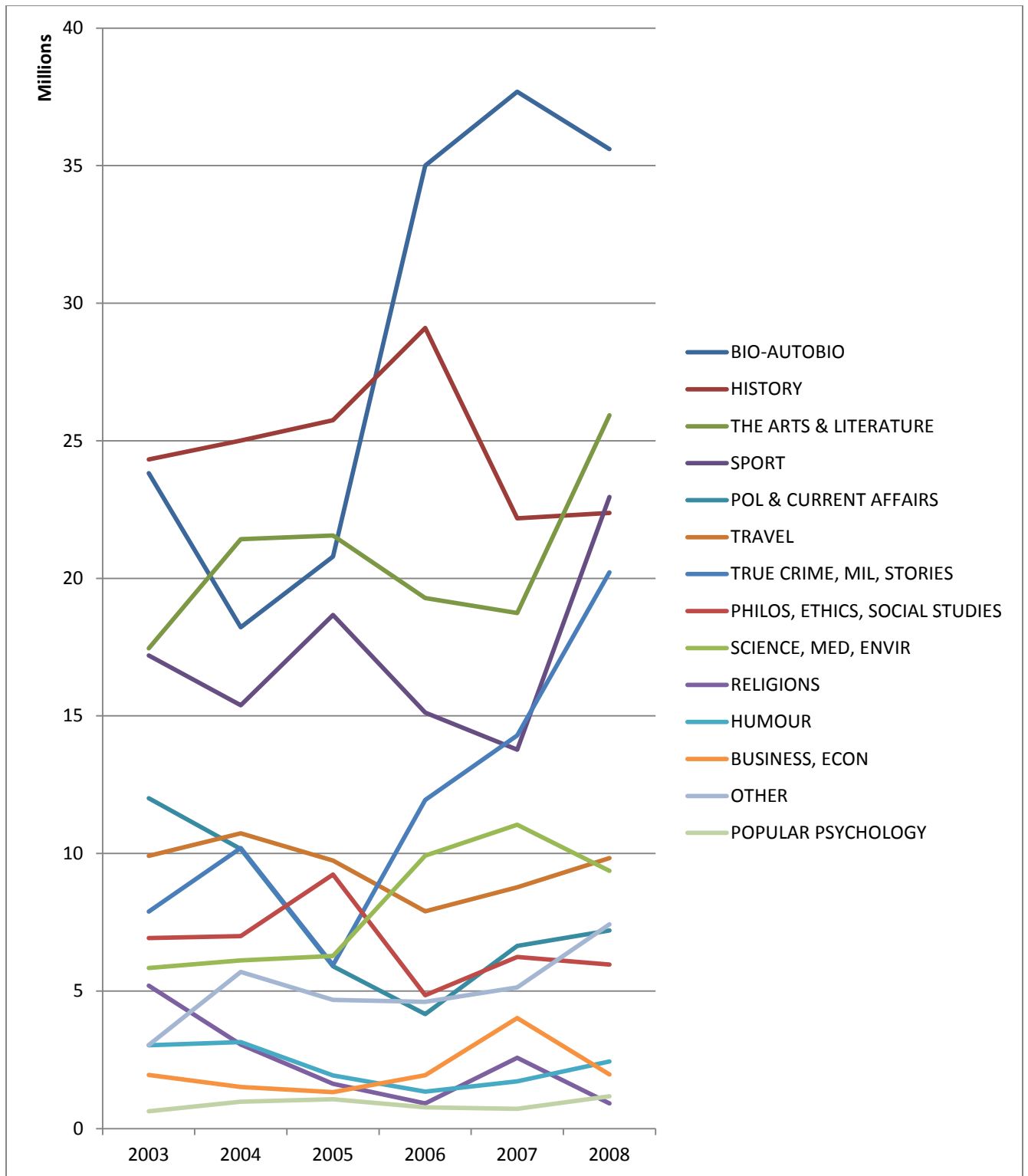


Figure 6 Combined 'broad brush' categories of sales narrative non-fiction books 2003-2008

If auto/biographies about historical figures are included under 'History', then history becomes the most popular narrative non-fiction category in the early 2000s. However, it is more nuanced to conclude that both histories and auto/biographies in general are the most popular narrative non-fiction genres and it becomes an artificial and arbitrary exercise to attempt to separate out all histories or auto/biographies. This category is boosted by the success of Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, which sells over 80,000 copies in 2004 and over 170,000 copies in the period of this research. Other successes indicate the popularity of Australian military history: *The Great War* by Les Caryl; *Tobruk* by Peter Fitzsimons; *Kokoda* by Peter Fitzsimons; and *My Story* by Peter Cosgrove.

