What the librarians did: the marginalisation of romance fiction through the practices of public librarianship

by Vassiliki Veros

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Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, *Vassiliki Veros* declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of *Doctor of Philosophy*, in the *Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences* at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Public libraries are cultural institutions with broad reaching stated values of inclusion underpinning their service delivery and collection provision to engage and reflect their local communities. These values of inclusion are enacted through a variety of practices of librarians. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the practices of librarians were leading to romance fiction potentially being excluded from collections and associated services. This study, set at the intersection of librarianship and studies of popular culture, explores these practices, using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and structuring structures, Raymond Williams's concept of ordinary and popular culture along with his concept of the selective tradition, and Catherine Sheldrick Ross's metaphors of reading. Through an ethnographic case study, the practices of public librarians in New South Wales are examined using field observations, interview and document analysis. The data analysis was enriched by an approach based on Bourdieu's notion of "thinking tools", a key tool being Gérard Genette's notions of transtextuality, providing a framework for both the thesis structure and for understanding the research data. The key findings of this thesis by compilation are that romance fiction novels are marginalised through the practice of creating absences with implications for other library services, authors and readers. These absences are situated within the practices of acquisitions and collection policies, the provision of cataloguing bibliographic records with its associated metadata, the placement and shelving of romance fiction, and the selection of fiction titles and the provision of kits for book groups. The conceptual context of the study identified that the tension arising from perceptions of legitimacy of romance fiction continues to prevail within the profession. As a consequence, public librarians no longer play a significant role in the selective tradition through which popular culture is institutionalised, their range of cultural competence tends to not include knowledge of the genre of romance fiction resulting in a lessening of the cultural capital of the wider community. At a methodological level, the study has demonstrated the usefulness of Bourdieu's thinking tools, in particular, field, structuring structures, and cultural competence. At a conceptual level, it has shown that while Williams's notion of popular culture is relevant, his concept of the selective tradition is constrained in the contemporary context; public librarians no longer have sole responsibility for the institutionalisation of culture, with the rise of internet-based services allowing people through their everyday lives to contribute to determining the cultural expressions that will become part of the cultural record.

Introduction

Background to study

In February 2009, I attended the Australian Romance Readers Association's inaugural convention in a professional capacity, as a team leader from my then public library employer and as a founding member of the New South Wales Readers' Advisory Steering Committee. I was thrilled to be able to attend an event that was focused on readers of romance fiction, as this was by far my favourite fiction-reading choice. After one particular session, I was introduced to an author who at the time had six books in print with Mills & Boon, a major publisher for the genre. I paraphrase her comment to me when she learned I was a librarian: "You put my books on those spinners, and my books don't get catalogued and because of this I don't get paid my Public Lending Rights." Public Lending Right is a scheme that allows authors whose works are held in public libraries to be paid according to the number of copies of their books that are held in the library.

This was a pivotal moment for me. Up until that moment, my interactions with authors had all been positive, with them making ritual aspirational statements about how librarians are wonderful, how librarians changed their lives or that being a librarian was a dream job, statements that positioned librarians as "evangelists of culture" (Griswald & Wohl 2015). The Mills & Boon author was clear that she saw value in libraries, but that she had an issue with the way that the practices in libraries by librarians treated her creative and intellectual products, which in turn affected her income.

This author's words stayed with me. At first, I struggled with this concept of the library being seen as the contributor to someone's sense of inequity. My first reaction was to defend my profession. Mine was an honourable profession, one with equity of service and freedom of access to information as core values. UNESCO has a library manifesto that makes statements as to the social good of public libraries, and as a committed professional librarian, I felt that we were successfully meeting the aims and ideals of the institution, and I was a happy and willing proselytiser.

My second reaction was to consider her assertion more deeply, to take seriously what this author was saying about her experience of the practice of librarians. Studies had already established that romance fiction is not treated in the same way as other fiction in public libraries (Adkins, Esser, Velaszquez & Hill 2008; Flesch 2004; Ramsdell 2012). The provision of books continues to be a core part of the service that public libraries provide to their communities. The works of authors

are used in the collection and selection, categorisation and classification, placement and display, as well as the running of both unique and regular programs. There is a considerable amount of professional work that is centred on fiction collections. Yet, as I reflected, it was clear that this author's concern was not just about what librarians do, but about the implications of these practices for her as an author, for the genre of romance fiction and for popular culture.

This reflection led me eventually to the research question that shapes this study:

How do the practices of public librarians marginalise romance fiction?

From practitioner to scholar-practitioner

However, this research question was not to be a problem-solving study conducted by a practitioner, as I had been reminded of the broader societal context within which library services are provided. Further, the conference program had already broached the question of romance fiction as a focus for scholarly consideration through its panel discussion "What academics *really* [the program's emphasis] think about romance fiction", featuring scholars whose research included romance fiction. The issue for this study, therefore, was how to frame the broader societal context in conceptual terms.

C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* proposes that the act of research should be seen as an everyday process, and he argues that the social researcher needs to be able to understand their own values and personal experiences to be able to examine the social construct of these values and experiences. It is only through an understanding and a contemplation of their own self can the researcher also study the social institutions and social forces in question. This understanding gives the researcher "the capacity to shift from one perspective to another" (1959, p. 8). This was an essential step into the research persona for me. I understood the importance of somehow being able to position myself at the intersections of various fields of study and practice, observing the library, its librarians and their practices, readers, scholars and romance fiction. I knew the minutiae of library practices but the challenge was to be able to position myself to examine the problem from a distance and from multiple viewpoints. In stepping away from my practitioner self, I was able to see that an author – the Mills & Boon author I had spoken with – had a "personal trouble" (Mills 1959, p. 11) with the practices of librarians. The question was whether her "personal trouble" with the practices was unique to her or whether her individual experience was also a broader social issue that merited examination. Even though it might have seemed to some "altogether trivial and cheap" (Mills 1959, p. 188) that her books were put on a library spinner rather than catalogued on the shelves, I determined that this issue went beyond

"personal trouble" for this author and beyond my immediate practice as a librarian. Thus, I felt compelled to develop as a scholar-practitioner, bringing scholarly processes into my everyday life.

As a practitioner, I have been a public librarian. I was a member of the initial New South Wales Readers' Advisory steering committee, whose intention was to facilitate collaborative state-wide support for readers' advisory library staff. Our aim was to broaden the perception of what reading is and the understanding of reading provision through our collaboration with public librarians who meet with patrons and potential patrons in physical and virtual places/spaces. It was in that capacity that I attended the first Australian Romance Readers Association convention in 2009. In my personal, everyday life, I have been an avid reader of romance fiction since my teenage years, and with the development of social media over the past decade I had been able to share my reflections on my reading through a blog. This blog found me exchanging ideas with many other readers, a few of whom were scholars of romance fiction. Unintentionally, I was surrounding myself with a "circle of people who listen and talk" (Mills 1959, p. 201) about romance fiction and the importance of reading in society, and that has served as a constant reminder of the issues involved with romance fiction. These interactions influenced me and led me to decide to undertake post-graduate research.

The scholar in me had begun to emerge without my recognising what was happening initially. I thought it was the librarian in me who wanted to find out more, who researched and read, who took notes. It was also the avid reader who diligently documented my leisure reading, including reviewing romance fiction on several online spaces and in the Sydney radio media, as well as digitally categorising and tagging my book selections using descriptions that were meaningful to me and expounding upon the nature of my own private collections (Veros 2017, p. 4). I continued to write with what I hoped was clarity and simplicity (Mills 1959, p. 201), perhaps evidence that the scholar was at work too. The more I engaged with the issue of uncatalogued romance novels in libraries, the more I began to understand the significance of the broader sociological work, and specifically *Popular Culture* and *Popular Romance* scholarship, which clearly went beyond the pragmatics of how the practices of librarians might affect a single individual.

Influences on the emerging scholar

C. Wright Mills

C. Wright Mills has been a significant influence on me in understanding how to establish a research study that emerges from an everyday reality, as introduced above and explained further

below. *The Sociological Imagination* provided me with useful advice on how to begin to think like a scholar.

This emerging scholar identified that the rhetoric supporting romance fiction focuses on the commercial success of the genre, on its desirability for reading for pleasure, on the insatiability of its readers and the potentially dismissive approach of public librarians towards romance fiction.

Sheldrick Ross and Regis

Catherine Sheldrick Ross has been influential in shaping my thoughts about reading in a conceptual sense. She argues that reading has a dual purpose. There is purposive reading (Ross 2009, p. 639), which is reading for information – this could be for work purposes, religious enlightenment, knowledge of the sciences and of history. Then there is reading for pleasure (Ross 2009, p. 633), as a leisure activity, for amusement and for appreciation of storytelling. The two types of reading are not mutually exclusive but culturally they are ascribed different values. Purposive reading is given a higher importance than reading for pleasure because reading in western society is taught as the foundation of learning. In a framework of readers, Sheldrick Ross discusses the pleasure reader, noting that the way that public librarians understand the purpose of reading affects their perception of public libraries and their place as a leisure structure (Ross 2009, p. 634). While there is no question about the value of reading "textbooks, reference books, how-to-do-it manuals, spiritual and religious texts, works of history or philosophy", which can all be seen as "utilitarian and improving" leading to "reading popular fiction can still raise alarm bells for guardians of public taste" (Ross 2009, p. 633). She concludes that despite public libraries actively courting pleasure readers, librarians still feel conflicted about encouraging romance readership (Ross 2009, pp. 634–5), suggesting perhaps that they do so due to thinking "of reading as a ladder with popular fiction at the bottom and literary fiction and canonical texts at the top" (Ross 2009, p. 365; Ross 1987, p. 12).

Prominent popular romance scholar Pamela Regis has also been influential in helping me to refine my thinking. She defines romance as "a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more protagonists" (Regis 2011) and notes that although it is the most popular of literary genres, it is the least respected (Regis 2003, p. 3). Romance fiction's authors, the books themselves and its readers face discrimination from several quarters. In her keynote address at the second annual conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance (2011), Regis investigates the criticism of popular romance fiction by examining the underlying values, assumptions and influential statements that are made by various critics of the genre, including the contrasts between the critics from 1970 to the 1980s and critics

from 2003 to 2009. This brought me to contemplate the values, assumptions and influential statements of librarians and their attitude to working with romance fiction in their collections. It also led me to think about the different ways that the practices of librarians and treatments of collections can be a critique of the materials being accepted into the library collection.

All of these factors are in and of themselves important but I found little that positions investigations into romance fiction collections in libraries from a broader cultural or sociological perspective. I was, however, engaging with the work of other scholars and this was another aspect of surrounding myself with the relevant social and intellectual environment, including "imaginary characters" (Mills 1959, p. 201), which allowed me to test my own assertions, hunches and to think about designing research (1959, p. 202). I began to see how I could use "fringe-thoughts" (Mills 1959, p. 196) and "playfulness" (1959, p. 212) to grapple with the disparate elements and the complexity of my research question.

Manifestos, guidelines and legislation

Manifestos, guidelines and legislation, I came to realise, were documents with the fundamental mission statements of the library profession and the legislation guiding the provision of services in New South Wales (NSW), the positioning of romance fiction and its study, and the consideration of popular culture. These will be considered in greater detail in the Literature Review of this thesis, but it is important here to set out briefly how these disparate documents come together to bring scholarly complexity to what might otherwise be a "trivial" question.

The policies of public libraries and the practices of public librarians are shaped through manifestos, statements and guidelines from authoritative bodies, as well as by a range of legislation. These create the institutional framework within which librarians, readers and books (and even to some extent their authors) are inter-related. The IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto for Public Libraries (International Federation of Library Associations 1994; Niegaard 1994) was developed in consultation with the International Federation of Library Associations and is the internationally recognised statement of aims and objectives for public library services. One of the key statements is that public library collections "must reflect current trends" as well as "the memory … of human … imagination". Following from that statement is a key maxim for public librarians engaged in readers' advisory work: "Every reader their book; every book its reader", a phrase derived from what Ranganathan (1932) coined as the five laws of library science. Even though Ranganathan wrote in 1932, in India, this maxim is seen as key to library practices, at least in principle. In NSW, public libraries are established under the Library Act of NSW (1939), permissive legislation that sets the framework of responsibilities for these libraries to exist,

including the management of their services. The State Library of New South Wales provides oversight and advice to public libraries, through the establishment of standards and guidelines, including Living Learning Libraries: Standards and Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries (Quinn and McCallum 2019). Library services are also influenced by a range of other legislation, including copyright, as well as government programs such as the Public Lending Right (2019).

In the 21st century, the role of the public library has transitioned from one that was broadly collection based – that is, one where access to recorded knowledge was significant, through lending and reference services – to one where it is seen as a cultural and community space that provides opportunities for an interaction of popular culture. Although collections still are of high importance as they are reflective of the interests and information needs of the community, libraries also reflect the changes in what the community considers 'information' and the ways the community accesses information. Libraries allow for communities to evaluate and solve common problems and to follow individual interests, whether through the provision of a variety of spaces allowing for both quiet and collaborative engagements; through the provision of information and knowledge in a variety of formats and across a variety of access platforms, from print books, DVDs, maps, and other physical and material objects, to e-books, e-audiobooks, film and music streaming; as well as open and linked data as is facilitated through library management systems. Behind these activities, the practices of selection, cataloguing, shelving and engagement with the users of library services, including readers, continue as they have done for many decades.

Raymond Williams

The perspective I developed on popular culture is based on that of Raymond Williams. He argues that "Culture is Ordinary" (Williams & Higgins 2001, p. 10), that is, that culture is created through the everyday activities of a society and that the labels of high culture and low culture are inappropriate for contemporary society. In arguing for a plurality in cultures, Williams says, "Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who started from a different position" (Williams 1961, p. 334) for "every human society expresses its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning." Thus, culture is to be found in the thoughts, observations and interests of everyday people. For me, Williams's key message is the importance of understanding how societal practices have entrenched the distinction between what has been considered 'culture' – the literary and artistic tastes of an elite – and ordinary culture, the entertainment enjoyed by the masses. From this position, Williams shows how a tradition of valorisation of certain works led to the creation of a canon and thus to the exclusion of works not meeting certain criteria. The works that did not meet these criteria thus disappeared from societal memory.

Coming back to C. Wright Mills's emphasis on research interests arising from the everyday, this understanding from Williams gave me conceptual tools to consider the role of cultural institutions in implementing the selective tradition, especially public libraries. As cultural institutions, libraries attempt to collect, maintain and make available the products of thought, and the items chosen to represent ordinary culture are influenced by many factors. Often the "ordinary" books that are popular in retail shops are not found in libraries; they do not receive reviews and are not taught within schools. Thus, they do not become part of the selective tradition.

Pierre Bourdieu

Another key person who influenced me as an emerging scholar is Pierre Bourdieu. His emphasis on what people do as a basis for understanding power relationships led me to adopt his concept of practices. In addition, his notion of "structuring structures" (1977, p. 53) gave me a thinking tool for analysing the context within which what librarians do (their practices) takes place. While his view of capital and how it is created differs from Williams's approach, he is nonetheless similarly concerned with how cultural capital is recognised and enacted, a process he refers to as cultural competence. Like C. Wright Mills, Bourdieu is concerned with observation of the everyday and the analysis of these observations as the basis for conceptualising structures and relationships of power. He has shared the idea that it is interpretation of data that is challenging and he writes that "the difficulty in sociology is to manage to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 207).

The Australian Research Council (ARC) Popular Fiction study team

As this study was developing and I was emerging as a scholar, sometimes confronting the criticism that my area of research was 'trivial', the Australian Research Council awarded a grant to a project called *Genre Worlds: Australian Popular Fiction in the 21st Century*[1] with the team being led by Dr Beth Driscoll, Dr Lisa Fletcher and Dr Kim Wilkins from the University of Melbourne, the University of Tasmania and the University of Queensland respectively. I was able to attend their seminar *The State of Play: Australian Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century* in 2016 and presented at the academic stream of the GenreCon conference, which they organised in 2017. The award of the grant conferred a level of authority and respectability on the field of studies of genre fiction, specifically romance fiction, crime fiction and fantasy fiction with an Australian perspective, and my research endeavour has greatly benefitted from this research and the acceptance of genre fiction as a subject worthy of study.

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[1] Australian Research Council Discovery Project DP160101308 2016-2018

Collecting the data in the study

Grenfell writes that any study using Bourdieu's notion of practices and the associated concepts within its framework "must begin with real, empirical data" (2012, p. 2). As already mentioned, C. Wright Mills and Bourdieu place a significant emphasis on interpretation of the data as crucial in shedding new light on what might otherwise be seen as banal or trivial. Thus, an interpretivist perspective has been used for making sense of the data and addressing the research question. The field of study – the practices of librarians in public libraries as they apply to romance fiction – is data rich. This study used multiple approaches to data collection, including open data, data from library catalogues, observational visits to public library branches across the state of NSW and interviews with librarians responsible for the selection of romance fiction in various libraries in metropolitan and rural NSW.

The thesis and its form

This is a thesis by compilation, a relatively uncommon form. That it is uncommon can be seen as something of a challenge as there are few examples to draw from and few people who have presented doctoral work in that form. The thesis by compilation starts from the premise that some parts of a thesis have already been published – almost always papers that draw on the findings. Thus, the requirement is for an Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology, as well as for a Discussion and Conclusion; these chapters serve to create a coherent study around the papers that present and discuss findings. The findings section of this thesis comprises four published, peer-reviewed papers and one still under review. A challenge has been how to create appropriate relationships between the published papers and the conceptual positioning of them, as well as the discussion of them and their linking into the wider research question, and how to meet the requirements of the university for doctoral work presented in this way. This has been a challenge for the scholar in me, rather than the practitioner.

The work of Gérard Genette provided me with a thinking tool. His concept of transtextuality (1997a) – that a text exists in a web of other texts, with tighter or looser relationships – gave me a way to conceptualise the relationships I needed to create in this thesis by compilation. He identifies five types of transtextuality – that is, five types of relationship that can exist among and between texts: archetextuality, intertextuality, metatextuality, paratextuality and hypertextuality. I will briefly set out how each of these works and how they appear on this thesis.

Archetextuality is concerned with genre – the way in which a text reflects the requirements of the genre of which it is a part. This thesis must meet the requirements for the genre 'thesis by

compilation', and at the same time the literature review and methodology, in particular, must meet the requirements for the genre of traditional thesis.

Intertextuality is concerned with references to other texts, usually through allusion, quoting and referencing. Although I have made significant attempts not to create too great an overlap between, for example, the literature review of the thesis and the individaual literature review of each of the journal articles, it is inevitable that there will be overlap. There will also be places where I have deliberately referred to or quoted my own published work, within the overall genre of thesis by compilation.

Metatextuality will be found in both the evidence and discussion chapters of the thesis, where a critical commentary on the text of the published papers will unfold.

Hypertextuality – relationships with other texts – would not usually be expected within a thesis. My published works have attracted citations and each paper that refers to my work is an example of a hypertext. I have conceptualised the prefatory material that I have written for each published paper as a hypertext, an attempt to draw the content of the specific paper beyond itself and to link it with the larger endeavour of the broad research study.

Paratextuality encompasses all the material in the main work that is not strictly part of the text; here that includes the abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents and bibliography, as well as the statements required by the university about originality and responsibility for the work.

Gérard Genette's notion of transtextuality, then, is the framework that shapes the thesis structure, but his category of metatextuality can also be seen as the conceptual thread that connects theory, method, research process and the outcomes through the application of commentary.

The chapters themselves

This thesis is made up of six chapters, including this Introduction chapter, as well as the requisite references and contents. Each chapter is conceptualised in terms of its own 'genre' expectations so as to meet the requirements of the thesis.

The Literature Review chapter, examines the literature and the scope of the field of study that is being undertaken. There are three main sections within this chapter. The first section starts with the conceptual frame of Raymond Williams's popular culture and the selective tradition, the discussion then leading to popular romance in terms of its definition and scholarship, then placing it within the Australian experience. The Australian Romance Readers Association and its reader

survey is then introduced, which includes questions on library use. From here, discussion of romance readers and romance fiction leads to the interest in popular culture.

In the second section of the literature review, several of Bourdieu's concepts are introduced, starting with discussion of how culture is created. This leads to the concept of cultural competence with capital, habitus and field being used to frame how librarians practise within their profession. The last of Bourdieu's concepts drawn upon in this thesis is his notion of structuring structures, which works as an introduction to the international, national and local institutions, organisations, legislation and other governance bodies that direct library professionals and their practices.

In the third section of the literature review, distinct library practices are considered, starting with an overview of service delivery and readers' advisory, and then focusing on four distinct areas: collection development policies and acquisitions; cataloguing and the purposes of metadata; floor placement, location and display of materials; and outreach and program provisions, in particular book groups and fiction reading. Each of these practices is discussed in terms of the general collection, in addition to reflections upon any literature on these practices in relation to romance fiction.

These three sections that make up the literature review coalesce to illustrate the position of librarians not only within the field of library and information science but also in the broader areas of popular culture and as they relate to popular romance studies. Taken together, the literature from these fields provides a conceptual and practical context within which to explore a question that has been largely ignored.

The Methodology chapter, engages with the ontological and epistemological approaches of the research, whereby I also discuss the personal lens through which I view the subject matter of my research, with all its preconceived ideas; my work practices; and the approaches that I have brought to the thesis. I then discuss my methodological approach of ethnographic case study and set out my research method.

In the Key Findings chapter, I present the key findings of my study. As this is a thesis by compilation, the chapter starts with an introduction to that particular form, then moves on to the five articles, four of which have been published in peer-reviewed journals and a fifth that is under review, which are presented in order of the practices associated with a book becoming part of the collections and services of a public library, rather than in the order of their publication. Each

article has leading and concluding comments, a meta-commentary as such, which positions the practices of librarians within the context of one another.

The Discussion chapter draws from both the journal articles and the linked commentary to reflect upon the practices of public librarians. The discussion reconsiders the way the selective tradition is informed by the everyday culture and attempts to understand how cultural capital is created by the practices of librarians. In this way, there is a rethinking of the practices of librarians within the context of popular romance studies and popular culture, which contributes to research practices.

The Conclusion chapter, starts with statements making a summation of the thesis, then move on to the innovations of the thesis, and the implications for practice and scholarship. The limitations of the study then guide the thesis to its concluding comments, reflecting on possible future research.

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will set out the complex conceptual framework within which this study is positioned. It will demonstrate that this study of the ways in which the practices of public librarians marginalise romance fiction is not concerned with a "trivial" matter (Mills 1959, p. 188), but with a question that has implications for our understanding of culture. In presenting this review of the literature, I have been mindful that each of the papers presented in Chapter 4 has its own tailored review with the potential for repetition; thus, my emphasis is on the bigger picture, with specific details brought out in those papers.

I begin by introducing the concepts of popular culture and the selective tradition as set out by Raymond Williams, and follow this with an exploration of capital, including cultural capital, and practices from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu. I will set out the position of romance fiction within popular culture and in the scholarly literature. Following this, I will discuss the framework of institutional and professional expectations of librarians, so I can then explore in detail the practices of librarians in selection, acquisitions and collection development, cataloguing and classification, shelving and organisation, and the programming and facilitating of book groups.

Popular culture and the selective tradition

Raymond Williams sought a re-thinking of the concept of culture in his writings from the 1960s. He argued that "Culture is Ordinary" (Williams & Higgins 2001, p. 10), proposing that culture is created through the everyday activities of a society, and that the labels of high culture and low culture were inappropriate for contemporary society. He distinguished three separate levels of culture. These were the *lived culture*, which is only accessible to those living and experiencing at that time; the *recorded culture*, which includes everything that is produced at that time from art to everyday facts; and *the culture of the selective tradition* (Williams 1965, p. 121), that is, the effects and objects that have been selected to represent the culture of the time, usually in the cultural institutions of the society. At the same time, he proposed three general categories in the definition of culture: the ideal, the documentary, and the social. The "ideal" refers to culture as a way of being perfect, as a universal value. The "documentary" covers the different ways of recording the intellectual and imaginative outputs of a society. The "social" extends beyond arts and learning, but is expressed as a way of life, the ordinary behaviour of people and institutions (Williams 1965, p. 57). This is the basis of his argument that "culture is ordinary": it is human

society and its thoughts and observations. Documentary culture is all that survives once "living witnesses are silent" as it "expresses that life to us in direct terms" (Williams 1965, p. 65).

Williams explores notions of culture through what was at the time the relatively new medium of television (1974). In taking this approach, he seeks to break down the division between high and low culture, to demonstrate that culture is not a product of the tastes of an elite within society, but the outcome of ordinary behaviours of ordinary people across society. In other words, he argues for the need to take a pluralistic approach to an understanding of what constitutes culture, including popular culture, and to be respectful of those who might hold a different view of culture (Williams 1961, p. 334). This pluralistic approach allows for inclusiveness and diversity for "every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning" (Williams 1961).

The proposition that culture was "ordinary" did not mean that its creation was random or without thought. Even ordinary, or popular, culture is created according to conventions and rules. Williams discusses the rules that shape our ways of understanding and describing objects/subjects. He says that a "description is a function of communication, and we can best understand the arts if we look at this vital relationship, in which experience has to be described to be realized" (1965, p. 40) and adds that that there are various ways in an "imaginative life" to come to an understanding of what is culture (1965, p 40). He emphasises the importance of these descriptions that enable an expression of the imaginative life to be "interpreted, and described" before it is seen (1965, p. 41).

Our own culture will be understood through the recorded culture of our time, Williams's documentary culture. This approach allows Williams to express the importance of his concept of the selective tradition in creating an institutionalised collection of that documentary culture. In the selective tradition, "from the whole body of activities, certain things are selected for value and emphasis" (1965, p. 69). Individuals may lament that aspects of ordinary or popular culture that were important to them were excluded or neglected from the process of selecting recorded materials that represent the culture of the time (1965, p. 69). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the selective process of our time points towards our understanding of culture only through the objects chosen by our institutions. Thus, the "selective tradition" is separate from ordinary culture or "from the culture as lived" (1965, p. 67). A cultural tradition may be seen as belonging to the past, but Williams notes that the selective tradition does not necessarily belong to the past; it may begin at any time, including from "within the period itself". In other words, the processes of selection and reflection may exist contemporaneously with the expression of popular culture.

Thus, cultural institutions are important to the recognition and collection of the documentary examples of popular culture. A wise society "will encourage the institutions to give sufficient resources to the ordinary work of preservation, and to resist the criticism, which any particular period may make with great confidence, that much of this activity is irrelevant and useless" (Williams 1965, p. 69). It is inevitable that there will be criticism made especially when it comes to selections that are perceived to have little or no value, but institutions involved in the selective tradition must resist this criticism because otherwise they will misrepresent everyday culture (1965, pp. 68–69). These decisions may be difficult to make, but without this resistance to criticism, institutions will misrepresent everyday culture because they will not have broken from the conventions and rules of the past.

Raymond Williams says that the most difficult part of a past lived culture to accept and assess is that which at the time incurred "a rejection of considerable areas of what was once a living culture" (1965, p. 68), that is, the areas that were considered "unimportant, irrelevant, inconsequential and valueless" for the purposes of selection (1965, p. 69). For Williams, it is inevitable that "losses" and "limitations" on what is recorded and what is collected will occur. However, these losses and limitations need to be noted and examined, for Williams insists

> that a good living culture is various and changing, that the need for sport and
> entertainment is as real as the need for art, and that the public display of 'taste', as a form
> of social distinction, is merely vulgar (Williams 1965, p. 364)

The selective tradition has been used in several studies by library scholars mostly in the area of diversity and racial representation, primarily in the study of selections made for children and their literary instruction both in the classroom (Hulan 2010), and in the American Library Association's awards (Rowland-Storm 2018), the latter writing that the "selective tradition has traditionally left out the voices of and authentic non-stereotyped representations of African Americans, Latinx people, people with disabilities, and GLBT people" (2018, p. 109).

In the 21st century, public librarians remain important in collecting and documenting popular culture in their collections. However, the rise in importance of the internet and social media means that, at one level, the public library is no longer the only institution involved in shaping documentary culture.

Romance Fiction

Before turning to the literature on practices in the field of librarianship, it is important to consider, briefly, romance fiction as a genre, recognised as an example of popular culture. This

section will set out the definition of romance fiction adopted for this study. It will comment briefly on romance fiction as a topic of academic interest and scholarly concern. Finally, it will note the position of romance fiction in society, from the perspective of economic capital and cultural capital.

The term *romance fiction* can conjure an array of topics and of reactions. The study of romance fiction is a field in its own right, and interests in the story lines, readers, and societal attitudes to romance fiction have been important themes in cultural studies and in social studies. In the context of this study, it is necessary to document how romance fiction is defined, the main themes of scholarship, and attitudes towards it. Romance fiction is also part of the book trade, and since this study is concerned with books that can be defined as romance fiction, a brief overview of romance fiction from the trade's perspective is provided.

Romance fiction is often considered synonymous with the books published by Harlequin and its subsidiary Mills & Boon (Driscoll, Fletcher, Wilkins & Carter 2018, p. 207), referred to in the publishing field as "category romance", which are "popular romance novels that are published in a category or series (also called line or imprint), which groups together similar types of romance stories" (Goris 2015, p. 5). A number of scholars have conducted research exclusively on the category romance novel such as Juliet Flesch with her study of romance fiction in Australia, which is focused upon Australian authored category romance novels (2004), and scholar jay Dixon's *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon, 1909–1990s* (1999) and Laura Vivanco's *For Love and Money* (2011). In this study, Harlequin Mills & Boon category romance novels are an important and central form, especially as they are as "commercially popular as they are critically loathed" (McWilliam 2009, p. 140) and are "the 'least likely' enunciation of the genre to 'achieve any form of legitimacy' in the public imaginary" (McWilliam 2009, p. 40).

The treatment of the novels that are the 'least likely' to have legitimacy by librarians in public libraries has been an important baseline for this study, but it has also been important for the study to include the whole of the romance fiction genre rather than only a subset. Romance fiction encompasses books of many forms, from mass-market paperbacks, trade B paperbacks, hardback, and digital. These are available from many mainstream and boutique publishers and these books are disseminated, read and discussed by many types of people. There are also many definitions of romance fiction. Scholar Angela Toscano writes that "writers and scholars continue to alter, modify, and play with these definitions …" and that this is "vital to the continued health of the genre, the inclusion of new and diverse perspectives, and the pleasure of romance" (2020). For this study, a combination of the market definition and a foundational scholarly definition is used.

The definition adopted by the Romance Writers of Australia (2018) and the Romance Writers of America (2018) have two basic elements fundamental to every romance novel: "a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending". Second, by romance scholar, Pamela Regis, a long-standing and authoritative scholar in the field of romance fiction, who states that romance is "a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more protagonists" (2011).

The Australian Research Council-funded project Genre Worlds explores the publishing outputs in Australia of genre fiction, including crime, fantasy and romance. Romance fiction had the biggest output by far in 2015–2016, with almost 900 romance titles by Australian authors, more than double the output of fantasy and over four times that of crime. The project data also suggests the number of self-published titles by Australian authors increased between 2010 and 2016 by 230 per cent for crime fiction, 290 per cent for fantasy, and 1000 per cent for romance (Driscoll, Wilkins, Fletcher & Carter 2018), hence illustrating that "genre fiction plays a central role as a driver of change in the … publishing industry" (2018, p. 204) with Australian romance fiction being value as "an adaptable and dynamic sector of the publishing industry, as well as a source of social connection and creative nourishment for its participants" (Fletcher, Driscoll & Wilkins 2018, p. 1013).

Scholarship of romance fiction at one level has sat within the broadly defined field of literature. Historically, romance scholarship has moved from researchers trying to understand readers (Brackett 2000; Goade 2007; Modleski 1980; Radway 1984; Snitow 1979) to an approach where literary theorists increasingly engage in a close analysis of the text of romance fiction. Gleason and Selinger observe that "although first-wave scholars of the romance novel were loath to speak of the artistry or literary interests of these mass-culture texts, much of the current wave of scholarship is frankly aesthetic and appreciative" (2017, p. 13). There is continued research from cross-disciplinary scholars, both historically (Krentz 1992; Radway 1984; Whitehead 1992), and in contemporary times, including from literary scholars (Frantz & Selinger 2012; Kamble, Selinger & Teo 2020; Regis 2003; Roach 2015; Vivanco 2011), as well as reading researchers including librarians and library and information academics (Adkins, Esser, Velasquez & Hill 2008; Flesch 2004; Ramsdell 2012; Ross 2009).

Romance fiction is frequently a source of derision and dismissiveness in society, attitudes that are applied both to its authors and its readers. Romance fiction is decried by many feminists. Germaine Greer (1970), one of the most influential voices of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, has suggested readers of romance fiction are castrated women who have been exploited,

manipulated and deceived by the patriarchy, a line of criticism that is dismissive of both books and readers. It has also been suggested that romance has been deemed porn for women (Snitow 1979). These attitudes persist despite a continued agenda of action to dismantle these prejudices from romance fiction scholars and advocates, especially evident in the founding and continued development of the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance and its *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* (2020), as well as reading and publishing researchers including librarians and library information scholars (Adkins, Esser, Velasquez & Hill 2008; Flesch 2004; Fletcher, Driscoll & Wilkins 2018; Ramsdell 2012; Ross 2009; Ross 1999).

Other forms of popular fiction, such as crime fiction and fantasy fiction, have achieved societal respectability. Genre forms like science fiction or crime fiction have been increasingly accepted without question or explanation as part of the literary canon. For example, publishers like Palgrave Macmillan have included crime fiction as part of their Key Concepts in Literature series (Worthington 2011) alongside postcolonial literature, modernist literature and other established literary forms. Books like *Science Fiction: A Literary History* (Luckhurst 2017) strongly asserts that sci-fi has no qualms about its status.

Part of the disdain for romance in the past has come from its commercial success for "…let us look at the publishers' records of sales and confute the snobs who, with bogus culture lengthening their ears, condemn books merely because the public in great numbers likes and buys them" (Rascoe 1937, p. 12). The need for commercial success of written work is not necessarily a prime consideration of the literati who are more concerned with intellectual status and reputation (Moore 2015, p. 48) even though it is the reality of a publishing business model to seek successful publications to make profit. Jennifer Crusie's definition of romance fiction is one that encompasses this dichotomy: "Romance is a form of literature beloved by readers and loathed by literary critics" (Crusie 1998). Its acceptance as part of literary cultural capital continues to remain low (Regis 2008; Roach 2016; Selinger 2007; Vivanco 2011), with reviews of romance fiction still being relatively rare in the mainstream media. Some changes have occurred since 2016 in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books* introducing regular and dedicated romance fiction review sections, however this shift is not yet evident in Australia.

Candice Proctor suggests that it is naïve to believe that non-romance readers have "blind prejudice" against the genre, and that the valuing of publishing outputs contributes to the issue at hand (2007, p. 19). This suggests that the high yields are responsible for the lack of respect, with Harlequin Mill & Boon in Australia being so popular that in 2005 over 900 titles were published

within all its lines and imprints (Thomas 2007, p. 21). More than twenty years ago, Juliet Flesch, an influential Australian scholar and librarian, argued that the popularity of romance fiction was a reflection of romance novels' responsiveness to its reading community, an action that she notes "not only reflects changes in society, but function as agents for social change, even if only by endorsing existing progressive positions rather than by enunciating new ones" (2004, p. 12). This position was supported by Barletta, who states that "popular culture has the capacity to inform ideas about social and cultural norms and therefore can be highly influential in the transference of knowledge and attitudes" (2014, p. 11), thus engaging with the idea that romance fiction as a way of reflecting and engaging with everyday culture.

Evidence of the popularity of romance fiction in Australia, and its positioning within the reading culture, comes from the annual survey conducted by the Australian Romance Readers Association (ARRA). The survey is answered by avid readers who report on their amount of reading, respond to how they find their reading selections, what their format choices and purchasing practices are, and what their library usage is, especially in relation to finding romance fiction. In 2019, 339 people responded. These responses demonstrate a group of people who read a great deal, who have a broad range of strategies for finding out about what they want to read and who are willing to try new authors and new themes. The responses also show a group of people who read in a wide variety of formats, from mass-market paperbacks to audio-books, e-books published by traditional publishers, as well as self-published works.

In the decade since 2009, two trends have emerged from ARRA's survey results. The first is the growth in use of e-books at the expense of printed books, with e-books being the most frequently purchased format for 10.2 per cent of respondents in 2009, rising to 60.2 per cent in 2018, coinciding with a fall in purchases of print formats from 89.9 per cent to 36.5 per cent. At the same time, the use of libraries to borrow romance fiction has decreased over the decade: 33.4 per cent of respondents indicated that they never used the library to borrow romances in 2009, and in 2019, it was 56.15 per cent of respondents who said they never used their library for this genre.

As popular culture has become an accepted focus of scholarship, scholars have linked romance fiction to popular culture. Catherine Roach, in her book *Happily Ever After: The Romance Story in Popular Culture*[2] discusses her own research method in her aim of understanding "how the

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[2] Catherine Roach's book is an academic text published by a university press and was described in *The Journal of Popular Culture* as being "a methodological groundbreaker, and its effects will hopefully resonate throughout popular culture studies, fandom studies, and future approaches to other genres of popular fiction" (Guynes, 2017, p. 900). When Roach gave a talk on her book at the State Library of New South Wales, her event was given the promotional tag of "hobbies" unlike other similar book events at the time that were tagged with "literature".

romance narrative functions in popular culture" by taking a "dive into the romance community itself for answers" (2016, p. 31). Roach represents the romance fiction reading community as multifaceted, functioning "as a highly supportive women's reading group, as a communal fan passion, as an online professional network, as a shared craft, as a love" (2016, p. 191). The activities of this group can be seen to mirror those found in the traditionally accepted activities of the *selective tradition* through creating reviews, blogs, podcasts and a variety of other production on various cross-media platforms, resulting in the cementing of the genre's importance in popular culture.

According to Williams, "the condition of cultural growth must be that varying elements are at least equally available, and that new and unfamiliar things must be offered steadily over a long period, if they are to have a reasonable chance of acceptance" (1965, p. 365). Romance fiction has been long established in popular culture of the 20th and 21st centuries, with two of the best-known romance imprints, Mills & Boon and Harlequin, founded in 1908 and 1948 respectively, and the popular-culture appeal of these publishing imprints continues to impact and influence readers.

The literature highlights the importance of changes in publishing. Driscoll, Fletcher and Wilkins point to the deep community links that are evident in romance fiction, especially in the area of self-publishing (2018, p. 215). This mirrors Pecoskie and Hill's research that explores the intersections between library and information studies and publishing, and underscores the importance of librarians needing to be aware of the publishing industry and any changes that the publishing field undergoes (2015, p. 609). They explore how "reading-focused user communities and self-publishing infrastructures are effecting change" (Pecoskie & Hill 2015, p. 610); they point out the significance of fanfiction and online communities in creating best-sellers, such as *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and emphasise the importance of librarians considering how fanfiction communities are strengthening the readers' agency and ability to "advocate for texts and themes they are interested in" and to "acknowledge the power the reader (and library users) hold" (2015, p. 622). They also suggest for librarians to consider how the fanfiction community's "information activities" are now creating a more permanent digital heritage (Hill & Pecoskie, 2017, p. 852).

An indication of how the selective tradition is being shaped by communities outside of the cultural institution is evident in literary scholarship that engages with and analyses blogs, reader reviews and social media interactions. Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo note that "Book reviews written by readers and published on digital sites such as Goodreads are a new force in contemporary book culture" (2019, p. 248), identifying the emergence of the emotions that are

evoked as important to readers (2019, p. 252). In the 21st century, the selective tradition is no longer as rigidly defined and controlled. Williams's "masses" no longer lack agency in cultural production but create, influence and shape how they engage with popular culture. This agency is still not fully acknowledged within the selective tradition and will be examined as part of this study.

Bourdieu: Capital, fields and practices

Pierre Bourdieu's work is also concerned with cultural life and its production, its position within a field of practice and its relational attachments, both within the field and outside the field. For him, literature acts as a symbol of taste and class, with literary culture being a symbol of high culture whereas commercial fiction is its antithesis, being viewed as low culture, a dichotomy often referred to as highbrow/lowbrow. Bourdieu writes that those who classify materials "distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. xxix) and that their "objective classification" (1984, p. xxix) is revealed by the position they take.

Bourdieu defines taste as having three areas: legitimate, middlebrow and popular (1984, p. 8) and these definitions work as constructs to aid in the positioning of the argument in this study. The value of Bourdieu's work to this study goes well beyond his concern with literature and the arts; his conceptual approaches can act a framework and a tool kit through which we can arrive at a deeper understanding of a society and its functioning. Bourdieu has written of his key concepts as "thinking tools" (Wacquant 1989, p. 50) and they are briefly set out here.

Bourdieu's fields of practice refer to sets of relationships within a certain society, be it a music society, an ethnic group or a profession, each of which engages in set rules and ideologies that allow entry in and out of those societies. The rules and ideologies that frame the way a field operates are social constructs that Bourdieu refers to as "structuring structures" (1977, p. 53). These are principles that guide and structure what people do, and that are accepted without question, and that ultimately lead people to ways of working and interacting collectively without the need for external direction (Bourdieu 1977, p. 72). Fields of practice, then, can be defined as "the objective network or configuration of relations (again structuring and structured) to be found in any social space or particular context" (Grenfell 2014, p. 47). Thus, the profession of librarians can be understood as a field of practice especially in terms of the social capital that libraries provide in their communities (Goulding 2008; Knox 2014) and in terms of structuring structures (Hussey 2010; Mattern 2014) with Mattern writing that "it can be instructive for our libraries' publics — and critical for our libraries' leaders — to assess those structuring structures". In a

profession, these principles can be seen as 'the rules of the game'; more broadly, they are aspects of social life that are ingrained and that shape the world we live in and the way we live our lives, what we read and how we value what we and others read (Maton 2014, p. 57). Bourdieu insists that members of a society only understand its systems within the constraints of their experiences. Societies (and professions) have sets of rules and practices to which their members adhere so as to belong in the group; knowledge of these rules acts as an entry point into a profession, and breaking the rules may lead to no longer being accepted as part of that group.

This knowledge of the practices of a field, and the ability to act within a field, is labelled cultural competence. Although this concept is not significantly elaborated by Bourdieu, it creates the possibility for links between Bourdieu's other thinking tools. Cultural order comes into existence through the interplay between people and cultural institutions (1984, p. 198). As people interact with the expressions of thoughts, ideas and imagination of others, and with the cultural institutions in their community, for example, through programs of professional education, they develop cultural competence. The use of skills, knowledge and understandings of values of the artefacts of culture leads to the creation of cultural capital. Institutions, such as universities, establish a cultural order based on accreditation and certification, processes that demonstrate that an individual has met certain criteria. Bourdieu refers to this process as "consecration" (1998, p. 116). Libraries are cultural institutions, and one can interpret a librarian's selection of a book into a library collection as an act of consecration, an act that parallels Williams's notion of the selective tradition. That a book forms part of a library's collection carries with it a richness of meaning drawn from these two notions.