Although growth in sales of biography and autobiography occurs early in the 2000s, as shown earlier in Figure 1, the growth in the general category of biography and autobiography towards the end of this period shown in Figure 6 indicates merely that best-selling biographies and autobiographies in earlier years are categorised elsewhere. The most popular titles here are *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert; *Marley and Me* by John Grogan; and *My Story* by Schapelle Corby and Kathryn Bonella. The next best-selling titles in this category are *Jonestown: The Power and the Myth of Alan Jones* by Chris Masters, and *My Story* by Peter Cosgrove.<sup>14</sup>

Following this, perhaps surprisingly, is a combined category of 'The Arts & Literature'. This is in sharp contrast to the second part of this essay about non-fiction books in general, and there are three main reasons: (1) autobiographies and biographies related to the arts and literature have been shifted from auto/bio classifications to this new category, meaning that a share of bestsellers is counted as part of this group; (2) the removal of how-to books seems to have been favourable (suggesting that proportionately more how-to books about business, 'life' and sport are sold than how-to books about the arts and literature); and (3) the incorporation of books from NB categories such as 'Linguistics' yields other relevant titles (including *Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language* by Don Watson). The list is dominated, not surprisingly by auto/biographies about figures in the arts, the media and literature. The most popular title is *Mao's Last Dancer* by Li Cunxin, which sold over 300,000 copies (prior to the release of a film based on the book in 2009) followed by *Scar Tissue* by Anthony Kiedis, the lead singer of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Books about celebrities drive the largest sales<sup>15</sup> but bestsellers also include Don Watson's *Death Sentence*. The challenge is for more modestly selling titles which make cultural contributions over a longer period of time to achieve publication and build readerships. However, if this 'broad church' approach is adopted, The Arts & Literature becomes a significant category in terms of sales and lower profile books about words, language, libraries and contributions by individual authors with literary reputations are a part of this eclectic mix.

Sport is another perennially popular category, and Australian-authored titles are evident among the top-sellers. The most popular sports title is *Out of My Comfort Zone: The Autobiography* by Steve Waugh; followed by *True Colours: My Life* by Adam Gilchrist; then *It's Not about the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* by Lance Armstrong; *Andrew Johns: The Two of Me* by Andrew Johns; and *According to Skull: An Entertaining Stroll Through the Mind of Kerry O'Keeffe* by Kerry O'Keeffe. These have a higher sales average (5,600 compared to 4,600 for The Arts and Literature and 4,030 for History), suggesting that there is a greater proportion of bestsellers which boost the average sales.

Books about travel are consistently popular and overall sales do not show fluctuations. *Almost French: A New Life in Paris* by Sarah Turnbull; *Down Under* by Bill Bryson; *Holy Cow! An Indian Adventure* by Sarah McDonald; and *Himalaya* by Michael Palin are the most popular in order of sales. Other popular Australian travel writers include Don Watson (*American Journeys*), Eric Campbell (*Absurdistan*) and Christopher Kremmer (*Inhaling the Mahatma*).

Books about science, medicine and the environment are the next most popular category. (Popular psychology is excluded because it is an NB category which veers towards the popular and potentially away from science.) The most popular titles include: *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins; *The Weather Makers: The Past and Future Impact of Climate Change* by Tim Flannery; *Never Say Die* by Chris O'Brien; and several books by Karl Kruszelnicki (*Dis Information and Other Wikkid Myths*, *Great Mythconceptions*, *Please Explain* and more). These authors are also largely responsible for the growth of sales in this category in the later years.