Cultural competence

Cultural competence demonstrates one's social status and standing in society, and assumes an understanding of the rules and strategies required to be acknowledged as part of this society. Cultural competence has both a technical capacity and a socially recognised capacity, which correlate to each other (Bourdieu 1984, p. 400). This technical capacity involves knowing the rules; however, the ability to apply and enact the rules within an organisation reveals the importance of the social, that is, the power structures and their impacts in the field.

Cultural competence gives individuals the capacity, the agency, to act in the field. The agency of the librarian becomes evident to the extent that they adhere to the rules of the practice but also is a way to show the level of their understanding. Bourdieu says that "a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu 1984, p. xxv). Applied to the field of librarianship, cultural

competence brings with it the expectation that librarians have their own codes of understanding the "sounds and rhythms, colours and lines" of the books (1984, p. xxv), which are core to their practices, often with an assumption that librarians have a deeper understanding of their collection rather than just a grasp of an initial meaning of the books as objects in a collection (Bourdieu 1984, p. 400). However, cultural competence in librarianship has been used in the social capital sense rather than the cultural capital sense (Goulding 2004; Griffis & Johnson 2014). By being able to ascribe status to a book, the librarian is then positioned as an authority within their field and its "institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities" (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002, p. 22) as well as a fostering cultural competence and facilitating cultural participation in the community (Summers & Buchanan 2018, p. 291).

There is an expectation that the professional who is acknowledged as having cultural competence is expected to "actualize" (Bourdieu 1996, p. 198) who they are expected to be. They are given authority, and through that authority they can then make decisions, and develop and resist rules; the greater the social capacity in cultural competence, the greater the power to enforce the rules of the field or to ignore them (Bourdieu 1984, p. 411).

Cultural capital

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is one of four types of capital, important for his analysis of society (1986, p. 241). Cultural capital encapsulates the knowledge, skills and education within a society. The other capitals are: economic capital – assets that can be monetised; social capital – deriving from one's network of social relationships; and symbolic capital – emerging, for example, through reputation and values (Bourdieu 1986, p. 241). Cultural capital is linked to social status, with increases in cultural capital reinforcing legitimacy, and increased legitimacy leading to a sense of privilege that distances itself from common culture.

Bourdieu identifies three interrelated forms, or states, of cultural capital: embodied, objectified and institutional (Bourdieu 1986, p. 242). All of these states are relevant to this study.

The *embodied* state refers to cultural capital in the form of social assets, such as education, skills, mannerisms, intellect, language, accent, tastes, and other verbal and non-verbal cues that are developed within an individual (Bourdieu 1986, p. 243). The embodied state is acquired over time as a result of both a conscious investment in oneself and a passive inheritance through exposure to culture and traditions. Initially, parents instil these qualities in their children but as children grow older this embodied cultural capital is also attained in programs of professional

education and at work, as well as in other social circles, and continues through individual effort (Bourdieu 1984, p. 73; 1986, p. 242). Cultural activities, including what people read, become symbols of taste that are linked to standing and privilege (1984, p. 65). Society places greater value on reading the right sort of books and developing a "hierarchy of degrees of legitimacy" (1984, p. 80). This hierarchy cannot be escaped "because the very meaning and value of a cultural object varies according to the system of objects in which it is placed (1984, p. 81). In the context of this study, those systems can include the recognition of a book's genre or a library's organisational system for fiction. Different systems of organisation can lead to differing understandings of the objects (1984, p. 84) and that the cultural capital of objects can change, with "jazz, strip cartoons, detective stories or science fiction" all now having "begun to achieve cultural consecration" (1984, p. 19). Librarians often are unaware of the symbolic influence they hold or the cultural production with which they engage (Budd 2003).

The *objectified* state refers to objects that symbolically convey the possession of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, p. 245). Thus, in that sense, it can refer to possessing items such as works of art, books and artefacts that display an understanding of the cultural meaning of the object, regardless of its price. The value placed on different objects varies over time, and between different societies. This is evident in the acceptance of a book into the literary canon, which through this association gives the work legitimacy (Bourdieu 1984, p. 18). Cultural capital is not necessarily conferred on an object that holds economic capital such that its popularity often means that such an object is considered "vulgar", "trivial", "silly" (1984, p. 27) and lacking in taste.

The *institutionalised* state of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, p. 245) includes formal academic credentials and professional qualifications. In the context of this study, education programs in library and information studies, and the embodied cultural capital of knowledge, skills and values gained from them, give legitimacy to various practices in the workplace of the public library.

Field and doxa

The notion of the field is that of the social setting in which individuals create systems of understanding and behaviour. It is the way a specific group practises its own unique context. The field of librarianship has its own rules and demands that reward the people who are aware of these rules. These rules are referred to as "doxa" (Deer 2014, p. 114) and are often formulated and agreed upon by the dominant people within the field, with others needing to understand and negotiate these rules so that they can be accepted as part of the field. The field of librarianship has rules set by professional codes of practice, such as those established by library associations and other professional institutions, as well as ones emerging from routinised practices. These

practices may derive from long-held values or from newly adopted technologies, and tend to be both localised as well as generalised. In other words, they are accepted as normal. According to Bourdieu, wherever there is an acceptance of normality then there is symbolic violence, that is, an exercise of power which disadvantages some players in the field or diminishes the capital of some objects (Moore 2014, p. 105).

Habitus

Habitus is defined as ingrained and unconscious behaviour and knowledge. Habitus gives an individual entry to the field. The possibilities of gaining entry to a field depend on a variety of codified behaviours and knowledge sets, whether they are conscious or unconscious, or whether they are unique to an individual or inherent in an institution or workplace. This study is less concerned with habitus than it is with thinking tools of field and cultural capital. However, Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful for this study because it reminds us that the habitus is "history turned into nature" – it includes behaviours and systems of being, as well as innate knowledge that is somehow passed on from one generation to another (Bourdieu 1977, p. 56). Although he is concerned with social class, and the influence of familial background and class, his emphasis on tradition passed on through generations is relevant to librarians. For librarians, institutional codes and regulations, rules and expectations are internalised and passed on from within the field. These "second natures of habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 79) codifies into practice the history of behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs of the field – those rules that the dominant members require adherence to so as to gain entrance, through an application of the "doxa" – those rules and beliefs which public librarians take for granted. This emphasis on the past, on the way things should be considered and done, means that there can often be a gap between a change in the rules of our field or society and the actual enactment of the change (if it happens at all). This gap, or "structural lag", is to Bourdieu, one that needs to allow for people in the field to adjust accordingly to it, if they do at all.

Practices

The next of Bourdieu's thinking tools to be discussed is practice (1977). Practice is the way people behave in any aspect of their lives, bringing together 'the rules of the game', creating a composite of capital, habitus and field. Practice is the thinking tool through which an understanding of the actions and values of librarians in their social context will be explored in this research. As noted above, using the rules of the game can stem from unconscious ways of being, often through routine and instinct, as well as by strategic and intentional actions that also arise from the specialist knowledge of cultural capital.

Public librarians and their practices

The focus of the research question is upon the practices of public librarians in the context of the ordinary, everyday popular culture that is romance fiction. Although Williams and Bourdieu are coming from different approaches, there are strong similarities between their theories which are relevant to a consideration of this research question. The concepts that are central to their work are essential to this study, where they function as thinking tools that facilitate the conceptualisation of the practices of librarians. Both Williams and Bourdieu also place emphasis on the observation of the everyday, what Henry Jenkins (2014) in his examination of participatory culture refers to as the "mundane" (p. 282). Jenkins's focus is "understanding how to connect … developments in [the use of] new media platforms and practices to the larger politics of everyday life" (2017, p. 282), but his starting point is the significance of what people do to understand power relationships existing in society, thus drawing on similarities between Williams and Bourdieu. Public librarians can be conceptualised as being involved in the "grassroots participation in the core decisions shaping cultural production and circulation or informing democratic governance" (Jenkins 2017, p. 268) through their practices, which shape the selective tradition and create cultural capital.

Williams's notion of the selective tradition is relevant to the purpose of the public library, an institution that is expected to reflect the cultural interests and reading habits of the community it serves. This is a principle of public libraries which is a reflection of the everyday reality of that community, what Goulding refers to as the "modern conception" of libraries with their ideology of inclusive service (Goulding 2008, p. 237), without reference to a hierarchy of taste.

Thus, understanding the practices of librarians becomes central to understanding the implications of how the selective tradition is implemented in the context of popular culture. Williams notes that those areas that are considered unimportant, irrelevant, inconsequential and valueless for the purposes of selection (1965, p. 69) will not become part of a cultural collection. Returning to the incident that sparked this research interest, that author who expressed her objection to me of her books not being catalogued by librarians, her creative output in romance fiction has been considered "unimportant, inconsequential and valueless" in not being fully integrated into the library collection.

This section will begin by considering the structuring structures that establish the principles that librarians are expected to uphold. It then presents those activities where librarians interact with romance fiction books: collection development, including selection and acquisition; cataloguing; shelving; and the creation of book club kits for use by local community groups. There is a

particular emphasis placed upon cataloguing and its records, a practice in which a surrogate for the book is created (Whaite 2013); the ways in which this surrogate is treated have parallels with the ways in which the physical copy of the book is located on the shelves in the collection of the public library.

Libraries have long been associated as repositories for information, most commonly in the format of a book, initially acting as storage places and repositories for documents of their era as well as being the centres that allowed for the reproduction of previous texts. Circulating libraries, that is, libraries that lent out items from their collections, emerged in Britain in the 18th century, and in the 19th century forming public libraries, which were reference libraries as well as circulating libraries, operated by local government, were founded.

In contemporary times, public libraries serve as information providers that meet the information needs of their community, including fiction reading. With the technological advances experienced in the latter part of the 20th century and the digitisation of information, libraries provide information in a range of mediums in material and digital forms that reflect metaliteracy needs, ranging from text, visual and digital literacies. These services can be seen as part of a tradition dating back 150 years in NSW, but longer in the rest of the English-speaking world.

In coming to an understanding of the nature of libraries and their public service ethos, Geoff Mulgan refers to Williams, saying that "the essential ethos of the public library system derives from the fact that it is public" and that this is a "very simple and admirable principle" (1993, p. 1). In being a public institution, librarians align themselves with specific value statements. These statements constitute terms of practice for organisations and their staff, especially in the area of information provision and core value statements around intellectual freedom and freedom of access to information.

The library profession in Australia recognises a number of these statements from authoritative bodies, as well as legislation that sets the 'rules' that govern the beliefs and practices of public librarians and the expectations of the readers of books in public library collections. They constitute the "structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 53), the principles that guide the rules of the practices of public librarians. In this study, there are the international bodies discussed such as UNESCO, and international and national professional bodies that define the values and ethos and umbrella motivational statements on the role of libraries and librarians, such as the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA – which is associated with UNESCO), and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). Each of these "structures" influence

how the field operates. Similarly, there are a variety of institutions that structure legislation and policies.

Although public libraries operationally are managed by local government bodies, the mission statement guiding librarians in their core values comes from an international body of significant professional standing – the International Federation of Library Associations, which collaboratively developed with UNESCO a "Public Library Manifesto" (International Federation of Library Associations 1994) in a document that still stands:

> Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

> The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.

> This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

> UNESCO therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.

These introductory statements are an alignment of values stemming from an ideology of equity and inclusion. Intellectual freedom has been codified into the practices of librarians since the 1930s (Knox 2014, p. 8) through statements such as the Free Access to Information (ALIA 2018b), which replaced the Freedom to Read statement that was adopted in 1971, as well as a code of ethics or the Core Values Policy statement supporting these rights (ALIA 2018a). These statements constitute "symbolic capital and power" (Knox 2014, p. 8; Bourdieu 1984). The Manifesto makes explicit mention of inclusiveness:

> The public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

> Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.

> Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressures.

The rhetoric of core values shows the public library as an ever-evolving place, organic in its responses to its community, aiming to reflect the interests of all aspects of their community.

The Manifesto also makes statements on the funding, legislation and networks, stating that public library services are the responsibility of both local and national governments and that they need to be "supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments", in other words, that other "structuring structures" must exist to support the work of public librarians. These will include the development of institutional frameworks and artefacts, as well as legislation and policies. Key structuring structures will be outlined below.

In Australia, professional membership for public librarians is recognised through the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA 2018c), which identifies the expectations of those who act as public librarians. This association adopts core values underpinned by the IFLA's Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers (2012), which states that "Librarianship is, in its very essence, an ethical activity embodying a value-rich approach to professional work with information". The code of ethics guides librarians on "access to information", "responsibilities towards individuals and society", "privacy, secrecy and transparency", "open access and intellectual property", "neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills" as well as "colleague and employer/employee relationship" (International Federation of Library Associations 2012).

In the Australian experience, as well as adopting the IFLA code of ethics (ALIA 2020), ALIA publishes their own statements of values, with the aforementioned Free Access to Information Statement (ALIA 2018b) stating "Freedom can be protected in a democratic society only if individuals have unrestricted access to information and ideas" and that there is a need for "resisting attempts by individuals or groups within their communities to restrict access to information and ideas". These are fundamental professional principles that these associations expect of librarians.

The National Library of Australia houses and coordinates the National Bibliographic Database. Public libraries physical and digital holdings are added to the catalogue record, therefore making items accessible and searchable through the public interface of this database known as Trove (2020). Librarians are not obliged to add their library's holdings and can choose to add all or only part of their collections to the database. The National Library of Australia is governed by the

National Library Act 1960 (Cth). The act primarily leads the activities of the National Library without making specific reference to public libraries, leaving individual states to form their own legislation.

Several laws also govern the practices of public librarians in NSW, with two being of particular relevance to this study. The *Library Act of NSW 1939* outlines the responsibilities of the Library Council of New South Wales, the responsibilities of the State Library of New South Wales as well as the responsibilities required of local libraries that are operated by their local council/authority. The Act defines and frames the conditions surrounding the operation of public libraries in the state, including the funding model, the service delivery expectations, the responsibilities of the State Library in conjunction with the governing local council, the entitlement to services for members of the library, as well as several areas of collection management, such as the Legal Deposit requirements for specified libraries to collect one copy of every item published in NSW (State Library of New South Wales 2020b). The State Library of New South Wales has a responsibility for state-wide library delivery services, stating on their website that "The Library exists in order to support and encourage research, debate, conversation, inspiration, learning and enjoyment" and that they "welcome all people and strive to serve them all equally well" (State Library of New South Wales 2020a), of which the responsibility to guide and develop local government libraries is delivered under the Public Library Services providing "specialist advice and support to all local councils providing public library services to the people of NSW" (State Library of New South Wales 2020c). Other areas of responsibilities are the collection of Australian and, specifically, New South Wales publications, Indigenous collections, accessibility and inclusion mandates, multicultural services, oral histories and a number of student-focused services. Added to these responsibilities is the collation and facilitation of reporting of their own and all the public library services across the state. Under the Public Library Services, librarians are provided with training opportunities delivered by the State Library staff in areas of reference, local history, readers' advisory and emerging technologies, especially in the area of maker spaces, building and confirming the cultural competencies expected of librarians. Ellen Forsyth and Shelley Quinn, in their history of readers' advisory services in Australia, show that non-judgemental approaches underpin contemporary service delivery in libraries and these align closely to both the American model of "readers' advisory" and the United Kingdom's "reader development" principles (2014, p. 2). The State Library of New South Wales sets benchmarks for public libraries to meet, modelling best practices for service delivery and collection building.

Fiction reading is explicitly referred to as a core service delivery in the Library Act 1939 (NSW). Supporting the community's intellectual freedom and freedom to read needs to also be adhered to, whether they are considered to be "benign issues of taste in genre" (Knox 2014, p. 11) or "trivial or frivolous" (Wright 2006, p.125). Whether this freedom to read includes reading romance fiction evokes strong reactions. Mosley, Charles and Havir state that librarians have "a professional obligation to defend the rights of others to read" romance fiction even if they don't like it (1995, p. 26). However, this also needs to be considered within the context of library budgeting and criticism from stakeholders, for "there will be limits to what will be socially and, therefore, politically acceptable in the use of library funds" (Buckland 2003, p. 682). Therefore, the collecting of romance fiction as fiction reading under the Library Act is not necessarily accepted as an appropriate professional action.

Public libraries are service providers that have "tensions and ambiguities existing at the institutional level" (Bouthillier 2000, p. 253), which the Library Act attempts to address in its clear definition of the duties and limitations of each governing body that is involved in the way the local public library is administered. Among the legislated requirements of the library is the entitlement for their members to borrow materials from the library that is "literary, informative or [of] educational value or as being fiction" (Library Act 1939 (NSW)). Another aspect of the Act is the requirement for legal deposit, that is, for publishers to give to nominated libraries one copy of each book published in NSW. A brief overview of the ways that romance fiction books are managed under legal deposit adds to the context for this study.

The National Library of Australia receives romance fiction as part of its legal deposit requirement. It creates a catalogue record for all the romance fiction publications it receives (Gidney 2019). Staff collaborate with key publishers, such as Harlequin Mills & Boon, on e-deposit requirements because in the 21st century romance fiction is often being published as digital only or by self-published authors. However, in NSW there is a notable difference. As a Legal Deposit library, the State Library of New South Wales catalogues every Mills & Boon novel written by an Australian author into its Mitchell Library collection. However, the rest of the romance publications[3] it receives are placed into offsite storage (a standard collection practice)

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[3] The title for this record *is [Mills & Boon romance novels]* and has an attached note reading: "Collective entry for Mills & Boon romance novels by non-Australian authors. Titles by Australian writers are catalogued individually. Imprints include Harlequin Mills & Boon, and MIRA [from Jan 2000]".

without a catalogue record and are only retrievable if the requester has the publication month and year, and the serial number of the book they need.[4]

The other legislation of particular relevance to this study relates to Public Lending Rights and Educational Lending Rights, which are government compensation payments to Australian authors and creators recognising the loss of income due to the "free multiple use of their work" (Australian Government 2019) of copyrighted material held in Australian public and school libraries. The Public Lending Right website states that the program also supports "the enrichment of Australian culture by encouraging the growth and development of Australian writing". The specific details of the operation of the Public Lending Right scheme are beyond the scope of this study. However, a necessary prerequisite for the payment to an author is the existence of a cataloguing record following internationally recognised cataloguing standards, demonstrating than an eligible book is part of the collection of a public library (National Library of Australia 2020).

A significant belief emerging from these structuring structures is that the processes of librarians are fundamental to the selective tradition. The items chosen by librarians are seen to represent and reflect their communities. Library selections are not only representations of ordinary culture, which are influenced by many factors including the written word, that is, "the book as cultural product" (Pecoskie & Desrochers 2015, p. 312), but librarians have been, and are, instrumental in shaping and setting up the selective tradition. According to Williams, particular meanings and values of societies are "kept alive … by embodiment in particular kinds of work" and these elements, techniques and communications are "learned" (1965, p. 59).

Fiction reading and public libraries

The provision of free books through a free public library system was intended to be a socially equalising phenomenon (Mulgan 1993, p. 4). In the late 19th century, making books available to the public was a way to encourage people who were considered to have a lower standing in society to aspire to becoming part of "the cultured public consisting of men of the world and educated women, artists and members of the upper classes" (Wittmann 2003, p. 300). Librarians were in the position of educating and uplifting their users, making reading suggestions for the betterment of the reader. Readers' advisory services were first introduced into public libraries in the 1920s and 1930s as a guide to "help readers pursue goals of self-education" while a second

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[4] For a point of difference, the State Library also has a record for a box set of 80 Penguin books under the title of [Penguin Little Black Classics box set] that has a Contents entry with Author/Titles for each book contained in the box, including the names of any translators.

phase of readers' advisory services emerged from the 1980s in "recognition of the centrality of pleasure reading and popular culture to the public library's mission" (Ross, McKechnie & Rothbauer 2018, p. 193). Readers' advisory services emerged from the 1920s as "product[s] of the therapeutic ethos" positioning the librarian as an "expert" (Luyt 2001, p. 451). In this first phase, librarians recommending reading takes on the "reading as ladder" metaphor (Ross 1987, p. 149), with non-fiction and literary works being considered culturally important and representing the highest attainment of culture with other types of fiction considered as progressively down the ladder in cultural terms until the bottom rung where romance fiction resides (Ross 1987, pp. 153–154). Those readers starting at the bottom rung were to be encouraged to extend their reading and thus climb the ladder, becoming more discerning in their taste as they progressed. In the second phase of readers' advisory services, librarians have taken on a pluralistic approach to their readers, providing reading "suggestions" (Forsyth & Quinn 2014, p. 2) rather than recommendations. Keren Dali suggests that readers' advisors pivot from discussing "book appeal" to using "reading appeal", thus centring the discussion on reading and the individual's personality (2013, p. 483), which allows for the personalised approach with readers' advisors "helping readers to find titles that they will enjoy, that will enrich their lives, and that will speak to them about their life concerns and dreams" (Saricks & Wyatt 2019, p. xv). This practice is described as being professionally "rewarding" for librarians and the shift to how librarians "think of books and speak with readers" as being "one of the most important concepts of library science" (Saricks & Wyatt 2019, p. ix). Repositioning librarians' practices away from "reading as ladder" in this second phase was promoted by library educator Betty Rosenberg, whose motto was "Never apologize for your reading taste" (1982). Her work was the basis of the *Genreflecting* series of professional materials published as guides for librarians by Diana Tixier Herald. Saricks, Rosenberg and Herald established in their guides for librarians' various ways to understand appeal factors for fiction and "the pattern inherent" (Saricks & Brown 1997, p. 15) for different genres, as well as listing popular authors and titles that librarians may want to include in their collections. These professional tools were developed to establish this new direction for librarians that ideologically replaced "reading as a ladder". This was a significant shift in the traditional values of the field, leading to a reconsideration of what should be understood as cultural competence, both for librarians and for society at large. Lauren Tarulli observes that under the reading-as-ladder model, "as many of you can imagine, Harlequin romance novels rarely made the cut" (2012, p. 39), leaving her reader to assume that in the past forty years, Harlequin romance novels (and books from similar publishers) could "make the cut" and that librarians are embracing a wider definition of "taste".

Fiction collections in public libraries continue to be a core service provision (Saarinen & Vakkari 2013, p. 736), and books and reading are "a subject historically of central importance to librarians" (Ross 1987, p. 147). In public libraries, the provision of fiction collections necessitates librarians to have the knowledge of the publishing field with specific professional practice to facilitate the delivery of library services to their public. This experience and knowledge is evident in the complex practices of librarians, which range from understanding their library users as readers; acquisitions and collections; cataloguing and preparing materials with metadata leading to digital access; organising and placement of books in the physical library; and arranging book programs and events. These interlinked practices are usually separated in the workplace into behind-the-scenes work (selection and acquisitions, cataloguing) and reader-interaction work (shelf placement, reference/readers' advisory interviews, program and events). These aspects of professional practice are skills based, grounded in doing and acting, in the principles and values of the structuring structures and in the rules of the field. The shift away from the valuing of the "reading as ladder" is evidenced in professional library practice when, in 1980, Rudolph Bold, editor of the trade publication *The Library Journal*, beseeched librarians to not look down their collective noses at romance readers. He says,

> I do not urge dropping any of our literary standards, but do urge that librarians realize that for many in our community those standards are idealistic and practically unattainable. Let us instead practice a humanistic tolerance and allow our philosophy of literary esthetics to broaden and include in our public those of "lower" taste as well as those intellectual wastrels who prefer lazing in the backwaters of low quality literature.

In his benevolent statement, Bold indicates that librarians needed to shift their collections to allow for the books that are being read by the general public to be part of a library's collection. This statement signalled at the time that cultural shifts notions of taste in society were such that librarians were going to have to acknowledge these shifts and to allow romance novels onto their library shelves. Bold is clear that librarians were exercising a form of censorship, not by officially banning or challenging books but by not making them available through acquisition and cataloguing practices. Bold said, 'Our profession should be sufficiently liberal by now to grant self-censorship rights to those who wish them.'

This shift in values continued to be discussed in the professional literature (Fialkoff 1995; Chelton 1991; Linz 1995; Mosley, Charles & Havir 1995) in increasingly positive terms. Mosley, Charles and Havir (1995) list a litany of objections that librarians make so as to not include romance fiction in their collection, including: romance fiction being formulaic, romance fiction not being intellectual, romance fiction not being sophisticated, romance fiction being sexually

explicit, romance fiction book covers being too steamy, romance fiction being trash, romance fiction not being real literature, romances being published as cheap paperbacks, romances being all alike, and romance authors having no credibility (1995, p. 25). To counter these arguments, Mosley et al. list defences of romance fiction: romances being popular with the communities served by libraries, societal issues being explored, the female characters being strong, and the books being "good reads".

However, the appropriateness of romance fiction in libraries did not cease to be a point of contention for some within the profession, evidenced by an opinion blog post published in *The Library Journal* over thirty years after Bold's editorial:

> So here we have a retired librarian who doesn't leave her house and who spends her hours reading Harlequin romances telling critics to "get a life" and "read a book." Oh my. Sitting around all day reading romance novels hardly qualifies as a life, and romance novels hardly qualify as books.

Anonymous librarian goes on to say:

> But it's also hard to feel sorry for customers who were duped into buying a "bad" romance novel by a good review. After all, they're all bad books. It's not like people are reading romances for their literary quality. (Annoyed Librarian 2012)

Despite the positive changes in perception towards both the romance reader and the literary appeal of romance writing, a bias in the values of the profession seems to persist. This opinion may not be one that is widely supported by public librarians but the blogger is endorsed by a leading industry body as a thought leader, and following the research of Bourdieu, this in turn informs the values of the profession. Bookending posts from Rudolph Bold and Annoyed Librarian, thirty years apart with the "language and structures that readers' advisors use and rely upon" (Saricks & Wyatt, 2018, p. ix) the ideological tension between elitism and populism that is present in the profession (Lawrence 2017, p. 493) can be seen. Librarian Mary K. Chelton says that the "casual dismissal of a popular genre reveals more about the critic than about the books themselves" (1991, p. 44) whereas author Ursula le Guin in a speech given to the Public Libraries Association noted that "most people now understand 'genre' to be an inferior form of fiction, defined by a label, while realistic fictions are simply called novels or literature" (2004, p. 21). From the discipline of cultural studies, David Wright's research into reading selections says that "a concern with reading … can be conceptualized not simply as a concern with whether or not people read at all but also, if they do read, whether the types of reading they are engaged in are 'correct' or somehow wasteful or corrosive" (2006, p. 125), adding that academic interest in

popular culture forms has led to concepts of "high" and "low" culture being contested and that "forms of popular culture have worth" and this is evident "at the level of policy" (2006, p. 125).

In one part of an influential and broad-ranging study, Adkins, Esser and Velasquez explored the attitudes of librarians towards romance fiction and romance readers in Missouri (2006) and then Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill extended the same study across the whole of the United States (2008). By focusing on only one genre, they were able to examine romance holdings and the practices used to acquire romance novels in the United States, suggesting that the results can be used by librarians to "re-examine their collection development policies and practices" (2008, p. 65) to better serve romance readers and to respond to patron demand. Their study produced presentations, seminars and several articles including a thesis (2006; 2008, 2008; 2010) and is framed within the lens of readers' advisory work and sits within the library and information studies scholarly discipline.

Collection development and its practices

Having reviewed the literature on the valuing of reading, and its relationship to public librarians, it is appropriate to consider briefly the practices of collection development, that is, selection and acquisition. According to Emily Knox (2014), the policies of a library are developed by groups of specialists, those with cultural competence. This view of policy development suggests that a collective of practitioners makes these decisions that form the structures that are then enacted, thus "librarians generally have significant control over the materials in their collection: they develop collection development policies, control the dispersal acquisitions budgets, and select materials. These institutionalized procedures help to consolidate librarians' influence over their collections" (Knox, 2014, p. 10).

Collection development policies guide the acquisition practices that inform librarians about their organisation's rules and regulations for acquiring materials that will subsequently be read or used in some other way by members of the community. Peggy Johnson notes that collection development is the "process of developing or building a library collection in response to institutional priorities *and* community or user needs and interests" (2018, p. 1), with the *"and"* creating and referring to the connection, and sometimes tension, that arises because librarians need to satisfy stakeholders with different sets of values. Collection development policies are statements that identify the kinds of materials appropriate for inclusion in the collection of a particular public library. They are frequently seen as "statements of actual practice" (Gardner 1981, p. 222), as well as being written statements that allow staff to support purchasing decisions. In the later 1960s, these policies were used out of concern for social responsibilities so that they

reflected the whole community and not only the "intellectually superior" (Gardner 1981 p. 222). Gardner argues that the collection development policies should be working tools that help identify long- and short-range needs, commitment to service, inform stakeholders, minimise personal bias, training tools, continuity, evaluation of performance, accountability tools, budgetary allocations, internal operating efficiency, and serve as a tool for justifying buying or not buying materials (1981, pp. 222–223).

Collections and acquisitions guidelines often advise librarians to consult the book reviewers, who can be seen to function as gatekeepers, to make their selections. Librarians who make decisions on selecting items for inclusion in the collection of a public library are also acting as gatekeepers, presenting a position of taste. According to Geoff Hall "literary gatekeepers (publishers, intelligentsia, the professional market) work to determine what literature 'is' before it begins to be consumed" (2009, p. 332). In other words, they become the arbiters of taste in the creation of cultural capital. Librarians are also involved in this process, but their influence is weak (Knox 2014, p. 19). Librarians being recognised as literary gatekeepers (Griswold & Wohl 2015, p. 98) is a reflection of their own cultural understanding of the products of the publishing field and it positions them as having cultural legitimacy but these are recognised as "competing discourses and values" (Webb, Shirato & Danaher 2002, p. 159) as the library collection should be a representation of the community identity (Webb, Shirato & Danaher 2002, p. 165). Anne Goulding points out that libraries, with their "catholic stocks and mission to embrace all reading tastes" may find themselves using the term "cultural capital" increasingly as they may need to "seek to justify the resources spent on them [the resources]" (2008, p. 40).

The practice of selection means that librarians, through the development of their programs, their budgetary decision-making, their inventory acquisitions and their materials selection, have a kind of symbolic power (Knox 2014). This symbolic power attributes "prestige and authority" (Knox 2014, p. 10) to librarians who, in the process of developing a collection in a public library "help to construct the desires and expectations of the communities" (Budd 2003, p. 22). Collection development guides the selecting of materials for the library's collections; this practice is accompanied by the administrative tasks associated with acquisitions, being the "process of obtaining and receiving physical library materials or access to online resources" (Johnson 2018, p. 383). Acquisition processes are mandated by the parent organisation – the local council – and adherence to their purchase and tendering systems guides the way the acquisition staff make their decisions. The concern for this study is not with each of these tasks, but with the principles that guide how a book is obtained.

Acquisitions, within the context of understanding information in the sense of "what can be known" and "what can be communicated" (Holden 2017, p. 2), is integral to the materials that find entry into the library. Holden's two tenets guide the acquisition process, where it becomes imperative for acquisitions staff to be "fully aware of the complexities that impact the production, distribution, and, especially, access within the respective information ecosystem(s)" (Holden 2017, p. 2). In the case of public libraries and fiction collections, these "ecosystems" are the publishing and its associated literature review fields.

The main methods of acquisition of items into a library are through purchase from publishers or library suppliers, a practice that is enabled and constrained by budgets and fiscal considerations, and through gifts or donations. The first method may be put into place through relationships with strategic partners such as library vendors, local booksellers and bookshops, as well as direct contact with publishers, who often have their own dedicated library liaison staff.

Each library-services librarian, in conjunction with their local council requirements, develops their own acquisitions processes that include from where and on what basis they procure their materials. Fiction acquisitions are not neutral (Atton 1996, p. 93) and librarians bring their own biases and moral judgement (Atton 1996, p. 91) into the collection of materials. In fiction acquisitions, approved plans may include standing orders, that is, "an ongoing commitment to buy content as it is published" (Holden 2017, p. 38) for select authors, publishers, and award and review lists, new releases and debut authors. Local authors may be sought out as well and librarians may respond to perceived community interests. These selections are acquired through a variety of approved business relationships such as library suppliers and vendors, local booksellers and bookshops. Vendors are agents that mediate between librarians and the many different publishers and content creators. The use of their services consolidates the procurement of materials into a library but also facilitates a number of possible services such as provision of prepublication data, managing orders, discounts on purchasing, inventory control, invoicing, subscription processing, and bibliographic record delivery (Holden 2017, pp. 28–29). Each library service decides upon how much of its acquisitions processes their vendor/s will conduct on its behalf and this varies from one library service to another. Community profiles are used by librarians as a way to communicate the characteristics and interests of their library's users to vendors and library suppliers. Any gaps occurring in the collections are seen to be compensated for through the provision of community requests, including patron-driven acquisitions and/or purchase suggestions, both of which are vetted for approval by library staff.

The other area of acquisitions into the library collection is that of gifts and/or donations offered by community members. These donations can be considered "desirable because they can strengthen a library's holdings, fill gaps, supply replacements, and provide materials that the library cannot afford or that are not available for purchase" (Johnson 2018, p. 146). Librarians often plead "financial constraints" as their reasons for not collecting materials (Atton 1996, p. 91). Donations supplement library collections, with donations making up close to 15 per cent of all acquisitions in public libraries in NSW according to the *Public Library Statistics for 2016–2017* (State Library of New South Wales 2018). Though donations are free, the staff time that is devoted to their assessment, selection and processing has budgetary impacts (Johnson 2018, p. 146; Holden 2017, p. 107) and need to be part of the acquisitions strategy plan (Holden 2017, p. 107).

Professional publications on collection development on fiction and readers' advisory suggestions are common in the field. These publications identify different genres and direct librarians in their choices with a variety of guides from general fiction to specific genres. For example, the *Genreflecting* guides each have a section on collection development. The romance fiction edition (Ramsdell 2012) necessarily discusses best practices, such as ensuring romance fiction is part of the library budget, not only depending on donations to build collections, and the necessity for cataloguing romance. However, none of these practices merit a mention in *Genreflecting*'s editions focusing on mystery fiction (Charles, Clark, Hamilton-Selway & Morrison 2012), horror fiction (Spratford 2012) or fantasy fiction (Herald & Kunzel 2008) as these practices are a given and these genres are accepted fully into the collection.

The selections and acquisitions of titles made for libraries can often result in books that are not controversial (Knox 2014, p.17). In the collecting of romance fiction, there are identified impediments to their full inclusion into the collection, such as a refusal by librarians to purchase, instead depending upon community donations (Adkins, Esser, Velasquez & Hill 2008; Flesch 2004; Mosley, Charles & Havir 1995; Ramsdell 2012). Often donations are accepted and added to the library collection only nominally, with librarians often refusing to catalogue romance fiction (Mosley, Charles & Havir 1995). This refusal to catalogue romance fiction is a recognised library practice (Saricks 1989; Ramsdell 2012).

The practices of cataloguing

The principal function of the library catalogue is that it stands in place of the collection. The catalogue record itself is a surrogate for the item (Whaite 2013); it does more than that, though, as it shows the place of the item in what might be called the world of knowledge, and the

annotations within the record indicate the place of the physical item in the library. Cataloguing practices are therefore integral to many other practices within the public library.

Cataloguing is the creation and facilitation of the bibliographic record, which comprises descriptions of the items held in the library. Through the bibliographic record, librarians express what a document embodies and how it relates to other works, including the intellectual content of the document (Andersen 2002, p. 59). Although a bibliographic record might consist of only a relatively small number of words, it is, conceptually, a very complex entity.

The catalogue was created for libraries to be able to share information about their collection's holdings; a by-product of this was that with open access to the shelves of the library, users could search for their own materials (Coyle 2016). The practice of cataloguing is more accurately known as bibliographic description. Bibliographic description is a practice with internationally recognised standards that are created and built upon by committees from within the field of librarianship. Committees of specialist librarians, whose work can be seen as "structuring structures", implement principles and rules that shape the bibliographic record. Over many years, these committees have made decisions that impact the functionality of library catalogues as well as the ability to search and retrieve, in a consistent manner, bibliographic records across the world. Catalogue records adhere to internationally recognised standards for bibliographic description; although the principles were laid down long ago, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) formalised them in 1967, with the move into online catalogues and digital data signalled with the development of Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC), and later, Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Resource Description and Access (RDA). Each of these standards has rigorous rules for every metadata field and has controlled vocabularies for the application of descriptors used in the record, along with some specified free text fields in the record. This emphasis on complying with international standards allows individual libraries to connect with one another and create a global bibliographic record.

Inherent in these internationally recognised standards for bibliographic description are rules that allow for consistency of practice across the profession. Descriptors such as "title, author, illustrator, translator, editor, publisher, and sequel information" are considered standard elements in a bibliographic record (Šauperl 2012, p. 287). Coyle states that bibliographic models in FRBR make the assumption that including author names to bibliographic works is a given and that "the treatment of the creator, as well as other sentient beings who have some role in producing intellectual resources, is fairly well under control" (2015, p. 4), and acknowledgement as an author through a bibliographic record is part of their identity as well as their commercial

bankability (2015, p. 5). Baldacchini furthers this idea, writing that it is also important to acknowledge the printers and publishers connected to a book, as it can be easily seen that there is importance placed on anyone involved in the bibliographic record creation, especially "with the corporate body name often being as important as the author or translator and sometimes even more important" (2004, p. 271). However, the most important factor here is the professional standard that requires the author of an item to be acknowledged in the bibliographic record. The listing of the author in the bibliographic record is essential for authors in NSW to receive payments under the Public Lending Rights scheme.

The bibliographic record becomes a symbol of cultural value. "[A]s text, [it] reflects, represents, and accomplishes […] communicative interactions mediating between document, author, publisher, and reader" (Andersen 2002, p. 57) This mediation is facilitated by the librarian who creates the record and assigns metadata. The metadata communicates this cultural value. The application of descriptors by librarians to bibliographic records is in itself a communication form where an object/subject is described and information is transmitted/communicated to the person seeking or receiving this information (Williams 1965, pp. 40–41). Metadata has "aboutness", which is a way of describing and representing information through its bibliographic record and is "essential to cataloguing" (Ward & Saarti 2018, p. 318). Aboutness allows for deeper understanding of the book that is being described. The descriptors too are professional standards in controlled vocabularies, such as the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). Natural language can also be used for keywords, with the choice of keywords being a reflection of the indexer's "values" (Saarti 2002, p. 55).

Thus, the bibliographic record is not neutral as "it talks to us with its many … elements each claiming their epistemic existence" (Andersen 2009, p. 64). Since the record is not neutral, then the subjectiveness of the record needs to be considered, especially as librarians make "sophisticated interpretative metadata-related decisions" (Greenberg 2003, p. 1882) in their creation of the record. The metadata that is applied to the record is derived through a book's *paratext* (Genette, 1997b), that is, its title, its front and back covers, its index, its relationship to other books in a series and so on. Genette writes that paratexts are "thresholds of interpretation" upon which Paling posits that paratexts also "constitute thresholds of access" (2002, p. 134) as they provide the conditions for creating the metadata that becomes "the symbol of cultural value". Among its roles, this metadata has the function of informing the reader (Pecoskie & Desrochers 2013, p. 233). The more enriched a bibliographic record is with metadata, the more it results in better informed access points reflecting that "metadata value increases as more metadata exists" (Alemu & Stevens 2015, p. 55).

The LCSH have been decided upon by a community of librarians over time. These subject terms are keywords that have been given value and authority in their representation of a subject. Williams refers to keywords as "patterns" and says "it is with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind that any useful cultural analysis begins, and it is with the relationships between these patterns, which sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities" (1965, p. 63). In the context of the library catalogue, keywords facilitate a book's descriptions. Fiction subject headings describe the narrative, which can include character names, settings, historical era, series details, and a number of other descriptors. A weakness of LCSH is that the terms included are primarily object focused and do not include information about emotions, which is a key element of most fiction. Olson argues that "emotion is excluded from any role in reason or logic" (2007, p. 512), which is evident in subject headings used to describe romance fiction, the most common of these being "man–woman relationships".[5] This subject heading is used in both fiction and non-fiction works; however, unless the record has several subject headings, it does not allow for the reflection of the aboutness of the book and becomes a derivative record.

There are lists of keywords, developed by librarians, that do reflect the emotional orientation of a book, such as evidenced in Goodreads reviews (Driscoll & Rehberg Sedo 2019), but these lack the authority of listings developed and tested through the institutions of the profession. Novelist Plus, a library product from a publishing vendor, has created its own metadata framework that applies appeal factors beyond objects to their records. Examples of these recent lists of keywords for emotional content includes tone and pace information such as "action-packed", "bittersweet", "lush", "witty" and "atmospheric" (2015). In the United Kingdom, library cooperative Whichbook.net uses descriptors such as "optimistic", "demanding", "violent" or "sad" (2020). These are all keyword patterns that reveal relationships; keyword connections – or what is now referred to as an "algorithm" – allow for items to be clustered together due to single or multiple similarities. Williams states that these patterns are useful because they "reveal unexpected identities and correspondences" (1965, p. 63). However, for these patterns to emerge and reveal connections and parallels, the bibliographic record for a book needs to have full and meaningful metadata applied. A bibliographic record that does not have full metadata is a sparse record that hinders communication. Understanding the cultural value that is attached to a bibliographic record is that "there are many possible levels of communication, from absolute failure (which

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[5] At the time of writing the subject "man–woman relationships" garnered 96,973 book records in a Trove subject search, and a further 225,304 book records in World Cat (4 November 2020).

within a given culture would hardly ever occur) through partial failure and misinterpretation to something like full reception" (Williams 1965, p. 41).

This lack of cultural valuing can be seen in Jarmo Saarti's study, which revealed that novels deemed recreational were not given rich metadata to the same level as literature deemed to be serious, with romance fiction being given the smallest number of subject headings and keywords. The librarians in the study were seen to use less exhaustive indexing for recreational or genre fiction (2002, p. 57) whereas the library borrowers in the same study were assigning much more complex descriptors to books. For librarians to not employ textual descriptors to convey and connect information about a book results in these books standing alone without their related connections and with the inability to reveal conceptual relationships across many texts. There is an "unspoken bias" being communicated to the user when there is a lack of information – is it "less important, less popular, or less desirable?" (Pecoskie, Spiteri & Tarulli 2014, p. 450). When there is no detail in the bibliographic record then no meaning is being conveyed to the reader. Andersen says that "the catalogue record as text has a rhetoric" (2009, p. 56) through its expressions of its elements. Saarti's study shows that librarians may be skilled in their use of the structures headings that are the tools of the profession, but it is the readers who bring their own interpretation to the indexing of a book. The breadth and depth of the indexing that the readers applied to their books is perceived by the librarians as a sign of incompetence and not as a sign of added complexity in their indexing, as these readers did not use the same structures to which librarians adhered (Saarti 2002, p. 55).