The fastest-growing broad category combines True Crime, True Military, and True Stories. The most popular title is *Underbelly: The Gangland War* which sold over 175,000 copies in the research period, followed by *Marching Powder* by Rusty Young. In a long list of titles about crimes there are some anomalies in the most popular titles. In order of sales, the next title is *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Joe Albion (classified under 'True Stories'); then *Joe Cinque's Consolation: A True Story of Death, Grief and the Law* by Helen Garner, which could have been placed in The Arts and Literature category but has instead been left in its original classification, partly as a demonstration of the quirkiness of the classifications, as is *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt. However the subsequent bestselling titles give a flavour of this combined category: *The Innocent Man* by John Grisham; *The Ice Man: Confessionals of a Mafia Contract Killer* by Philip Carlo, *Leadbelly* (another in the Underbelly series) and *Big Shots: The Chilling Inside Story of Carl Williams and the Gangland Wars* by Adam Shand. The popularity of this genre was the subject of a First Tuesday Book Club program on ABC-TV, with the presenter Jennifer Byrne noting bookseller estimates that roughly half of the readers of true crime are women.

Three other combined categories are also worth mentioning. Sales in Politics and Current Affairs categories decline during this period, but taking this trend out of context is misleading. In 2003 the number one top-selling non-fiction book is Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men ...and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation*. After the phenomenal popularity of Moore's books in 2003 and 2004, overall sales decline in the later years but this is in the context of strong sales for books about current issues during this period. *My Life* by Bill Clinton, is the best-selling political autobiography in this period and *Living History* by Hilary Rodham Clinton is also a bestseller. Mark Latham's *The Latham Diaries* and Peter Costello's *The Costello Memoirs* are the most popular Australian political auto/biographies (both to be eclipsed in sales terms by John Howard's *Lazraus Rising* published in 2010, now Australia's bestselling political autobiography). Books by Australian journalists are also prominent, including Margot Kingston's *Not Happy John*, and Don Watson's *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, as is extended reportage by Australian journalists on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Dark Victory: The Military Campaign to Re-Elect the Prime Minister* by David Marr and Marian Wilkinson is notable as work about a serious policy issue which has become an Australian bestseller.

Philosophy, Ethics and Social Science (also encompassing books about the law and legal issues) achieve strong sales, declining overall but important to acknowledge. An interesting characteristic of this category is that the bestselling books sell closer to 30,000 copies, relatively less than in some other categories. The bestselling titles are: *Wisdom* by Andrew Zuckerman; *Status Anxiety* by Alain de Botton; *Advance Australia... Where?* by Hugh Mackay; *Resilience* by Anne Deveson; *The Consolations of Philosophy* by de Botton; and *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* by Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss. This category has lower average sales of roughly 2,880. However, arguably these books are likely to form the basis of coverage in other media: the book serves as the basis for a much broader public platform for the author.

Lastly, the bestselling books categorised under religion constitute strange bedfellows. The bestselling title in this category was later exposed as a fraud: Norma Khouri's *Forbidden Love*. Next, George Negus's *The World From Islam* sells over 60,000 copies in this period. Christopher Hitchens is the next bestselling author in this category, with *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

Table 3 in the appendices sets out the top-40-selling narrative non-fiction books in Australia by number of copies sold from 2003 to 2008. Just over half the list (21 out of 40) is Australian-authored. The list demonstrates some striking if unsurprising characteristics: the predominance of authors with established public profiles; the presence of international bestsellers; and Australians' affinity for books about sport, true crime, military history, travel memoir, and celebrity auto/biography. Two books were later exposed as frauds: Norma Khouri's *Forbidden Love* and James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*. A significant feature is the presence of Australian journalists: ten of the twenty-one Australian-authored titles were written at least in part by journalists or former journalists.

Finally, motivated by Mark Davis's interest in changing economic conditions for the publication of literary fiction and non-fiction (*Literature*), the author went through the entire NB lists and selected titles across a diverse range of genres which were all considered bestsellers by their publishers, according to online marketing and publicity material.