The use of subject headings and keywords in a bibliographic record positions one item against other items with similar content. However, these are not taken as a given, in the way that an author's name is. In their gaze tracking study for selecting fiction in library catalogues, Pöntinen and Vakkari found that "Keywords", "Author, title" and "cover images" (2013, p. 75) were the primary indicators for the discovery of fiction. "In addition to glancing at the cover frequently, devoting attention to author/title and not to keywords predicts selecting an interesting book" (Pöntinen & Vakkari 2013, p. 80) with the authors of the paper expressing "surprise" that the "crucial role of author and title" emerged in their study (2013, p. 82). These results correspond with the Australian Romance Readers Association (ARRA) 2019 survey, with respondents indicating that the author and blurb along with a combination of other factors are their primary access points. Pecoskie, Spiteri and Tarulli state that the "lack of subject headings may certainly detract from the quality and accessibility of bibliographic records" (2014, p. 449) as they do not allow users to link records to others of a similar type.

Andersen, too, asserts that there is a need for many points of access that are necessary within the bibliographic record so that it can serve the social activity (readers' advisory and user searches) needed to access the text (2002, p. 58). The social activity of a material book cannot be achieved without textual connections. The complex, rich interconnections of metadata through the bibliographic record, and due to its representation on the library catalogue, allows for the discoverability of a text. A record without the interconnections risks becoming "misinterpreted" or rendered an "absolute failure", which, Williams points out, rarely occurs (1965, p. 41). Though the catalogue is essentially a system representative of a library's holdings, in contemporary times it can also be seen as a reflection of the way that users of the catalogue, and by extension, the library, are expected to behave, interact and accept the assumptions inherent in the cataloguing system (Alemu & Stevens 2015, p. 55; Tarulli 2012, p. 28). Thus, any deviation from the standards that are in place for any particular record or set of records has an impact on that group of people who would be using the catalogue to find if the library has books on that topic or by that author. The catalogue here becomes a symbol of cultural competence, not just for the librarians who created it, but also for those who use it. The catalogue acts as a discovery space for the objects that the library holds, and studies of catalogue use indicate that library users do not share the knowledge and skills of librarians, nor, necessarily, are aware of the elements of a cataloguing record that are important.

Greenberg refers to cataloguers, indexers and database administrators as having "high-level training" and who make complex classificatory decisions and therefore have "the intellectual capacity to make sophisticated interpretative metadata-related decisions" (2003, p. 1882). As noted above, these classificatory decisions impact upon authors and publishers because they reflect the way that their intellectual capital is represented in the community. Enriched and complex metadata in a catalogue benefits librarians, authors and readers using the catalogue. Alemu and Stevens promote the importance of what they call "mixed metadata" (2015, p. 97), which is made up of both standards-based metadata and folksonomies (Tarulli 2012, p. 44) or other "socially-constructed" descriptors. They argue that allowing mixed-metadata in a catalogue facilitates "multiple interpretations [of] an information object" (Alemu & Stevens, 2015, p. 97).

The practices of shelving and placement in the library

Library catalogues place bibliographic records, as the surrogates of books and other items, in the wider sphere of knowledge, using established rules and standards. In the individual library, each physical item has its designated place. Catalogue searches allow people to know where that designated place is and to locate the item. The library catalogue allows for the library user to move from the catalogue to the shelving location, as an "enmeshed" process where "what we do

while connected is inseparable from what we do when disconnected" (Jurgensen 2012) or as an interrelated, intertwined and complex area (Gourlay, Lanclos & Oliver 2015, p. 276). The digital space of a library catalogue is intertwined with the library's physical location of its objects but also as part of the everyday practices of the profession. Studies, such as that by Gourlay, Lanclos and Oliver, show how use of the catalogue and finding items on a shelf are, for a library user, part of their everyday life and behaviour.

The varied nature of the different media that a library manages across physical and digital platforms brings about a complexity in the way that these resources are accessed. Gourlay, Lanclos and Oliver use the term "messy" (2015, p. 265) to describe the way students in this study use the services and spaces of the library. This term is a useful one to show the relationships between the practices of librarians in cataloguing and in shelving and the practices of library users in finding items within the library. Lydia Pyne says that "the bookshelf is an object that we use to ask and answer broad cultural questions of use, value, and function" (2016, [n.p.]). Bookshelves and the selection and placement of books on the various types of shelving units make a statement about collections and the value that is applied to them. The principal organising philosophy that all public libraries employ is that of the ficta/veros juxtaposition in which fiction and fact books are categorically separated from each other. At the next level, in considering fiction, Catherine Sheldrick Ross writes of the alphabet as an "ordering principle, the alphabetic arrangement offers the serendipity of arbitrariness. Things can be juxtaposed […] without the need to make logical connections" (Ross 2014, p. 1). Ross argues that fiction that is ordered in alphabetical order allows for the "possibility of all-inclusiveness – of containing everything – promised by the alphabet" (2014, p. 1).

There are two approaches that people using the library take to locate the item that they want to read, a catalogue search and browsing the shelves, with avid readers being more likely to browse shelves than occasional readers (Saarinen & Vakkari 2013, p. 746). The use of the alphabet allows for serendipity and is the least biased system of ordering as it is not organised on any particular group or profession's conceptualisation of knowledge but follows the patterns of language. Serendipity and browsing, each being distinct information seeking behaviours (Case 2007, pp. 89-90), are strategies that are used by readers searching to select books to read (Yu & O'Brien 1999, p. 41). Serendipity, however, "does not exist within a vacuum, it is the product of context" (Foster & Ellis 2014, p. 1034). Book selection behaviour in the physical library revealed found that readers at the shelves "tilt and look (pull and half pull) […] the sampling act of opening, flicking through and reading" (Hinze, McKay & Vanderschantz 2012, p. 312), noting that there was a "prevalence of physical interaction with books during the selection process"

(2012, p. 312). Library users do not look to the library to influence their book selection, most often having predetermined in their mind what they want to borrow before they visit. Ooi and Liew, for example, have found that "participants pre-planned what they would borrow before visiting their public libraries, drawing ideas from sources such as the internet, book reviews and friends" due to limited browsing time (2011, p. 758). Further to this, library users often do not feel that they can ask librarians for guidance in selecting fiction because they do not feel that asking what they should read is a worthy question (Hollands 2006, p. 205) as they do not know the librarian personally or think that staff are too busy (Ooi & Liew 2011, p. 764).

Some public librarians choose to organise their fiction collections according to genres, using the bookstore retail model to arrange their shelves (Maker 2008, p. 169). This can seem helpful for the reader browsing the shelves, however, it can create confusion for borrowers as well as for staff (Maker 2008, p. 169; Saricks 1998, p. 24). Mallory Jagodzinski discusses the othering practices of book retail shops, which often shelve "multicultural" romances separately from the rest of romance fiction are viewed as having othering practices (2015, p. 19) and that it is in an act of "literary segregation" (2015, p. 18). Wendell and Tan discuss shelf placement of Black romances and Black authors away from the rest of the romance fiction and that this is "a big fucking deal to some authors who hate being shelved separately" (2009, p. 193). Ursula le Guin, a renowned author of fantasy and science fiction, takes a similar position and says that a book can only be judged by reading it and that "All judgement of literature by category or genre is tripe" (2004, p. 23).

Joyce Saricks uses the word "segregation" to describe fiction collections that are organised by genre and says that it can be helpful and that it contributes to an "ease of access" for patrons (1998, p. 25). The use of identifying labels on genre fiction is also often seen as helpful to readers (Ramsdell 2012, p. 40). These identifying labels and subsections of the library act as signals to readers of the genre but also as signals to readers who are not interested in the genre to ignore the books in that space, creating a division in the way that fiction is organised as "the categories established by genre are not only perpetuated, cemented in, by the stereotyped thinking of reviewers, by the ingrained habits and superstitions of publishers, and by the shelving and descriptive practices of booksellers and libraries" (Le Guin 2004, p. 21). The romance fiction paperback stands and spinners are reported as being described by librarians as the "Red Dot District" section of the library with connotations pertaining to the collection having less value in the opinion of librarians (Adkins, Esser & Velasquez 2006, p. 61; Esser, Adkins & Velasquez 2008).

The issue of format has also been a factor in decisions about shelving and location. For example, paperbacks have often been located on 'spinners', rotating stands holding a relatively small number of books, displayed face out, so that the cover is visible. Although these books may be fully catalogued, the form of the paperback stand means that there can be no order, and often books destined for the paperback stand are not catalogued. Saricks, discussing uncatalogued materials, notes that "For years paperbacks have been the bane of the library profession" and that "Looking for uncatalogued material, which may or may not be on the shelf, is exceedingly frustrating for both staff and patrons and the collection becomes less useful" (1998, pp. 22–23). She continues that the main obstacle for a genre library are the guidelines that need to be given to the cataloguers (1998, p. 25) as they impact the shelf placement. Ramsdell makes a similar point: that access to romance fiction would be improved if full catalogue records were available, thus aiding better access to shelf locations (2012, p. 39). Ramsdell wrote that it is necessary to "treat all genres equally"– so romance, westerns and fantasy should be shelved in the same way that mysteries and science fiction are shelved (2012, p. 40).

The practices of programming through book groups

Librarians develop programs that reach out to their communities so they can engage with the library's collections in a variety of ways. In the instance of promoting the fiction collections, programs they arrange vary from author visits, book displays and annual "One Book" community reading events, thus the librarian is positioned as an "evangelist of culture" (Griswold & Wohl 2015). The most regular of the social activities promoted by librarians to their reading communities is that of encouraging and engaging book groups. Librarians are in the practice of promoting reading as a social activity and "welcome reader interactions through book clubs, book discussions, and recommendations" (Pecoskie, Spiteri & Tarulli 2014, pp. 431–2). The library is seen as a reading site where individuals exchange "social capital" (Wiegand & Herald 2006, p. 10), although this exchange is not identified as related to the production of cultural capital.

Reading as a social practice (Allington & Swann 2009) has a historical tradition, from the reading public in Ancient Rome (Cavallo 2003, p. 64) through to the contemporary book groups of the 21st century recreating the salon reading circles of the 18th and 19th centuries, periods in history where the book was "unchallenged as a communications medium" (Lyons 2003, p. 313), with the reading society acting as a symbol for both social and cultural status (Bourdieu 1984). Book groups create social connections and increase engagement with cultural products because reading is profoundly social (Long 2003, p. 10). Library-run book group members read well beyond the materials that their book group suggests, with family and friends as well as mass media influencing their choices (Ooi & Liew 2011, p. 760). Research on book groups in Victoria,

Australia, show that librarians make selections of books that have "literary authority" (Devlin-Glass 2001, p. 571). Book groups do not question these selections as it helps them to "maintain their currency as literate citizens through group discussion" (Devlin-Glass 2001, p. 583). One exception to this type of book group is the Townsville-based Indigenous (Murri) Book Club, whose point of difference is to challenge the traditional book group expectations (Nolan & Henaway 2017).

The books chosen for book groups and the authority with which they have been chosen are dictated by a number of complex interactions between text and reviewers, and includes influencers such as Oprah Winfrey (Rooney 2008). Book group members make their selections to "legitimate choices and to predict the outcome of their reading experience" (Long 1987, p. 311).

Juxtaposed to the literary book group, romance book groups create their own spaces where they meet and discuss romance fiction. Janice Radway's analysis of the romance genre is grounded in the interviews with the "Smithton" community of readers, who would meet at a romance bookstore (1984, p. 4). Elizabeth Long writes of the romance reading group that she attended in Houston that "meeting in the shadow of the literary hierarchy, such gatherings help to build communities of romance readers who support romance reading materially, socially, and ideologically" (2003, p. 158).

Whether it is in the form of a book or a review or any number of other formats, once knowledge is published or "put outside of ourselves" it invites dialogue and discussion. Published books contribute to being "discussable, criticizable knowledge" (Popper 1994, p. 34). Although Popper is concerned with books based on his notion of scientific observation, the notion that works of fiction can be discussed and criticised is well established. Book groups provide an opportunity for collective discussion, with Jenkins suggesting that forms of participation in online book groups vary from "spectacular" to the "mundane" and that they "may help us to better understand how to connect these developments in new media platforms and practices to the larger politics of everyday life" (2014, p. 282).

Marsden and Squires (2019) explore the systems with which book awards are judged and refer to this system as a "cultural consecration" bestowed by literary gatekeepers, and say that "book awards are a pervasive aspect of contemporary book culture, attracting substantial media and scholarly attention. They confer prestige, generate marketing opportunities, increase sales, and contribute to the early stages of canon formation" (Marsden & Squires 2019, p. 1). The development of book group kits has a similar outcome. Tools used by librarians, such as the Novelist Plus database as well as publishers' and authors' resources, guide them in the facilitation

of book groups. So too do guides on how to create book club kits, including suggestions on developing question prompts for the book group (Novelist 2015). These practices can be seen as part of the selective tradition (Williams 1965).

The provision of kits for book groups is a relatively recent phenomenon in public libraries. These kits comprise multiple copies of a single title, along with sets of discussion questions, often proposed by the publisher. The availability of these kits is signalled through a library's catalogue or website. The service assumes that the books will be read not in private by a single individual, but in a group with a focus on generating discussion (Hermes, Hile & Frisbie 2008). This, in turn, shifts the focus to the enhancement of popular culture. The practices of librarians related to book club kits are included in this study because they offer an insight into the ways in which selection and cataloguing of books links with the social practice of reading, discussing and commenting on a book. Book groups are well established in the community, and also are popular online. Their popularity links them to the creation of popular culture and the conferring of cultural capital on those books, which may in the future be identified as significant for their time.

During the early 21st century online book websites such as Goodreads and LibraryThing emerged as the social media sites where readers were able to leave their personal reviews of books. Forums, blogs and other social media saw the emergence of genre-focused readers exchanging information and critically engaging with writing that had previously not been given much attention in the mainstream literary review journals. The emergence of these websites also saw reader groups organise their own online book groups, with these groups identifying their participants as either readers or fans (Jenkins 2014; Roach 2016). Emerging from literary scholarship is the examination of the reviews of readers on Goodreads (Stinson & Driscoll 2020; Hajibayova 2019), as well as Goodreads' investigations into book group members' reading choices, showing that they predominantly have "a mainly female canon" (Thelwall & Bourrier 2019, p. 1). Participants in online book groups add their reviews to commercial sites such as Amazon and Goodreads (Kousha, Thewall & Abdoli 2017). These sites have influenced the format of library catalogues; librarians can opt to integrate these reader discussion sites into their catalogues as well as adopting the functionality for their readers to add reviews to the items they have read. These online groups, supported by commercial interests, record and make public the discussion on the books they have read, thus contributing to popular culture in a very public way.

Conclusion

Romance fiction as part of a library collection is considered a category of popular reading. This fiction being included in library collections has somewhat become an accepted practice – part of the orthodoxy of the library practices. This thesis examines whether marginalisation of romance fiction occurs because there is an unquestioned acceptance of the practices of librarians, with the unconscious dismissal of various aspects of their practices that align with the documented professional values of librarians. The literature review provides a framework that brings together the different elements of the study. In the first section, Raymond Williams's notions of everyday culture, popular culture and the selective tradition were positioned alongside Pierre Bourdieu's notions of structuring structures; cultural competencies, including capital, field and habitus; and practice theory. These notions provide the sociological framework of the study. In the second half of the literature review, the literature details particular to this study were presented in relation to specific practices of librarians that lay the foundation upon which the research question can be understood through the use of ethnographic case study. These practices of collection and acquisition, cataloguing and metadata application, placement and shelving, and, finally, book groups occurring in the library are in the majority placed within the field of library and information science, drawing on and describing them from within the field of practice of librarianship. Much of the literature points towards this field as a place for developing social capital, rather than as a place that develops cultural capital.

The literature of librarianship focuses on what librarians do. It does not usually concern itself with what librarians do not do. The research question that underpins this study is one that is concerned with absences created by the practices of public librarians. Though there are traces in the literature recognising that there are absences, such as staff "looking for uncatalogued material, which may or may not be on the shelf" (Saricks 1998, p. 22), and building collections through accepting romance fiction donations (Flesch 2004; Ramsdell 2012), these are all drawing on the authors' empirical knowledge and observations. The literature of librarianship reviewed here also shows that there is little concern to link the practices of librarians into popular culture and its positioning in society. This study sets out to address these gaps through the research question: How do the practices of public librarians marginalise romance fiction?

Methodology

Introduction

"How do the practices of public librarians marginalise romance fiction?" This research question emerges from my "starting point" of the first Australian Romance Readers Convention, where the author raised with me the issue of how the practices of public librarians affected her livelihood as an author, but it is also grounded in the literature. This is a question that emerges from the everyday experiences and practices of people. It is concerned with the relationships between what public librarians do in selection, acquisition, cataloguing, display and promotion and a specific type of fiction: romance fiction.

This research question is multi-dimensional, going beyond a description of the practices that take place in public libraries to issues of popular cultural and cultural traditions. The question requires a consideration of the values inherent in the professional practice of librarians and how those values impact on the decisions that librarians make on romance fiction books. Importantly, the question steps outside of the confines of the public library and the practices of librarians to bring into perspective broader questions of culture and the valuing of particular kinds of expressions of creativity. Thus, this question is not merely an empirical one, seeking accounts of the policies and procedures for managing materials that form part of the library's collection and their implementation, but one that requires a broad conceptual approach as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

The study's conceptual foundations come from several fields of study: library and information studies, sociology and studies of popular culture. Such a study needs to approach the question from an interpretivist paradigm, one that "embraces a wide range of philosophical and sociological thought which shares the common characteristic of attempting to understand and explain the social world primarily from the point of view of the actors directly involved in the social process" (Burrell 1979, p. 227). It is not necessarily the interpretivist researcher's aim to change the organisation at the heart of this study, but to understand it in its historical social context while acknowledging her own role in this construct.

Identifying the Research Method

The question underpinning this study, then, is one that requires a research design that can sustain a complex, multi-layered study. Such a research design would be concerned with the social world of its participants; it would also require approaches to data collection that enable real, empirical data gathered from a variety of sources. The influence of theorists such as C. Wright Mills and

Bourdieu, whose focus was on understanding the everyday world with the emphasis on observation and data gathering in that context, means that this phrase, real empirical data, has become something of a mantra for scholars concerned with everyday practices in social contexts. Two such research designs are considered here, an organisationally focused case study and ethnography.

Case study research

Case study is a research method that is used across many disciplines, from sociology to science. A case study is used "to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena" (Yin 2014, p. 4). Creswell defines case study research as "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes" (2007, p. 33). A case study allows for the situation where there are "many more variables of interest than data points" (Yin 2014, p. 17) thus resulting in "multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion". Using case study as a method also allows for the use of multiple-case studies, where "the same study may contain more than a single case" (Yin 2014, p. 56) or where the research "selects one issue or concern but also selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue" (Creswell 2007, p. 246). Through the use of multi-cases the analysis can then make cross-case and cross-theme conclusions (Creswell 2007, pp. 172–173; Yin 2014, p. 18). An advantage of the multiple-case study is that the evidence is "considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin 2014, p. 57).

However, in spite of these advantages to a case study approach, one of the drawbacks of case study as a method is that due to the "extensive resources and time" it can be onerous for a single … researcher to undertake such a study (Yin 2014, p. 57). Another limitation to the case study is the question of rigour (Yin 2014, p. 19); procedures for the collection of data need to be clearly detailed, with assurances they have been followed. A further, related limitation is the presentation of evidence that is neither ambiguous nor vague. It is acknowledged, too, that the ability to generalise findings may also be of concern (Yin 2014, p. 20), especially to those used to a positivist, quantitative approach to research; however, "lessons learned" (Yin 2014, p. 41) may be applicable to other situations.

An organisationally focused case study could provide the concern for the everyday and the real, empirical data that is crucial to a Bourdieusian approach to the work practices of a group. It

would also allow for a consideration of the policy documents that shape the attitudes and values of librarians, as well as other data that facilitate an understanding of the workplace. Such a methodology, however, would ignore the social and cultural context in which the public library exists and in which public librarians carry out their work. This is an essential aspect of a study concerned with concepts related to popular culture, the selective tradition and the development of cultural capital.

Ethnography

Ethnography provides another approach for this study. It provides real, empirical data and, by situating librarians and their practices in their social and cultural contexts, ethnography brings complexity to the study. An ethnography is naturalistic; thus, context is important. Its concern is with representing the everyday lives of participants. "Thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1973) are an essential part of ethnographic research. A thick description presents the behaviours and actions of participants in their context, providing a level of detail that "goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another" (Denzin 1989, p. 83) enabling the reader to understand the complex cultural meanings behind the observations. Ethnography draws on multiple sources of data, including observation, interviews and analysis of documents and artefacts. These sources of data not only reveal what participants do, that is, their practices, they also reveal their emotional behaviours and the values they espouse. It is clearly an interpretivist method, with the interpretations of the researcher bringing meaning to the data. The researcher is crucial to ethnography, facilitating the presentation of insider and outsider perspectives that are essential in representing the complexity of the social and cultural contexts being observed. The presentation of these dual perspectives can reveal discrepancies between what participants say and what they do (Bryman 2016, p. 268).

Ethnography is not without its disadvantages. It is a time-consuming method; any description of activities and behaviours requires engagement over time (Bryman 2016, pp. 461–462). The lengthy engagement with participants in their context can also lead to an over-abundance of data, potentially making it more difficult to identify key themes at the point of analysis. An ethnographic study requires trust to develop between the researcher and the participants. This may be expected to develop over time, but trust also requires the development of some common ground or some shared understandings.

Ethnography is a study of a group of people in their context, with geographic boundaries traditionally being the most commonly used to create the social context. When social groups are

not geographically bound, it can be difficult to set boundaries that can feasibly be implemented in the research context. Finally, the findings of an ethnographic case study are not "generalizable" outside the bounds set for the study (Bryman 2016, p. 399; Yin 2014, p. 40).

Key strengths of each of these methodologies include close engagement with the context and phenomenon under investigation and the use of multiple sources of data (Yin 2014, p. 105). The focus on organisations, the public libraries where the librarians work, would suggest that the case study method should be favoured; and the focus on the social world that emerges from an ethnography would also be a favoured method. Thus, this study takes an approach that combines the two methodologies, that is, it uses an ethnographic case study approach. This approach provides the advantages of ethnography together with the strengths of case study. The ethnographic focus enables an emphasis on the sociocultural processes of the group being studied. The case study approach bounds the study; the focus on organisations provides a context within which these processes take place (Yin 2014, p. 39).

An ethnographic case study confirms the strengths of ethnography, but importantly, sets boundaries for the study as these are easy to identify (Stake 1995; Yin 2014). Similarly, in a traditional anthropological approach to ethnography, the boundaries to the group being studied are clear, being set by geography or ethnicity or by membership defined in some way. Setting the boundaries for an ethnographic study in a professional setting can prove challenging. Babbie proposes a specific type of ethnography, the institutional ethnography, that is "a research technique in which the personal experiences of individuals are used to reveal power relationships and other characteristics of the institutions within which they operate" (Babbie 2007, p. 328). Yet, this approach is still focused narrowly on an organisation, excluding the broader societal and cultural factors important for this study.

Thus, this study uses an ethnographic case study method. It is concerned with investigating the practices and the processes of public librarians and their attitudes towards romance fiction books within their library collections.

Establishing the ethnographic case study

Establishing the boundaries around the group to be studied is often a simple and straightforward matter. The boundaries might be based on geographic considerations, or on cultural considerations such as language, or on place of work or profession. At the same time, it is important to be clear on how the boundaries are drawn. Thus, consideration will be given to how that process was developed for this study.

Public librarians are well recognised as a professional group in Australia. However, public libraries in each state are governed by different legislative frameworks and different administrative structures. Thus, it is not possible to bound an ethnographic study using only membership of the professional group. The next step in creating a boundary for this study, was to focus on public librarians in a given state, New South Wales (NSW). Public libraries in New South Wales are operated by their local council, however the State Library of New South Wales "has a statutory relationship with councils to promote, provide and maintain public library services for the people of NSW" (State Library of New South Wales 2015). At one level, this means that the boundaries of the ethnographic case study can be set by including the practices of those librarians working in public libraries in New South Wales. That approach could potentially provide a shared professional cultural context. However, the contexts of these libraries vary considerably. Libraries in NSW are in metropolitan, rural and outback regions. They vary in size with some council areas operating a sole library for their whole local government area (LGA), a sole library network within an LGA – that is usually a central administrative branch in a central business district or main town/city with various smaller branches in other suburbs or smaller towns. There are also library networks that operate in conjunction with a number of separate council libraries that have formed a cooperative within which shared resources span the collective area and deliver materials to the community members of all their regions. Beyond New South Wales's 363 fixed library branches operated by 90 separate services[6], each library service also runs a variation of outreach services from mobile libraries, home library deliveries, express library kiosks and vending machines, homework centres and other community partnerships (State Library of New South Wales 2018). The broader sociocultural context for these public librarians, even in a single state, is extremely diverse but the focus on public librarians in a single public library, as noted above, is too narrow to maintain the emphasis on the professional group. At a reporting level, each local government public library is required to report their circulation statistics, their acquisitions and donations, and other activities back to the State Library of New South Wales which then collates this information and makes it available through annual (2018) and special reports (2015) from their public library services division (2020c).

In this study, the decision was taken to bound the group at two levels. At one level, the study is concerned with public librarians as a professional group. Following Bourdieu, this study uses the concept of structuring structures (1977, p. 53) to identify those statements from professional associations at the international, national (that is, Australian) and state (New South Wales) levels

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[6] Council mergers occurred in 2016. There were 102 services when my research started in 2012, this shift has been accounted for wherever was necessary.

that guide the values and practices of public librarians, thus establishing a boundary through values and beliefs. For Bourdieu, as noted in the Literature Review chapter, structuring structures "are principles that guide and structure what people do, which are accepted without question, and which ultimately lead people to ways of working and interacting collectively without the need for external direction" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 72). At the second level, the study is concerned with public librarians in NSW and their practices. The study does not claim to be representative of the practices of all public librarians in NSW, nor of the practices found in all public libraries in NSW. Again, as set out in the literature review, the practices of public librarians related to romance fiction books are easily categorised: selection and acquisition; cataloguing; shelf display; and programming, including the provision of kits to book groups. Evidence of some of these practices is easily accessible online through the library catalogues. A catalogue record is taken to be a surrogate for an item in the library collection (Whaite 2013), thus giving evidence of the books that are part of the library's collection. A catalogue record is also evidence of the output of the action of cataloguing an item, that is, recording its place in the library collection and providing the means through which it can be located within the library. Listings of book club kits, to be borrowed by groups in the community, are also available through the library websites. Thus, for these practices, evidence is available for all public libraries in the state of NSW. However, evidence for shelf display can only be gathered from specific locations, either by asking library staff for a report or by the researcher visiting the location to record what she has seen. Analysis of the websites of all the public libraries in NSW gives a sound picture of the practices of public librarians, that is, what they do. However, it does not provide any evidence on the principles that public librarians use in implementing these practices, or the values that they hold. To identify these, it is essential to interact with public librarians, and to formally interview them. Interviews with all public librarians would have been impossible, and therefore a decision was made to identify key informants (Bryman 2016, p. 432) from each of the main type of public library service: standalone library services offered by small local government areas in metropolitan areas and large metropolitan libraries both from high and low socio-economic areas; rural libraries; and regional libraries, offering services to residents in more than one local government area. Thus, in these ways, the group that was the focus of this study was bounded.

Positioning the Researcher

In establishing the ethnographic case study, it is customary to refer to the position and role of the researcher. Ethnography allows for the expression of the sense of how the world being studied works. Bryman writes about the dangers of the ethnographer "going native" (2016 p. 439) through becoming so deeply immersed in their field of study that they can no longer be able to

differentiate between their role as the researcher and the actual field. My experience as the researcher however has been the opposite situation whereby I was already "native" to the field, fully immersed in the practice of librarianship. I have been a public librarian for more than twenty-five years and have worked in a number of library systems in metropolitan Sydney. Thus, I am an insider to the profession, a "native". I am familiar with the "structuring structures" of public librarianship. I have been a member of an expert group, the NSW Readers Advisory working group since 2005 , a group convened under the auspices of the State Library of New South Wales. Part of my role in this group involved being on the organising committee for the annual Readers' Advisory seminar which involved finding speakers, leading and taking part in professional workshops, presenting sessions on romance fiction as well as interviewing authors and librarians for the seminar, and delivering in-service training for staff in the library system where I was employed. I also was a contributor to the Readers Advisory wiki, attended the quarterly meetings, and wrote for the working group's blog and other connected social media such as Twitter. I am also an insider to the topic of the research question, romance fiction, as an engaged reader of the genre.

As the researcher needs to ensure a level of critical distance between themselves and their interviewees, wherever possible (Bryman 2016, p. 475), I did my best to ensure that I was not an "insider" to any of the librarians I would interview by excluding the libraries where I had worked as well as those where close colleagues worked. It was not practical to exclude those libraries where employees had attended one of the programs I had been involved in running between 2005 and 2014; as it turned out, one librarian did acknowledge that she attended a training program I had been involved in. Thus, being "native" to the field, it was important to emphasise my role as researcher in my interactions with the public librarians who took part in the interviews for this study. This became easier over time, as I learned to create a barrier between myself and my previous practice, and to position myself at the critical boundary between scholarship and professional practice.

Data Collection in this study

Thinking tools

The research question required a methodology that would enable an approach that was both broad and contextual as well as being specific, and an ethnographic case study fulfils that requirement as discussed above. The research question also, as identified in the Literature Review, was situated as a question best approached from an interdisciplinary perspective. Interdisciplinary research demands the integration at a conceptual level of the various fields (Stember 1991, p. 1).

Bourdieu's practice approach provided me with an appropriate method, enabling me to take an emic perspective, giving me a sense of being able to apply my understanding of the practices of librarianship through the conceptual approaches of others.

An epistemological approach that would support such an approach was important to ensuring the complexity of the data and its interpretation. Bourdieu's notion of "thinking tools" was crucial to the development of this ethnography, which conceptually is an interdisciplinary study. Bourdieu himself considers habitus, field, capital, doxa and practice as the tools through which to better understand the workings of society. Where Bourdieu is framed as being part of my conceptual tools in the Literature Review chapter, in this chapter, the same conceptual tools are used in that Bourdieuesian approach of theory as a "thinking tool", applying an epistemological approach or a different way and purpose to the research study. Thus, to avoid what may appear as repetition to the reader, I have not re-iterated my use of capital, for example, from an epistemological perspective.

Building from this notion, that analytical thinking can shed new light on the functioning of a society, I have developed several "thinking tools", relevant to understanding the practices of librarians in working with romance fiction. These have shaped my study and the interpretation of the data I have collected and analysed. I will set out each of these "thinking tools", with a level of detail appropriate to their importance for the study. I adopted Cawelti's metaphor of sport as a way of understanding genre fiction; he notes that the rules for any game of football, or any other sport, do not vary, but that no one would argue that meant that every game of football was the same as a way of understanding the argument that all formula fiction is all the same. His statement that "Formula literature is, first of all, a kind of literary art. Therefore, it can be analyzed and evaluated like any other kind of literature" (Cawelti 1976, p. 8) gave me a way to counter arguments that romance fiction was not a worthy topic for research of this kind.

Metaphors can be useful thinking tools. Some are a part of the everyday practice of librarians, such as Ross's concept of "reading as ladder" (1986, pp. 150–154). Other metaphors are particular to this study and their use can be seen in the findings of this study in the Key Findings chapter. I use Pamela Regis's structure of the romance novel to understand shelving and placement in the library in 'Nobody puts Romance Fiction in the corner' (Veros [under review]). Regis demonstrates through the eight stages of the plot of a romance novel how the main characters interact and how a relationship then develops or not. Using the eight stages of the romance fiction plot as a thinking tool, enabled me to understand and then demonstrate how the relationship between librarians and romance fiction expressed through shelving practices, can be

seen as a dalliance, where a romance fiction title may be encouraged to think that it will have a place in the library, only to discover that that place is at the margins, rather than at the centre.

Finally, Genette's notion of transtextualities (1997a) was deeply influential in my interpretation of the relationship between the romance fiction book and the practices of librarians, especially in cataloguing. Genette's transtextualities express a hierarchy of relationships between a text and other related texts. A key practice of librarians is the creation of records about books, primarily, the catalogue record. The catalogue record is accepted as a surrogate for the book (Whaite 2013), as noted in the literature review. Thus, the way these bibliographic records are created and presented sheds light on the ways public librarians value the book and relate it to other books in the collection or to other collections, and also how they conceptualise the relationship between a reader and the book in the context of a library collection as I reported in 'A Matter of Meta' (Veros 2015).

Genette's notion of transtextualities helped me in the presentation of a thesis by compilation, as it allowed me to manage the five types of transtextual relationships (1997a, p. 1) that must exist within such a thesis. Architextuality refers to the genre within which a text sits, so conceptually enabling me to identify the elements of my research that fit within the genre of the journal article or within the genre of the thesis; intertextuality, the use of other texts, through quotations, citations and so on, is an integral part of scholarly work; paratext is that text that surrounds what would be considered the main body of the text – that is to say, titles, headings, introductions and so on – and it is paratext that can provide evidence of that interdisciplinarity; metatextuality is commentary (Genette, 1997a, p. xix) and I used my understanding of metatextuality to position each of the articles that make up the key findings chapter; finally, hypotextuality and hypertextuality enabled me to be clear about the hierarchical relationships among and between the articles and the thesis itself. By bringing together the various components of this thesis by compilation in this way, I was creating a palimpsest, reworking the journal articles by giving them new meaning through being reconceptualised into the theoretical framework of the thesis.

Quality in the Research

Qualitative research needs to be able to demonstrate its strengths and its rigour. It is almost taken for granted that a qualitative study needs to represent a context that is complete and understandable in its constructivist form. It is a research approach that needs to be credible, since it proposes to set out a truth as it is valued within the field of study. All research has to have relevance beyond its immediate context, but it is difficult to talk of applicability and transferability, because the very nature of qualitative research means that its findings will be

unique to its particular study. Unlike in quantitative research where the replicable nature of the research framework and method test the research question or hypothesis, with some sense of what the outcome might be (Yin 2014), in qualitative studies, rigorous research is much more closely tied to the conceptual framing of the research question and relies more upon the structure of the research staying consistent than the need to adhere to structured and standard questions. The position of the researcher is also significant. Researchers are regularly advised to remain neutral and to keep in check biases as they emerge from the way the study is conducted; however, in qualitative research, the researcher's approach and knowledge and their own social reality, cannot be ignored and must be confronted and clearly documented as part of the research method (Marshall & Rossman 2014).

In qualitative research, a study is developed with the key goal of "trustworthiness and authenticity" (Bryman 2016, p. 384). Measures such as "reliability and validity" which are the standard measures of quality in quantitative studies, are inappropriate for qualitative studies, especially those reporting on socially constructed worlds. Lincoln and Guba (1986) aimed to show that qualitative studies can also lay claim to rigour; they developed a framework, which is now widely used, made up of four distinct principles: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, all of which contribute to "rigor in the naturalistic sense" acknowledging that "human behaviour is time- and context-bound" (Lincoln & Guba 1986, p. 75) requiring any inquiry to relate to its multiple, interrelated contexts.

Credibility is the assurance with which data and interpretations are understood as being truthful. For a study to have credibility, it needs to be seen as authoritative within its social reality. Credibility relies on "lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomena […] in the field", persistent observation, triangulation of data, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba 1986, p. 77). It also needs to reflect expertise, an understanding of the background of the research, where the research is published and who is citing it. From these actions of the researcher, and validation from other scholars, a reader can have confidence in the report of a study and accept that they are believable. Dependability is related to the consistency of findings, not only within the study at hand, but through the linking of these findings to previous studies. This is not to say that the findings are being replicated, but rather that the new contexts for findings allow for more detailed interpretation and therefore for a deeper understanding. Dependability is also related to the method of the researcher, especially in ethnography, where the documenting of processes is a significant action enabling other researchers to assess the processes and techniques used. Lincoln and Guba (1999, pp. 421–428) detail an approach to the inquiry audit, a process through which the findings can be checked through access to the data and methods of analysis, thus

demonstrating that they have not been influenced by the biases of the researcher. Confirmability shows how the data meaning needs to be accurate. "Recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible" (Bryman, 2016, p. 386) due to being constructivist research, the researcher still needs to establish that their own constructs of the world do not allow their values to sway their findings. Transferability ask the question of whether the research that has been developed can be understood within the context of other disciplines, and other cases so as to allow the research to be used to study other situations. According to Lincoln and Guba, this is the responsibility of the reader; the responsibility of the researcher is "to provide the database that makes transferability judgements possible" (1985, p. 316). Often research is focused on a small group (Bryman 2016, p. 384) so it needs to be produced with "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) so that the reader has the possibility of recreating the research and applying it to their own context.

The claim to credibility of the studies presented in this thesis rests on several factors. With my own professional practice underpinning my research, I was able to triangulate across the data and the phenomena that I collected and observed throughout the study period. The data was collected, checked and re-checked over an extended period of time and in this thesis, the peer debriefing became core to my process. My numerous conference presentations meant that my interpretations were being tested against peers in three different disciplines of studies. These presentations were eventually developed as peer reviewed journal articles, four of which at the time of writing (2020) have been published. These processes all contributed towards the confirmability of my research too as I sought to recognise my own position on aspects of the research data as I conducted the analysis. I acknowledge that at times it was difficult to maintain a researcher's approach; at times, I felt conflicted as some of the data did not represent well some of the fundamental tenets of professional practice. This was an important bias to keep in check while I was doing all the analysis and writing of the thesis. The claim to dependability rests on the sources of data used; I have been very clear on these, with most sources being publicly available, so that should others wish to set up the kind of inquiry audit identified by Lincoln and Guba, they would be able to do so.

Transferability of my research design is one that allows for aspects of the study and its findings to be applied to other contexts, for example, using the research design to study other genre collections in the public library, or other areas of popular culture such as those identified by the Popular Culture Association's subject streams such as fanfiction, celebrity or gaming cultures. This transferability is evidenced in my published work as it has been cited by other scholars[7] and

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[7] At the time of writing, (November 2020) the four articles had garnered 15 citations from other scholars.

I also became my own reader, applying Genette's notions of paratext and Williams' notion of ordinary culture to children's reading challenges resulting in a peer-reviewed journal article[8].

These four distinct principles as described here show that the work presented in this thesis lends itself to trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), giving credibility to the study, its research methods and findings and allowing for its application in the future to other studies.

Data Collection Techniques

Field Observation

Field observation is an essential technique in ethnography. According to Babbie, "the greatest advantage of the field research method is the presence of an observing, thinking researcher at the scene of the action" (2017, p. 323), where the researcher watches, records, and looks for patterns through the interaction of the group that they are studying. As a social researcher, looking for differences and similarities, absences and presences that occur in the setting that is being observed, reveal a field's preferences and attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. These all can seem to have generalities and only through a deep immersion into the community or field do granular behaviours emerge through the recurring patterns in the data.

The observer of a setting takes copious notes when they are in the setting (Bryman 2016, p. 441) often identifying key people in the organisation, their relationship to others who use the setting as well as taking into account who are the stakeholders who possibly are not at the same setting. Other attributes that may need to be considered by the observer is the social position of the objects or people being observed and how that may impact upon the field that is being investigated. Full and accurate notes need to be taken at the moment of the observation, and if that is not possible, they need to be written down as soon as possible (Babbie 2017, p. 323) so that a clear memory of the observation is captured, leaving no doubt to the observer when they return to analysing their notes. Notes can vary in the way they are written, with each area of investigation creating different types of observations. These can vary from events, objects and interactions, with the researcher needing to make considerations about what is impacting their observations, be it time, space, frequency, if the observation is it bounded by a set purpose, or by a set of rules. Any number of questions can arise as consequences of an event, such as, is there a precedence that led to a practice, or a behaviour, or anything else that may occur, as the research

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[8] Veros, V. 2016. "Marginalising children's reading experiences: From series books to paratextual reading" *TEXT: journal of writing and writing courses 20.1*

is being conducted. Notes can also include feelings, not only of the participants but quite importantly, the feelings that field observation may evoke within the researcher. The researcher's emotional response to the research setting can inform the study and should be identified as an important part of the data (Saldaña 2013, p. 106). This is where interesting and seemingly unimportant observations are noted and described, with Babbie (2017, p. 325) pointing out that sometimes these are the significant details that can "jog your memory" when you are doing your analysis. Notes may be handwritten with pen and paper, through diary keeping, photographs, sketches, audio recordings or film, though each of these also invites their own ethical considerations. The researcher though only uses a small amount of their field notes in their final write up of their research, using only "the gold" notes. This activity of observing and noting with thick description is an important professional skill for researchers (Babbie 2017, p. 326).

Ethnography is done in the setting where people are most often found. In this study, the setting is that of the public library. In the setting that is observed, this is most often a physical place, however there has been a rise in online ethnography (Bryman 2016, p. 447). Babbie differentiates between the term "participant observation" using instead "field research" as the observer in the field can have several roles and they do not need to "always participate in what they are studying, though they usually do study it directly at the scene of the action" (Babbie 2017, p. 300). The researcher can at one extreme be a full participant, such as can be seen in aca-fandom studies increasingly found in popular culture including popular romance studies (Roach, 2016, p. 35), through to the other extreme where the researcher is a complete observer taking no participation in the research setting at all. Often these two opposing positions for the researcher in the field study are described as being an active or passive researcher, and if the choice is to be active, a decision is required upon the extent of the participation. This is a continuum and the researcher can be involved at different levels however, if the researcher is participating fully with the group under study they need to make it clear that were also undertaking research, known as overt participation, or they are in the situation that they are conducting covert research (Babbie 2017, pp. 299–300).

In an online ethnography, the researcher can still observe the field of research, but the relationship to the people in the study is changed (Bryman 2016, pp. 447–448). It may be that the researcher studies the texts written by participants or other expressions of interactions with the environment, such as photographs or sound recordings. In a context, such as a public library, where much of the work of librarians is created in digital forms, the researcher can observe the output of work practices online. That is to say, traces of the work of the public librarian can be found online, in the website of the library, mostly commonly in the library's catalogue. The

results of the selection processes, the books in the library, will have been catalogued, and the outputs from the practice of cataloguing are to be found in the online catalogue of the library. Thus, these practices can be observed online through their outputs, more easily than they can be observed in an embodied capacity.

Gathering Documents

Documents as sources of data allow for researchers to make sense of the "natural" materials that are produced within the setting of the research. These documents can be diaries, letters, autobiographies, correspondence, official documents, photographs, films, and any other objects that occur in the field (Bryman 2016, p. 546). Official documents from the state (Bryman 2016, p. 552) make up a significant amount of information that contains textual detail on policies, organisational hierarchies, flowcharts and other functions that may occur within the community being studied. The use of these documents lends authenticity and credibility to research. Documents present their own reality often being written to meet the needs of a specific audience (Bryman 2016, p. 560). Bryman says that documents "need to be recognized for what they are – namely, texts written with distinctive purposes in mind, and not as simply reflecting reality" (2016, p. 561). This means that the researcher cannot solely use the documents to conduct their research but instead needs to use these documents along with other data, interviews and observations – to triangulate so as to understand the research question. These documents, and other data, get codified so that they can show representations of certain concepts and ideas through qualitative content analysis (Bryman 2016, p. 563).