This is perhaps the most interesting finding (see Figure 7). It was undertaken partly as a tongue-in-cheek exercise in placing such disparate works alongside one another, but it was also motivated by curiosity about the sales expectations associated with different types of works if they prove to be commercially successful. The dazzling success of *Mao's Last Dancer*, the best-selling work of narrative non-fiction in this period, was exceeded by three 'how-to' titles: *4 Ingredients*, *Spotless*, and *The Secret*. However, of more interest is the other end of the scale: the important and impressive contributions of works by Raymond Gaita and Jacob Rosenberg, which are likely to endure in Australia's cultural memory longer than many of the other titles, experience a fraction of these sales. Does this represent a change in market conditions? Would the scale of disparity between these different types of titles be smaller in earlier periods, in keeping with theses about the increasingly unfavourable conditions for the publication of serious titles? Or do we simply have more conclusive evidence now about what has been a long-standing state of affairs? Unfortunately, it is very difficult to know. One returns to Eisenstein's accounts of bestselling almanacs and auto/biographies of notorious figures in early modern Europe and the

answer becomes less clear. Perhaps this new data could serve as a ‘line in the sand’ from which to compare the fortunes of various types of books in the new networked publishing environment.

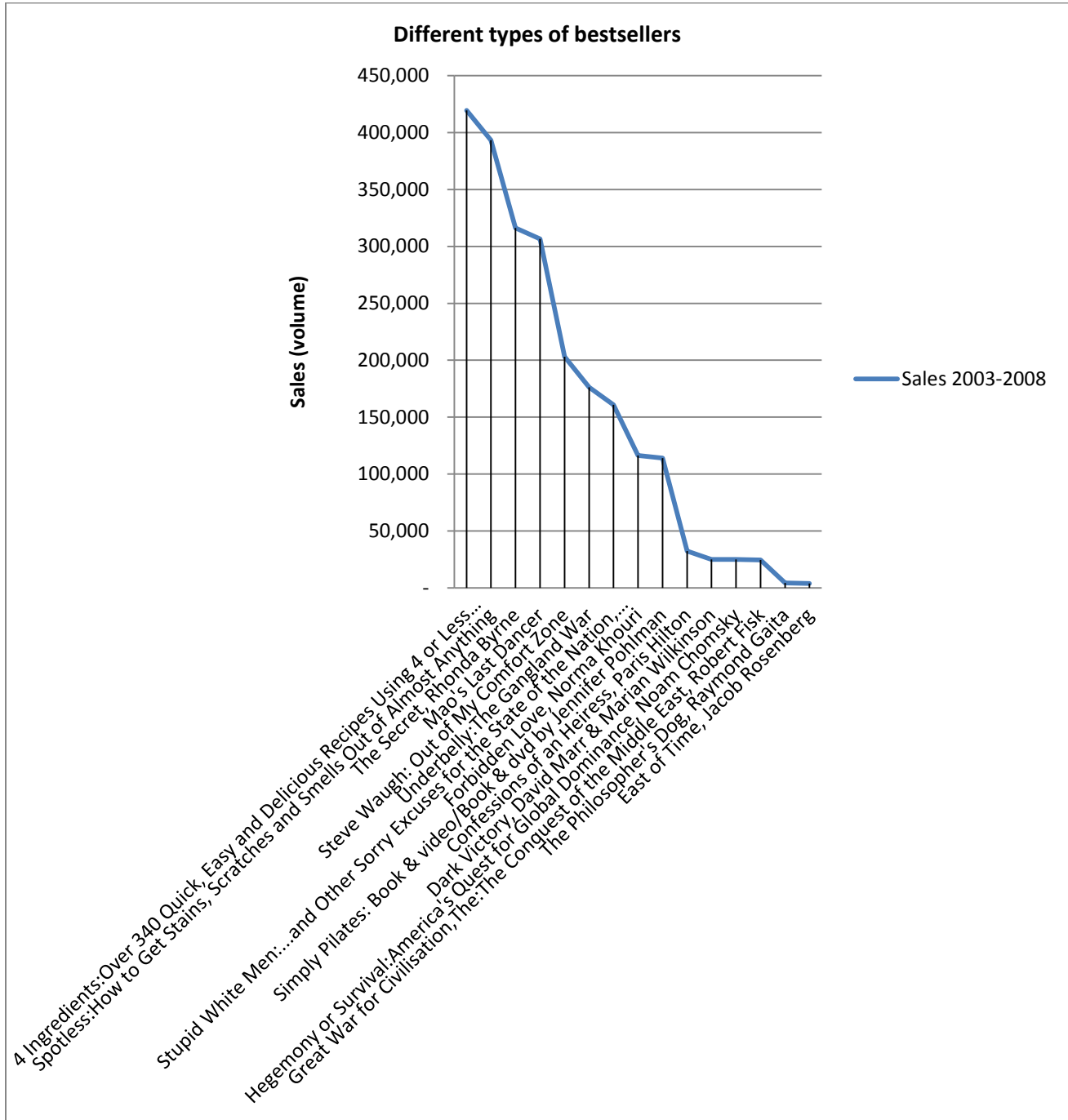


Figure 7 Total sales in 2003-2008 for a range of books considered to be bestsellers