In this ethnographic study, I was what Bryman would refer to as a "non-participating observer, with interaction" (2016, p. 437). The main source of data comes from interviews, documents from the field, and the outputs of the practices of the librarians. This "field research" may seem at first sight a little unusual, as I did not "study it directly at the scene of action" (Babbie 2017, p. 300). This was not the observation of daily routines of the librarians in their setting. Rather, the practices that were being researched have left traces, a legacy that is present across public libraries in many countries. Participant observation does not usually look at the unique or special activities, instead focusing upon routine actives, so too does observation of the outputs of the field need to look at the routine outputs rather than extraordinary cases.

Field research with its observations of people and their practices may from time to time raise ethical issues for researchers, as activities that are not part of the focus of the study may be observed. There is, however, no ethical dilemma in examining the outputs of the practices of public librarians, as they occur and are recorded in the public arena. These outputs may be

created by librarians but no individual is intrinsically linked to a catalogue record, and although the record may be found in the catalogue of a specific library, it is easy to de-identify the data, and any collection and analysis of the data is unobtrusive (Bryman 2016, p. 324).

I was a passive ethnographer (Bryman 2016, p. 438), gathering documents and most other evidence without interactions with librarians; the interactions took place in the interviews. As my research straddled both physical libraries and their corresponding online spaces there was an element of the field observations that could reflect an "online ethnography"; however, my approach was to consider the internet, the library websites and their corresponding catalogues to be an integral part of the library setting, as Gourlay shows, it is a "messy" reality of the "intertwined and complex area" (2015, p. 276) of the physical and the digital setting. The online aspects that I was observing in an "unobtrusive" manner (Babbie 2017, p. 357), just like in the physical setting, was that of outputs and as an ethnographer observing the field, I was moving between the online and offline and finding the interconnections and how they functioned as a whole.

Apart from the interviews, the data that I collected for this study was publicly available data. My interaction with the data when I was examining the publicly available documents and records on the internet involved no interaction with any librarians or library staff, and thus, to be consistent, I deliberately did not interact with any of the librarians in the branches I visited to examine the location and shelving of romance fiction, the exception being the seven library services I visited to conduct interviews.

Ethnography is a naturalistic method of research (Bryman 2016, p. 451). Documents as sources of data for this study were those that occurred naturally such as collection development policies, value statements of the profession and the legislation that bounds the profession. These documents are the artefacts of the field of my study, Bourdieu's structuring structures. The artefacts that were collected were all publicly available materials either accessible in the physical space of a public library or from the public documents available on the internet from public libraries, their parent council, and other library organisations, legislation, and national and international library bodies that inform the professional practices of librarians. As already noted, the data collected was available to anyone with a computer, no passwords were required to access the information, none of the material was "sensitive in nature" and there was no site policy prohibiting the use of the material (Bryman 2016, p. 138); in fact, the documents that were used were public policies and documents produced as transparency requirements and public information.

Interviews

Ethnographic research that relies on observations and documents can describe what has happened, but cannot draw inferences from this as to why it happened. Qualitative, or ethnographic, interviews allow the researcher to gather rich exploratory data that cannot be obtained through quantitative methods or observation. The interview is an integral part of the ethnography whereby a "typical ethnographic research employs three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents. This in turn produces three kinds of data: quotations, descriptions, and excerpts of documents, resulting in one product: narrative description" (Genzuk 1999, p. 9).

Qualitative interviews rely on a trusting and respectful relationship between the interviewee and interviewer, and therefore have to be in a setting, and of sufficient duration, for this to develop. The semi-structured nature of the interview allows for the interviewee to be a co-creator of knowledge, as they are active participants in the interview, helping to determine areas for deeper exploration and examination (Gubrium & Holstein 2001). Unlike the structured interview whose standardisation controls for variations and difference in interviews (Bryman 2016, p. 197), the semi-structured interview works as a guideline of prompts allowing for the interviewee to extrapolate and divulge ideas and attitudes that reveal a deeper understanding of the topic being researched.

The type of questions asked within a semi-structured interview (open ended, probing) invite in-depth responses. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer the flexibility to explore concepts in more detail, and the interviewee freedom as to how to reply to questions. It is common for ethnographic interviews for there to be an existing relationship between the interviewee and interviewer. This was certainly the case in this research, where my previous extensive activities as a librarian had created at the least professional recognition in some of the interviews.

The naturalism approach to social research states that creating artificial environments such as interviews cannot capture human behaviour (Babbie 2017, p. 305; Bryman 2016, p. 43), however, conducting interviews does allow for uncovering the thinking behind observed behaviours and the outputs of the group that is being studied. For this study, I conducted semi-structured, or qualitative, interviews with librarians nominated by their managers, at their libraries which were also included in the broader observational research data and document collection. The interviews uncovered the thinking behind decision-making on acquisitions, cataloguing and shelving, programing and events, whereas the participant observation and document analysis uncovered the

results, or outcomes of that thinking. Certain practices of librarians can only be seen in the evidence of their practices and not in the actual observation of a person at work. However, interviews are used to reveal the motivations and rationalisations for the practices being investigated.

Reflections on the Data Collection processes

Method of Data analysis - Thematic Analysis and coding

Most analysis in qualitative studies is both inductive and deductive; many studies start with some theoretical ideas that are derived from literature, but also consider the patterns that emerge from the various forms of data. Deductive approaches begin with the big picture patterns of theories and models, whereas inductive approaches analyse the data gathered to identify the patterns that emerge from the data (Bryman 2016, pp. 21–22). Inductive analysis is a demanding approach, leading to the discovery of new ideas, theories (Bryman 2016, pp. 21–22). Qualitative studies may use both a priori coding, which uses operationalisations and categorisation from the literature, and emergent coding, where the categories arise from the researcher's interactions with the data (Stemler 2001). It is demanding because explanations in the data do not necessarily emerge from the weight of evidence; as Saldaña noted "qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña 2013, p. 3). The researcher searches for meaning in the data so to reflect their interpretation. This meaning is significant to the content of the data and the overall ethnography (Saldaña 2013, p. 39).

Coding is a system used to analyse complex data. There are many approaches to coding as well as a variety of techniques. In ethnography, data is analysed after the data collection has taken place. Coding itself is an "interpretive act" (Saldaña 2013, p. 4) and relies on the variety of data that is collected to allow for the patterns and linkages between the data sets to emerge to the researcher. The benefits and drawbacks of qualitative data is that this "interpretive act" (Saldaña 2013, p. 4) is unique to each researcher and that there is no single way of interpreting qualitative data. Coding is a way to link theoretical concepts and patterns that occur throughout the data; it is not only a system of labelling (Saldaña 2013, p. 8).

Bryman (2001), however, has attempted to formalise the process and writes that data analysis has four stages. His description of the stages assumes text-based data, such as interview transcripts, but the process can easily be adapted for the analysis of data gathered using different techniques. The first stage requires the researcher to be familiar with the data as a whole, making notes on its

aboutness, any major themes, and any unusual events, ideas or issues, and then to group these cases into categories. It is important for this initial phase to take into account data gathered using different techniques. The second stage requires the researcher to re-consider the data, this time searching for granularities. For textual data such as interview transcripts, this may involve marking the text, highlighting in the coding system that has been devised and labelled, circling and underlining important sections that may sit outside of the coded system but remain an important part of the concepts that are emerging. For data in other formats, the processes are similar. Importantly, this second stage includes making notes and identifying keywords along with noting analytical ideas. Saldaña writes that descriptive coding "assigns labels to data to summarise in a word or short phrase - most often a noun - the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (2013 p. 262). Seal emphasises the meaning-making role of this phase when he writes that he considers coding to be a "descriptor of a data segment that assigns meaning" (2016 p. 452). The third stage requires another reconsideration of the data, where elements of it are systematically marked and "chunks" of data are coded and recoded. This reconsideration and recoding is a process of review and reflection; it helps to eliminate similar codes and other forms of duplication (Bryman 2016, p. 581) and to consolidate groupings and emerging themes for the researcher, as well as acknowledging that in "building conceptual categories", the act of coding can also be "unexpected", "surprising", "puzzling" and "downright frustrating" (Sipe 2004, p. 482). One of the key limitations of the coding and thematic analysis is that the context of data can be lost through over-coding of the data (Bryman 2016, p. 583). This should be kept in mind at all stages. In the last stage of analysis, the interconnections between the themes and the general theoretical ideas that have emerged from the data (Bryman 2016, p. 588) are made. Coding is only part of analysis and the researcher needs to make their interpretation of the data. The interpretation of the data, while not as lengthy a procedure as the three stages of analysis, is nonetheless a most significant stage; the outcomes of the iterative processes are related as a whole to the research question and considered in the light of the research literature. This is the stage where the meanings that emerge from the data as a whole are expressed; their relationships to the research question are identified and they are tested against the research literature identified as relevant to the study.

The links and patterns in the data reveal significant themes. Seal says "a theme reflects the significance of a pattern or patterns within the data in relation to the research question" (2016, p. 451). The coding decisions of the researcher represent their inherent biases and predispositions, revealing their own beliefs, characteristics and quirks (Sipe 2004, pp. 482–483) reflecting the way that they interpret social life. There is a risk that the analysis becomes deeply ingrained with

the researcher's world view and their role as a "lone ethnographer" (Saldaña 2013, p. 28); this means that the researcher needs a "circle of people who will listen and talk", as a way of confirming the soundness of the processes followed and of validating the emerging themes.

Data Collection and Analysis in this Study

Much of the data collected for this study, on how the practices of public librarians marginalise romance fiction, was publicly available information. However, interviews with librarians who had responsibility for selection and cataloguing of romance fiction was an essential part of this ethnographic study. Approval for this study, including to conduct these interviews, was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS HREC no: 2014000622). The following section sets out the processes of data collection and analysis used in this study. As a research method, ethnography is particularly data-rich; yet, until all the data has been collected, it is not always clear which elements may be significant.

Ethnography is concerned with the social world of a group. Some examples of ethnographic studies in library and information studies include studies of the work place (Heizmann 2012; Lloyd 2005), and studies of professional and community groups (Pettigrew 1999; Olsson 2016). In this case of the social world of the public librarians in NSW, the boundaries were set by documents that were key to professional practice, to the legislation of the state of NSW, and to the policies of national, state and local bodies that governed the practices of these librarians, documents that were available online. The practices of these public librarians were considered to encompass the tasks they were responsible for and the outputs of those tasks, the ways they talked about their tasks and responsibilities and the values and attitudes they expressed.

Ethnography is a naturalistic form of enquiry. The data I collected included policy documents, catalogue records, data on as the book club kits of public libraries; floor plans and photos of shelving and book placement is all naturally occurring data (Creswell 2007, p. 122) as they are phenomena that have occurred in the field without any researcher intervention.

In this context, decisions had to be made on how to collect data on the practices of librarians without significant intervention by the researcher, but still working in a naturalistic way. Watching the process of the librarians' work such as cataloguing or book selection was neither practical or relevant. Thus, the decision was made to use bibliographic records as a surrogate for three of the practices of public librarians, that is, as evidence of selection; as evidence of cataloguing practices; and as evidence for the inclusion in book club kits. The bibliographic record also provided some indication of shelving practices. Thus, the websites of all the public

library services in NSW, which give access to their individual library catalogues, was the starting point for data collection.

During the period of the data collection, in 2016, there were 102 library websites and catalogues, a number that has since diminished, due to amalgamations of local government areas. The purpose of this process, as noted above, was to identify the practices of librarians in cataloguing romance fiction books, and as the focus was on the marginalisation of romance fiction, it was, specifically, to identify library catalogues which did not have bibliographic records for romance fiction. Uncatalogued books are a silence in the record of the library, and as I was looking for an absence of data, I first had to establish how to find traces of these absences.

To do this, I undertook a number of iterations of catalogue analysis, each revealing different aspects of cataloguing practice. As indicated in the Literature Review chapter, the category romances published by Harlequin Mills & Boon were my starting point. I used popular and well known authors from this publisher to conduct the initial Author name searches, for example, Lynne Graham, Sarah Craven, Emma Darcy. My assumption was that if librarians had selected romance fiction titles, they were likely to be those by well-known authors, especially Australian authors. I also did a search for other well-known authors, not currently published by Harlequin Mills & Boon, such as Julia Quinn, Stephanie Laurens, Jennifer Crusie, Sherrilyn Kenyon and J. R. Ward, to identify the ways in which their books were treated. These are bestselling authors who may also have won awards. These authors seemed to be more strongly represented in author searches in the catalogues than the Harlequin Mills & Boon authors. As I was searching for absences, I concentrated on the publications from Harlequin Mills & Boon. If the author search was successful, my next step was to establish what information was included in the bibliographic record especially pertaining to the format. If the author search was successful, I then searched for the specific title in the national database on Trove, to identify whether this bibliographic record was shared in the national database, providing evidence of its existence in a library beyond the constraints of the individual catalogue. A pattern emerged from successful searches, showing that Large Print copies were more evident than paperback copies. When an item was identified as a paperback copy, the bibliographic record varied from an Author/Title entry with no additional metadata to full catalogue records without a Trove holding, to full catalogue records with a Trove holding.

This phase of data collection provided evidence that of the 102 libraries services, librarians in 49 of them had selected paperback Mills & Boon novels which had at the very least an Author/Title record, with four of these library services adding their Mills & Boon holdings to Trove. I was

able to establish there were 53 services that seemed to have no Mills & Boon specific author holdings in a paperback format (nine of these libraries did have Large Print copies). The next step was to determine whether any of these 53 library services had any paperback romance fiction collections that were not catalogued. I knew from my professional experience that at least one of these 53 libraries did not purchase or accept donations for any Harlequin Mills & Boon novels in any format for their library as a collection policy decision, so I could not assume that each of these libraries had an uncatalogued collection which was hidden on the catalogue.

The document and naturally occurring data that was being collected at this point was analysed and thematically categorised as it was being collected. This was not yet a conceptual analysis but a categorical one allowing me to make decisions as to how to go forward in the examination of the catalogue data. I chose to examine more deeply the absence of data rather than the depth of the level of metadata (and its links) of the 49 libraries with catalogued romance novels. My attention turned to finding the traces of absences in the other 53 library services.

My searching was now, necessarily less systematic. Each library had their catalogue configured to their own requirements. Wherever possible, I chose to conduct an "Advance Search" which sometimes allowed for me to browse collections. I was now looking for romance fiction books not identified by author nor by a relevant subject heading. I concentrated on the title field. A process of trial and error identified the following as productive words to use in the Title field: "romance", "paperbacks", "fiction". Here I was using Genette's transtextuality (1997a) as a thinking tool, as there was no "paratext" to be searched, I started considering the terms that may be used at the *architextual* level – thinking that as these items might be treated as genre based rather than treated as unique titles. Though this was hit and miss, it did garner some results. The following "titles" emerged in 36 of the 53 of the catalogues[9]:

> Adult paperback
>
> (branch name) Paperbacks
>
> Donation paperback
>
> Harlequin Mills & Boon
>
> Home Library paperback

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[9] 13 of the 53 libraries identified through the catalogue also had uncatalogued paperback collections with other genre names such as Westerns and Crime.

Light fiction romance

Lovestory Paperbacks

Mills & Boon

Mills & Boon Sexy/Intrigue [softcover]

Mills & Boon – Temptation/Blaze/Nocturne etc

Mills & Boon 2013/2014/2015 etc

Paperback: rom [QR code]

Paperback romance

Paperback unbarcoded

Paperback [uncatalogued paperback]

Paperbacks

Paperbacks for paperback exchange

Pbk

Romance

Romance Paperback

UC paperback

Uncatalogued Paperback

[unclassified paperback]

XXRomance

Some libraries use more than one 'title' and had numerous records, so this list does not match up with the number of libraries with this practice. These terms are all expressions of the outcomes of the practices of librarians. In these library services, a librarian had at some point made the decision to catalogue these collections at the architextual level, and then subsequent librarians continued the practice.

There were a remaining 17 libraries from the 53 where I could not identify any bibliographic records indicating there were uncatalogued items held in the library. Previous professional experience allowed me to identify four other library services (included in the 36) with some

uncatalogued romance fiction holdings: two of these were "swap and go" collections and the other two libraries where the uncatalogued records were not made visible through the catalogue's user interface. At this point, I could identify three groups of library: largest group (49 libraries) being those with the practice of providing bibliographic records with at least author and title data; a second group (36 libraries) identifying romance fiction books using generic genre and format based descriptors in the Title field of the catalogue record; and a third group (17 libraries) that appeared not to select romance fiction. The focus for the next phase of the study was the second group.

The next step was the embodied practice of visiting library branches. The 102 library systems comprise 363 branches. During the time I was undertaking the study, I visited 53 branches from 37 library systems. These visits were to metropolitan, rural and outback branches and encompassed networked library services as well as standalone library services. They included libraries from all three groups identified above. Some libraries were visited during the preliminary phase of the study, others during the main phase of data collection, between 2015 and 2018, and others in the later stages of the study. A key purpose of the visit was to identify the floor location and shelving arrangements for romance fiction. In each branch visited, I explored the shelving used and any stickers or marks identifying romance fiction or other genres, I rechecked the cataloguing practices, including identifying uncatalogued books. The number identified varied from 13 books in one smaller branch to over 280 books by Australian authors in one large library holding over 800 uncatalogued books on the shelves on the day that I visited in 2016. I took photos of shelving arrangements and kept field notes including the type of library, the type of shelving, cataloguing, stickers and marks and any other signage on the books and on the shelves. Floor layouts were described in brief notes as prompts for remembering floor placements and these were all kept in diaries and on spreadsheets that were updated as visits continued during the period of the research. This phase of data collection is further discussed in the article 'Nobody Puts Romance Fiction in the Corner' (Veros [under review]); data from the 19 branches visited between 2015 and 2018 is included in this article.

Supporting this phase of data collection, documents were also collected and analysed. Policy statements and documents such as the acquisitions and donations information supplied in the annual Public Library Statistics (State Library of New South Wales 2018), and records and policy documents created by the local government library organisations were collected, including policy information from the websites of library services. These gave data relevant to aspects of collection development, selection and acquisition. This phase of data collection is further

discussed in the article 'The selective tradition, the role of romance fiction donations, and public library practices' (Veros 2020).

Throughout this phase of the data gathering process, I also kept regular responses to every library catalogue I visited through their website with deliberate notes on findability and accessibility of romance fiction entries. These notes were taken after every library visit, as well as after access to the library website or catalogue, which to me was the equivalent of a digital visit. These notes were broad in scope, including notes on types of records a library keeps, types of e-book provisions, ease of catalogue access, findability of the records, transparency of policies, mission statements, donations statements, shelving placements and a number of other elements including notes on the book group provisions that each library service supported.

The book club kits data set allowed for the exploration of the types of books that are included for those in book groups. At the time of the data collection, book club kits were available from 21 of the 102 library services. By accessing library websites, I found the 21 libraries that made book club kit provisions to their communities, and I identified the 1052 unique titles in those kits; each title was analysed by looking at the publisher's website, the author's website to identify claims of popularity and commercial or literary success through awards. This analysis revealed the propensity for selecting books with critical acclaim and commercial success. A fuller description of this process is in the article 'Metatextual Conversations' (Veros 2019).

Phase three of the data collection was the interviews with librarians from among the 36 libraries identified as having uncatalogued romance fiction collections. The list of libraries was narrowed, taking into account two factors: the first was to delete any library service where I had worked or where I had close professional relationships with one or more of the librarians; and the second was the need to represent a range of libraries from small councils with standalone library services, large regional, rural and metropolitan libraries from high and low socio-economic demographics as well as councils that represented the various diversity and representational groups regularly identified in communities. The list was narrowed to 22 libraries which were contacted and invited to take part. After follow-ups, eleven librarians from seven library systems agreed to take part in the study; here it should be noted that some large library systems cover more than one local government area and that the branches where the interviews were conducted were among the 53 branches where I explored floor location and shelving practices. My request was to interview librarians involved in any way with the fiction collections of the library; the library manager selected the staff I should interview. In considering the role of key informants in arranging interviews and the importance of interviews as a way of eliciting information about this

world of the ethnography, I also need to acknowledge that being a well-known librarian within the field was perhaps a double-edged sword, not only opening doors to interviews with some librarians but also creating barriers to interviews taking place. There were instances when I was surprised at being politely turned down.

Most of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in the library branch, with one interview taking place in a meeting room in the nearby council building. With the agreement of the interviewees, they were audio-recorded and I personally transcribed later. Interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to just over two hours. The time allocated to each interview was set by the interviewee rather than the interviewer, and reflected both the time they had available and the degree to which they were happy to discuss in detail the questions asked of them. Ethnography is done in the setting where people are most often found. In this research, the setting is that of the library, and the librarian interviewees were pleased to welcome me into their setting.