## Conclusion

To return to Dolin, is this essay a history of democratic freedom, self-actualisation and political agency, or social and cultural degeneration? Inevitably and regrettably, the experiences of the actual readers remain a mystery behind the wall of data. We have more evidence about publishers, though. The strong presence of UK and US titles, from the two global English language centres of publishing, is not surprising but an important correlation is the success of a broad range of Australian narrative non-fiction genres and titles, which lends support to recognition of the achievements (self-actualisation and political agency) on the part of the Australian publishing industry, perhaps in a brief period before the publishing environment has entered a period of crisis and transformation. The establishment of *The Quarterly Essay*, *The Griffith Review* and the popularity of *The Best Australian Essays* enabled Australian narrative non-fiction writers to reach readerships under the aegis of these publications. These developments provide empirical support for Carter's analyses of contemporary middlebrow readers: those who are interested in accomplished literary works that deal seriously with moral and ethical issues, including many non-fiction genres. This was a period of acute public controversy about the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, about a range of Bush, Howard and Blair government policies and, as Brigid Rooney (ix-xxix, 180-194), and later the author (*Books*) discuss, a period in which writers and publishers took activist stances. Narrative non-fiction genres offer a range of ways to engage with these issues. It is not clear whether readers have turned to them in preference to fiction, but they are certainly active in purchasing narrative non-fiction texts relating to contemporary issues.

Alongside that, the sales data also reflect that Australia experienced economic prosperity in the early period of the study. Buyers willingly engage in traditionally popular genres offering the pleasures associated with celebrity, aspirations for self-improvement and national preoccupations such as sport, food and drink. Accounts linking sales of popular genres to social and cultural degeneration are rightly viewed with suspicion and as somewhat dated in their approach. However, the findings do serve to underline the pressures on publishers: they support Davis's concerns about the unfavourable market circumstances for the publication of literary non-fiction (and literary fiction), especially for new writers or those with modest public profiles. They illuminate the economic mechanisms in the publishing industry which favour front-list titles that can be heavily promoted rather than slowly building readerships for titles and authors over years. The data indicate that changes underway in the UK and US publishing industries are occurring in Australia. John B. Thompson interviewed senior publishing executives in the UK and US about developments over the last forty years, particularly the shift from publishing and bookselling as a long-term to a short-term business. Thompson emphasises the contradictions involved in the pursuit by the largest publishers of 'substantial growth in a market that is largely flat' to meet the expectations of corporate shareholders (373). He reports increased pressure on acquisitions editors to focus on 'hoped-for bestsellers'. In reality, most hoped-for bestsellers do not fulfil expectations, but according to Thompson, editors in multinational conglomerates are discouraged from developing lists of small, quality titles because they diffuse the company's resources at the expense of promoting sales of frontlist titles. Even as Thompson was researching his book, Malcom Knox observes this pressure in Australia.

As Davis predicts, Australian independent publishers have filled an important gap. Scholarly attention in recent years has shifted to examining whether the cultural diversity of books includes

modestly-selling titles with the potential to make different types of cultural contributions. Interest in the contributions of independent publishers (and independent booksellers) may be one way in which book historians can observe and enjoy book-selling trends and crazes while also examining the conditions under which lower-selling titles can find publishers and readers on a sustainable basis. As our appreciation grows of the importance of literary networks and institutions in the context of these market conditions, a counterpoint to this research may be, as David Carter envisages ‘better arguments for literary studies per se, even for the canon, at least in the curatorial sense that Robert Dixon has recently proposed’ (*Structures* 52, Dixon).

A broad-brush overview gives only a partial sense of what was a complex and in many ways successful period for Australian publishers and readers. In retrospect, this was a period of initiative and risk-taking by publishers, and also the publication of significant narrative non-fiction books by multinationals and Australian independents. These include, as indications only: *Mao’s Last Dancer*, the best-selling auto/biography of the period written in English as a second language by Li Cunxin with the full support of his publisher, Penguin Books; the success of new subscription-based publications including the *Quarterly Essay* and *Griffith Review*; the popularity of Australian political autobiography and Australian extended reportage on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and books which challenge contemporary government policies. It was also a period of important but lower-profile literary achievements, including *East of Time* and *Sunrise West* by Jacob Rosenberg, published by Brandl & Schlesinger. Rosenberg has been praised by Richard Freedman as ‘Australia’s greatest Jewish autobiographer and a world-class figure in Holocaust literature’ (284).

This was a period on the cusp of profound change: the rise of ebooks; the impact of the strong Australian dollar; the growth of online sales from overseas book retailers; failures in the business models of some large book chains; and public disquiet about the domestic price of books. Towards the end of the 2000s, sales of books in Australia declined 4 per cent in 2010 and 12.6 per cent in 2011.<sup>17</sup> The situation has since become even more complex: although purchases of books by Australians remain high, book sales *in Australia* are declining, for example due to increasing purchases of ebooks from international booksellers, according to Webster. It would be a much more complex task to undertake similar research now. For example, Nielsen BookScan does not collect Australian data about ebook sales because, as Shaun Symonds, General Manager of Nielsen BookScan Australia reported to Susan Wyndham, ‘it’s a global market rather than an Australian one,’ although the company is trying to develop ways of doing so.

Despite this, or because of this, it would be fascinating to learn about how changes in the industry have affected the reading habits of Australians. For example, one could investigate whether the availability of literary classic works downloadable free as ebooks has increased their readerships (or whether they are downloaded but not read). If so, are the readers familiar with the classics or are they being introduced to them for the first time? Similarly, has the convenience of online sales increased readerships for obscure titles which would not have received prominence in retail bookstores? Authors have become increasingly entrepreneurial in using digital self-publishing and social media to build readerships. Is this development offering better publication prospects for niche titles? One also wonders whether the dynamics by which books are launched and readers participate in discussion about them, contributing to the public sphere, have changed. Over the past decade Australian researchers have become increasingly interested in the networks

and structures which underlie and shape our publishing and literary infrastructure. Digital technology has enabled the collection of information about Australians' book buying habits on a scale that would have been previously unimaginable. However, just as we are coming to grips with finding out more about the preferences of 'everyday readers', the terrain has shifted again and we are faced with another set of questions and the challenge of developing new methodologies to answer them.

*The author thanks Nielsen BookScan for the opportunity to undertake this research, as well as the anonymous JASAL reviewers, Jane Messer, and Michael Webster for their valuable suggestions and feedback.*

## Notes

1. Critics such as Alex Heard argue that Sedaris has stretched this contract to its limits, that his work transgresses the boundaries of non-fiction and should be categorised as fiction. However there is lukewarm support for Heard's position according to Jack Shafer . (Sedaris describes himself as a 'humorist' and his work continues to be categorised by NielsenBookScan as non-fiction.)
2. The Nielsen BookScan subcategories for biography and autobiography are: General; The Arts; Historical, Political & Military; Royalty; Sport; Literary; Science, Technology & Medical; Religious & Spiritual; and Business.
3. The NB subcategories for food and drink are: General; National & Regional Cuisine; Health, Dieting & Wholefood Cookery; Vegetarian Cookery; Wines; and Other Beverages.
4. The combined NB categories are: Family & Health: General; Marriage, Family & Other Relationships; Sex & Sexuality; Pregnancy & Parenting; Fitness & Diet; Coping with Problems & Illness.
5. Travel & Holiday Guides: General; Where to Stay / Where to Eat & Drink.
6. The combined NB categories are: Business, Accounting & Vocational: Textbooks & Study Guides; Management Techniques; Management & Business: General; Sales & Marketing; Finance & Accounting; Entertainment & Etiquette; Self Improvement: General; Careers & Success; Money & Consumer Issues.
7. Gardening; House & Home; Pets & Equine; Hobbies, Pastimes & Indoor Games; Handicrafts, Arts & Crafts
8. The Arts: General & Reference; Fine Arts / Art History; Individual Artists / Art Monographs; Design & Commercial Art; Photography; Architecture; Film, TV & Radio; Music & Dance; Other Performing Arts; Antiques & Collectables
9. History: World & General; Ancient History; Regional History; History: Specific Subjects; Military History; Archaeology; Local History, Names & Genealogy. As an example of the anomalies in classifications, the last category includes books of baby names, a perennially popular sub-genre.
10. True Crime; True Military / Combat Stories; True Stories
11. Politics: General & Reference; Political Science & Theory; Political Ideologies & Parties; Government & Constitution; International Relations; Current Affairs & Issues
12. Bestselling US titles in the 1930s include *Life Begins at Forty*; *You Must Relax, Wake up and Live!* and *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. (Korda 47).

13. The Art of the Real: National Creative Non-fiction Conference, convened by Kim Cheng Boey, Keri Glastonbury and Ros Smith, Newcastle University's Writing Cultures Research Group, May 2008.
14. Books under 'Other' include narrative non-fiction books about family and health; mind, body spirit; motor vehicles, cars, planes and trains and other titles not classified elsewhere.
15. The sharp jump in sales in this general category in 2006 was due partly to the success of *Salvation Creek* by Susan Duncan; in 2007 to *My Steve* by Terri Irwin, *Infidel: My Life* by Hirsi Ali, *Marley and Me* by John Grogan, and *Sophie's Journey* by Sally Collings; and in 2008 to *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert.
16. Other popular titles associated with celebrities are: *Parky: My Autobiography* by Michael Parkinson; *Dear Fatty* by Dawn French; *Bravemouth: Living with Billy Connolly* by Pamela Stephenson; and books by or about Slash, U2, Eric Clapton, Shakespeare and Graham Kennedy.
17. See Currie and Brien for an insightful discussion of the long-standing popularity of life narrative genres.
18. 'The 1000 bookshops surveyed by Nielsen BookScan reported 60.4 million sales, a drop of 7.1 per cent on the previous year. The value of sales fell 12.6 per cent to \$1078 million (following a 4.2 per cent fall in 2010).' (Wyndham, *Celebrity*)

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*Appendices*

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000
Books classified as biographies, autobiographies	62,868	51,904	57,669	64,404	70,914	81,490
Food & drink	42,151	45,796	46,742	56,842	60,210	69,982
Family health, sex, problems, parenting, fitness, diet	30,897	31,046	43,510	29,414	29,504	26,951
Self improvement, finance, business, sales	21,391	18,863	15,562	14,713	17,090	13,103
Travel guides, where to stay, eat, drink	20,843	24,122	25,342	24,925	26,022	23,215
Home, pets, garden, hobbies, craft	16,311	14,894	12,910	18,777	16,703	12,912
Arts, film, TV, perf. arts, antiques	17,218	18,196	16,033	15,524	12,576	11,112
History	14,937	17,524	17,352	25,241	19,525	18,559
Sport (not counting biographies & autobiographies)	10,602	10,614	8,935	10,457	8,049	10,028
Politics and current affairs	8,898	6,129	3,711	2,814	4,764	4,927
True crime, true military/combat stories, true stories	6,927	9,735	5,484	11,512	13,099	19,620
	<b>183,247</b>	<b>187,183</b>	<b>190,097</b>	<b>198,708</b>	<b>194,443</b>	<b>190,789</b>

Table 1 Combined categories of the most popular NB non-fiction classifications. This table accompanies Figure 2. (NB, this table excludes many smaller NB categories including dictionaries, maps, puzzles etc)



	2003 '000	2004 '000	2005 '000	2006 '000	2007 '000	2008 '000
Biographies, autobiographies	23,819	18,225	20,788	35,006	37,690	35,603
History	24,319	25,005	25,750	29,097	22,178	22,381
The Arts & Literature	17,458	21,424	21,556	19,285	18,742	25,923
Sport	17,194	15,384	18,672	15,116	13,773	22,960
Politics & Current Affairs	12,008	10,158	5,898	4,159	6,643	7,203
Travel	9,913	10,729	9,741	7,895	8,771	9,829
True Crime, True Stories, Military Stories.	7,889	10,201	5,946	11,946	14,294	20,221
Philosophy, Ethics, Social Sciences (including law)	6,928	7,001	9,239	4,846	6,237	5,960
Science, Medicine, the Environment	5,834	6,113	6,270	9,923	11,041	9,372
Religions	5,198	3,060	1,628	920	2,575	917
Humour	3,029	3,143	1,934	1,347	1,715	2,442
Business, Economics	1,947	1,512	1,329	1,943	4,015	1,964
Other	3,042	5,692	4,683	4,605	5,133	7,429
Popular Psychology	634	975	1,067	769	723	1,171
Grand Total	139,21	138,62	134,50	146,85	153,52	173,37
	2	3	0	8	8	6

Table 2 Combined categories of the most popular narrative non-fiction classifications based on NB categories *and* sorting by the researcher. This table accompanies Figure 6 and is not directly comparable with Table 1. (NB, this table excludes many smaller narrative non-fiction categories including family, health, motor vehicles, cars, planes, trains, food and drink, mind, body, spirit, etc).

Title	Author	Publisher Group
Mao's Last Dancer	Cunxin, Li	Penguin Books
Underbelly: The Gangland War	Silvester, J. & Rule, Andrew	Floradale Press
A Short History of Nearly Everything	Bryson, Bill	Transworld
Out of My Comfort Zone: The Autobiography	Waugh, Steve	Penguin Books
Stupid White Men... and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation	Moore, Michael	Penguin Books
Eat, Pray, Love	Gilbert, Elizabeth	Bloomsbury Pub
It's Not about the Bike: My Journey Back to Life	Armstrong, Lance & Jenkins, Sally	Allen & Unwin
Marley and Me	Grogan, John	Hachette ANZ
Scar Tissue	Kiedis, Anthony	Hachette Little, Brown
Almost French: A New Life in Paris	Turnbull, Sarah	Transworld
Forbidden Love: A Harrowing True Story of Love and Revenge in Jordan	Khouri, Norma	Transworld
True Colours: My Life	Gilchrist, Adam	Pan Macmillan
The God Delusion	Dawkins, Richard	Transworld
My Story	Corby, Schapelle & Bonella, K.	Pan Macmillan
Bravemouth: Living with Billy Connolly	Stephenson, Pamela	Hachette Headline
Tobruk	FitzSimons, Peter	HarperCollins Publishers
Tuesdays with Morrie	Albom, Mitch	Hachette ANZ
Great War, The	Carlyon, Les	Pan Macmillan
Marching Powder	Young, Rusty	Pan Macmillan
Down Under	Bryson, Bill	Transworld
Kokoda	FitzSimons, Peter	Hachette ANZ
Dear Fatty	French, Dawn	Random House
The Weather Makers: The Past and Future Impact of Climate Change	Flannery, Tim	Text Publishing Company
My Steve	Irwin, Terri	Simon & Schuster
Parky: My Autobiography	Parkinson, Michael	Hachette Hodder
Dude, Where's My Country?	Moore, Michael	Penguin Books
Holy Cow!: An Indian Adventure	MacDonald, Sara	Transworld
Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart	Livingston, Gordon	Hachette ANZ
Jason McCartney: After Bali	McCartney, Jason & Slattery, Geoff	Hachette ANZ
Leadbelly: Inside Australia's Underworld Wars	Silvester, J. & Rule, Andrew	Floradale Press
Who Killed Channel 9?	Stone, Gerald	Pan Macmillan
Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation	Truss, Lynne	Profile Books
Million Little Pieces, A	Frey, James	Hachette Hodder
Short History of Nearly Everything, A	Bryson, Bill	Random House

Joe Cinque's Consolation: A True Story of Death, Grief and the Law	Garner, Helen	Pan Macmillan
Anzac's Story, An	Kyle, Roy & Courtenay, Bryce	Penguin Books
Kokoda	FitzSimons, Peter	Hachette ANZ
My Story	Cosgrove, Peter	HarperCollins
My Life	Clinton, Bill	Random House
Royal Duty, A	Burrell, Paul	Penguin Books

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Table 3 The top-selling narrative non-fiction books by volume 2003-2008 (not weighted according to year of publication)