The semi-structured interviews included a list of interview questions to frame the discussion, but allowed me to change the order, probe into more detail, circle back to earlier responses to seek clarity, validity and veracity of claims, explore new themes as they emerged, and customise the experience for each interview in a conversational, relaxed and non-threatening style. As I had already collected data on the cataloguing practices and had evidence of uncatalogued romance fiction collections, there was no need for the interview questions to evolve during this phase, a practice that often occurs with semi-structured interviews (Bryman 2016, p. 468; Babbie 2017, p. 319). The format of semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewee the freedom to "ramble" (Bryman 2016, p. 466) and focus on elements they felt were more important or that they were more comfortable discussing. However, as the interviewer, I also needed to be able to "steer the conversation from one topic to another, creating transitions," (Ryan & Bernard 2003, p. 91) as a way to reveal the cultural attitudes that guided the interviewee's practices. Throughout the interviews, my extensive prior "native" experience as a librarian proved useful as it allowed me to both make sense of industry-specific language, terminology, practices and concepts, and then to dive deeper into these to explore them in greater detail. One of the limitations of semi-structured interviews is social desirability bias Bryman 2016, p. 267), where the interviewee may have responded in a manner they felt was acceptable to me as the interviewer. As mentioned earlier, my existing profile as a librarian may have impacted some responses within interviews, but as many responses did not align with the content of training sessions or seminars I had been part of, this seems relatively unlikely.

There are certain data collection techniques that ethnography demands of the researcher; these include extensive field notes. As already noted, I kept extensive notes of my structured observations; I also kept notes on serendipitous observations, for example on reports of displays, events and opinions on romance fiction in libraries as they occurred in the media. I also kept notes of my thoughts and emotions in relation to the discoveries I made. Other field notes that I kept were related to the digital visits to libraries, that is to my analyses of the catalogues and websites of the library services – I recorded my "impressions and feelings" (Bryman 2016, p. 444). The notes that I made used both a structure that guided my observations, as well as a separate "free-text diaries" that allowed for creative and unstructured ideas to be recorded, allowing me to develop a writing style that could eventually be applied to ethnographic writing, one that would potentially "raise a claim for the attention of readers" (Mills 1959, p. 218) thus developing my personal academic writing style cognizant that "to write is also to claim for oneself at least status enough to be read" (1959, p. 218).

As noted above, the analysis of the data on the practices of librarians deduced from the bibliographic records was undertaken at the time. My own in-depth knowledge of cataloguing which, as noted in Literature Review chapter, is a practice that follows well established professional standards, gave me an understanding that helped apply a straightforward process to develop a coding frame enabling the identification of non-standard practices. The bibliographic records and my detailed knowledge of romance fiction meant that conceptual themes related to the type of books held in the collection, as well as to the practices of cataloguing, emerged easily. A priori coding was also used to analyse the shelving options identified.

The analysis of the interviews used thematic coding. I transcribed the interviews, at times making notes to refer to when I was coding. The process of coding was undertaken, applying consistent and brief labels to phrases that matched themes that linked across to the naturally occurring data and documents. As I reviewed the coded data, new themes emerged. Mindful of the need for dependability in the study, I followed a process: during and after the first reading of the transcript, I began by writing analytical notes (Saldaña 2013, p. 41). Coding at this first level also meant that I was identifying the important sections of the data that informed my research questions and brought deeper meaning to my analysis. The second process, recoding, moved from coding the data to categorising it according to the emerging concepts. These categories were then analysed again and themes and theories were linked to them to make interpretive sense of the data.

In the writing up of my interpretations, I am deliberate in my use of the pronouns "her" and "she" for my interviewees were all females. In a gendered workplace that is heavily skewed towards female staff, the fact that of my interview requests only females responded and only females were interviewed about books that are written predominantly for females, by females about (predominantly females) is noted here. None of my interviewees asked to be identified in any particular way.

Finally, I reflect on my roles as public librarian and as researcher. Though there was a substantial amount of data that was free of my intervention, I am aware that my dual roles did affect not only the interview process but also my analysis of the interview generated data – this is a tension which is "intrinsic to ethnographic research" and by acknowledging and accepting the contradictions, I was able to "draw on multiple lenses and construct a richer, more complex analysis" (Sipe 2004, p. 482). This is apparent from the notes I made about my emotional responses to the data; these responses were not only to the content of the interviews, but to the practices discovered through analysis of bibliographic records and through visits to library branches. Ethical research practices require the researcher to reflect upon their place and influence in the ethnography (Babbie 2017, p. 62). I am known in the public library community in NSW so any power that I hold is reputational and meant that the interviewees would consider me to be from within the profession. Although I was not in a position to influence their employment, I was in a position to make judgments on their professional practices and values. As a consequence, I have taken particular care in the de-identification of library services and of librarians, so that no details are recorded that could even hint at where a particular practice might occur or who might have expressed a particular opinion.

Conclusion

The decision to use ethnographic case study as the chosen methodology for this study of practices that marginalise romance fiction meant I needed to immerse myself in the data in two key ways – that is, in identifying the institutions and organisations whose data sets and documents create the context for the field of librarianship and understanding the group being studied so that I could write a "thick", descriptive narrative as befits an ethnography. In choosing a geographic region for the data, that is, the public libraries of New South Wales, I also needed to identify the laws and policies that govern these libraries, acknowledging that some would come from outside of the state. The data sets and documents used in this study are all publicly available online. A number of library branches were visited during the course of the study. Interviews were conducted with

librarians in selected libraries. The study used a priori and thematic analysis and coding. Bourdieu's thinking tools were useful in establishing the a priori coding frame.

Rigour and quality in any study is important. This chapter drew on Lincoln and Guba's approach (1985) to quality in qualitative research, which has become almost a classic. The writing in an ethnographic case study is important, both in demonstrating the criteria for rigour, but importantly in communicating the social world of the participants to the reader, thus this chapter emphasised the use of Geertz's thick description (1973) in presenting aspects of the data. Finally, I have positioned myself in this study, given the significant role the ethnographer plays in the interpretation of the observations in an ethnographic case study.

Key Findings

Introduction

In the genre of the thesis by compilation, there needs to be a positioning of the peer reviewed articles in such a way that they present the evidence as a whole. They do this as separate parts, that here are linked by commentary in a form of the palimpsest (Genette 1997a). The intricate web of relationships between the research question and the published findings, and Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology and the articles is conceptualized, using Genette's notion of *metatextuality*, "the transtextual relationship that links a commentary to 'the text it comments upon (without necessarily citing it)'" (1997b, p. xix).

These commentaries are not reiterations or abstracts, but instead express how the journal articles work together to answer the research question. With the exception of the first article, I have chosen to forgo positioning these articles by their chronological publishing dates. Instead I have chosen to order them in the logical order of a book becoming part of a library's collection, as a reflection of practices of public librarians. That is, starting from the broader concept of reading romance fiction and the practices of librarians, then to collection development practices, cataloguing practices, the placement of the books in the library, and lastly a program which brings together books and readers outside of the public library building.

My doctoral work being in the discipline of library and information studies, there might be an expectation to primarily publish within the discipline. Though the first article was published in a journal in the field of librarianship, the decision to consider journals of popular culture for publication allowed for an interdisciplinary approach for this thesis. The choice of the *Journal of Popular Romance* for two of the articles was made so as to allow for the breadth of the study to reach scholars outside of the scholarship of information and knowledge management but also to reflect romance scholarship in librarianship. Earlier versions of each of these papers were presented at peer reviewed conferences attended by scholars and librarians or scholars and authors of popular culture, and popular romance fiction. Positioning the research across these different scholarly fields and for these different audiences, emphasises the interdisciplinary approach relevant to the research question answered here: How do the practices of public librarians marginalise romance fiction?

An early scholar's overview of the research question

Veros, V. 2012, 'Scholarship-In-Practice the romance reader and the public library', *The Australian Library Journal*, vol. 61, no. 4, pp. 298–306.

This article is as a preliminary exploration of romance fiction in libraries so as to establish a viable research question for the thesis. The article was published in the "Research in Practice" section of the journal, indicating that it was written by a practitioner, a new entrant into the field of scholarship. In the context of the thesis by compilation the importance of (inter)disciplinary spaces within which an emerging scholar can publish is clear. The "scholarship in practice" element of the *Australian Library Journal* allows for these exploratory articles where a cohesive study has not yet been formulated.

This article presents an overview of the literature on possible areas for research as well as establishing some effects of the practices of public librarians. This is an initial exploratory analysis of the literature on practices that marginalise romance fiction within the public library. It is an initial phase of the study which helped to clarify the research question. At the time of writing, the bounds of the research study had not yet been set. There is also an element of personal exploration as a researcher who is doubly engaged in this area. Here I recount my own experiences as a reader who was directed to "better" fiction by the librarian who was guiding me away from romance fiction. Though well-meaning, this interaction left an impression upon me. I also draw implicitly on my practitioner background in readers' advisory in public libraries.

The article facilitated the clarification of the research question. As a result, the focus of the study was narrowed to the books themselves, asking how romance fiction was marginalised in public libraries. To achieve this clarification, the article draws on concepts of popular culture, romance fiction, public libraries and readers' advisory. From the initial stages of my research project, Raymond Williams' concept of everyday culture underpinned the research journey. Also, important to my own professional practice was the introduction of Readers' Advisory as a practice of librarians and Catherine Sheldrick Ross's discussion of the "reading ladder" as not only an educational improvement but also as a way of attaining cultural capital. This concept of 'a way of bettering your reading and therefore yourself' was an important concept that became an indicator of professional values throughout the research.

Other important organisations identified in the preparation of the article were the Australian Romance Readers Association, especially their annual reader survey which has had a continued impact upon my scholarly work, as well as the Romance Writers of America, which established

the Veritas Award rewarding the best article that "depicts the romance genre in a positive light"; the first recipients in 1995 were librarians writing on the excuses that librarians use to keep romance fiction out of libraries. The article was called "The Librarian as Effete Snob: Why Romance?" (Mosley, Charles & Havir 1995). As a new scholar at the time, I did not fully appreciate the significance of this award as part of a program by the Romance Writers of America to indicate that the published outputs of their members had value.

This article's methodology is a deep, loosely structured exploration and engagement with the literature on romance fiction and libraries as possible areas of focus. Several themes that emerged from this exploration were: romance readers, romance authors and publishers (the creative team), feminism, gender studies, discourse analysis, librarian's practices such as cataloguing, collection and acquisition of e-books, display material, and legislated requirements of books published in Australia. Not all of these themes could be explored in this research however they inform the limitations to the research study and provide critical areas that could be explored in future research. This early research stage approached the research in a general way giving a strong understanding of the breadth of possible data that could be gathered. This exploratory work allowed for the eventual setting of boundaries so as to avoid scope creep yet leading to an understanding of the topics that are positioned just in and out of the boundaries that were set. These boundaries became important in the choice of research methodology, the ethnographic case study. Though this article discusses the various positions that could have been taken for the research study, it significantly demonstrated the centrality of the practices of librarians. This observation guided the clarification of the research question and thus was fundamental to the study. It is evidenced in the articles presented here, each of which brings a focus upon a specific practice of librarians in public libraries.

The Romance Reader and the Public Library

Romance fiction, romance authors and readers have been routinely marginalized, in spite of their significant role in contemporary popular culture. Sales figures for the book trade indicate that romance fiction is the most popular of all genres with ebook technologies being led by romance and erotica publishers. Yet, many public libraries have not collected romance fiction or collect only token examples of this genre. Drawing from data in the Australian Romance Readers Association annual survey on reader usage, this paper will discuss how the romance reader accesses their reading choices, impediments to the romance reader accessing reading materials and the role of the public library and how library practitioners, through Readers' Advisory practices, can meet the romance reader's needs.

A personal perspective

My own experiences as a romance reader have influenced my role in Readers' Advisory work in public libraries and formed a starting point for this paper.

I read romances for the love, the escape, for the catch of breath below my diaphragm at the anticipation of that knowing glance and the sexual tension. I read romances for the beautifully retold love cliché. I read them for they are predominately women writing for women about women. I read romances for the sheer science fiction of improbability that is possible, for its absurdist nature and absolutely for the joyful resolution, the Happily Ever After.

As a teen, I quickly exhausted the small romance collection at my local library. When I would ask for more, the librarian would kindly guide me to 'better' reading choices, a reflection of the professional emphasis of the time on reader development and education. I was given Mary Wesley and Maeve Binchy. Even as a teenager, I saw

them as 'lovely reads' but they were nothing like the darkness of Charlotte Lamb, Anne Mather's torridness and Carole Mortimer's alphabrutes.

At university, when reading was being discussed, it was serious and scholarly and fiction was literary. I read across all fiction but discussing romances was considered only one step away from being illiterate. I also started to explore academic papers on the romance reader with which I did not agree. What these papers did was anger me because they seemed to think that there must be a psychological reason to read romance. Reading romances meant I was 'supermenial' (Greer 1970, 188). Reading romances meant that I was not a feminist. Pamela Regis in *The Natural History of the Romance Novel* states that 'more than any other literary genre, the romance novel has been misunderstood by mainstream literary culture – book review editors, reviewers themselves, writers and readers of other genres, and especially, literary critics'. (Regis 2003, 3) I would add libraries to her list, as they too reflect mainstream literary culture.

Thus, I did not talk about my reading of romances and I gave up trying to access my books from my library early on. I bought all my romances from newsagents, supermarkets, second hand bookstores, bookshops, markets, online and swapping books with friends.

Culture and the reading of romance

Public libraries in Australia developed from a tradition of self-improvement through reading as they did in other English-speaking countries and their collections traditionally held books that were seen to represent 'culture'. Yet, from the 1960s, Raymond Williams argued that 'Culture is Ordinary' (Williams and Higgins 2001, 10), that culture is created through the everyday activities of a society and that the labels of high culture and low culture were inappropriate for contemporary society. In arguing for a plurality in cultures, Williams says, 'Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who started from a different position' (Williams 1961, 334). Importantly for libraries, Williams reflected on the role of institutions in legitimating this everyday culture. Public libraries, however, have been slow to legitimise romance fiction.

Librarians' attitudes have come a long way from the approach voiced by Rudolph Bold, who, in *The Library Journal* (Bold 1980, 1138) proposed that libraries open their doors to romance readers for, perhaps by osmosis they may one day read higher literature. He said, 'I do not urge dropping any of our literary standards, but do urge that librarians realize that for many in our community those standards are idealistic and practically unattainable. Let us instead practice a humanistic tolerance and allow our philosophy of

literary esthetics to broaden and include in our public those of "lower" taste as well as those intellectual wastrels who prefer lazing in the backwaters of low quality literature'.

Rudolph Bold, as condescending and patronising as he sounds to contemporary public librarians, was part of the shift towards user-oriented services as he signalled that librarians, despite their grave doubts, were going to have to acknowledge public culture's norms and allow romance novels onto their library shelves. Those who did not were exercising censorship, not by officially banning or challenging books but by not making them available through acquisition and cataloguing practices. Bold said, 'Our profession should be sufficiently liberal by now to grant self-censorship rights to those who wish them'.

Matching a reader to a book is now recognised as a normal part of public library practice and the philosophy is that every book has its reader is at the heart of Readers' Advisory services. However, matching a romance reader to a book is taking much longer to emerge.

Romance fiction, romance authors and readers have been routinely marginalized. This is evident from feminist critics distancing and elevating themselves from the romance reader, romance reading being portrayed as pathological (Flesch 2004, 109) to readers developing corrective strategies in dealing with social criticisms upon being discredited for their reading choices (Brackett 2000, 347). There is a stigma associated with romance reading that seems to necessitate a defense or justification (Vivanco 2011, 113-127) of the readers' choice rather than an approach of general acceptance that is afforded to the broader reading community. This is despite sales figures for the book trade indicating that romance fiction is the most popular of all genres, with the Romance Writers of America reporting(Romance Writers of America b) that in 2010 Romance Fiction Sales in Comparison showing Romance selling at $1.358 billion compared to classic literary fiction at US$455 million.

In 1995, the Romance Writers of America instituted the Veritas award(Romance Writers of America a). The Veritas Award may be given annually for an article that best depicts the romance genre in a positive light. The inaugural award was given to Shelley Mosley, John Charles, and Julie Havir for their article 'The Librarian as Effete Snob: Why Romance?' (Mosley, Charles, and Havir 1985, 24-25) In this article, the authors explored the criticisms and excuses used by librarians to keep romance books out of their libraries, from formulaic writing, the reader's intellect, sexual explicitness, cover art, trashiness, lack of credibility to cheap book production.

They go on to discuss reasons to stock romance such as popularity with library users, strong characters dealing with a variety of social and medical issues and the more pertinent issue of censorship and that 'Romance novels are the last genre that librarians feel comfortable censoring'.

Mosley, Charles and Havir state, 'The bottom line is, even if you don't like romances, you have a professional obligation to defend the rights of others to read them.'

However, in spite of this shift in perspective over the past thirty years, public library practices still marginalise romance fiction and thus prevent the romance reader from being the avid library user that she might be. This paper explores data that is unique to both the Australian romance reader and Australian library practices therefore adding a national perspective on the current international literature on romance readers and libraries.

Romance reader and the library

The Australian Romance Readers Association (ARRA) conducts an annual survey of readers (Australian Romance Readers Association, 2011). As this data is sourced from an external public data source it is only possible to give descriptive statistics. In 2011, they had 324 respondents, 61.4% of whom were aged between 21 and 45. A further 36% were aged from 46 to 65. Of all the respondents, 63.4% read five to 'more than 15' romance books a month. This is a substantial amount of reading, particularly as it does not take into account the non-romance books that these readers may also be reading. Most respondents were members of the ARRA, a reading association. They are readers who follow book review sites, author websites, and subscribe to newsletters, magazines and blogs so as to decide upon their next read. These are readers that engage with social media. And yet they do not recognise the library playing a large, positive role in providing resources for their desired reading experience. Half of them responded that they never use the library and only 25% of them said that new romance fiction releases were usually available from their local library. Yet, 70% of these respondents had read ebooks on a variety of devices, e.g., ebook readers, tablets and laptop computers. These respondents are aware of technological opportunities that enhance their reading experience and this mode of reading is becoming a cultural artifact in its own right.

This article explores practices in selection, acquisition and cataloguing that may explain why so many romance readers choose not to use the public library.

Catalogue Records

The romance novel is an important cultural literary artifact which represents not only the creation of intellectual property but also the willingness of readers to purchase, and of course to borrow, this property for their entertainment. The cataloguing practices of libraries prevent readers from easily identifying romance fiction titles within the library catalogue. The cataloguing of romance paperbacks is conducted at a basic level by many libraries. The practice for many public libraries used to be a 'Romance Fiction' 245 (MARC) title with barcodes attached for individual items with no other information recorded. Basically, the romance novel cannot be found through the catalogue. It is not searchable. The author is not considered important, nor is the title or the series. It is treated as lesser than a magazine for at least when a magazine is accessioned libraries keep a record of the title, issue number and the month and year of publication. The arguments go along the lines of 'we have budget constraints', 'these books are junk', and 'the readers don't remember them'. However, if a reader loses one of these books they still need to pay the full book replacement cost and the administration fee, even though only minimal administration has been used to make the book available on the public shelves.

Another reason why romance fiction may not be catalogued is that many of the books are donated to the library, rather than purchased through the acquisitions budget. Juliet Flesch notes in *From Australia with Love* that when it comes to romance paperbacks, many public libraries 'depend heavily on donations of recent titles from their patrons, thereby freeing acquisition funds for other titles' (Flesch 2004, 59). Though it is understandable for libraries with budget constraints to choose to concentrate their budgets on items that do not get donated, it is imperative that if the donated items are accepted to be circulated within the library system to honour the donation with an allocated catalogue record.

I will recount how this practice of minimal identification of a romance novel can result in a negative experience of library service for a borrower: A reader at a metropolitan library was enquiring about a book she owned called Reunited by Kate Hoffmann. Through her own research on the internet, she found that this book was part of a septet. The other six titles in the series were category romances, which are titles 'issued under a common imprint/series name that are usually numbered sequentially and released at regular intervals, usually monthly, with the same number of releases each time' (Romance Writers of Australia Inc). The most common of these publishers using this approach are Harlequin Mills and Boon. These books were all out of print despite their recent publication dates of post-2001, as most category romances are only in print for a

month, this borrower was searching for Inter-Library Loan copies of the six different titles she identified. Of the six, only one book was found in a NSW library due to the listing of a brief catalogue record – author/title/publisher. Some months later, this reader complained that she had found another of the septet at one of the library branches on the paperback stand. She was not impressed to learn that others of the septet might also be in the library but staff had no way of knowing.

This single catalogue record/many accessioned items impacts the reader experience of the library. The inability to search for items does not give a positive library experience. The literary reader is given a much more positive experience of the library. Literary fiction is given several access points through the catalogue, even though sales figures would suggest that literary fiction is not as popular as romance fiction(Romance Writers of America b). Yet, romance is not catalogued to the same level.

This decision to not catalogue does not only impact readers – it impacts authors and their impression of libraries. This cataloguing practice does not recognise and respect the intellectual property of others which is a core value to librarians' professional conduct (Australian Library and Information Association). An author of romances published by Mills and Boon attending the Australian Romance Readers Convention in 2009 commented, 'My books don't get catalogued. As they are rarely searchable, I have not yet been eligible for Public Lending Right payments though I know my paperbacks are available in libraries'. This writer has 16 books published in Australia and translated in over 10 languages worldwide.

Language
Librarians can also show the disdain they have for romance fiction through the language they use and the approach they take to the genre.

For example, prior to Christmas, many libraries create book trees using different collections. I've seen Reference Christmas trees, fiction Christmas trees, classics Christmas trees and Romance Christmas trees all appear. For the most part, all of these trees have been captioned in a straightforward objective manner, but one was an image of a Christmas tree that appeared in a library's social media photographs that was captioned with the following: 'I know you romance readers will disagree with me but have u ever seen a better use for a mills and boon?' This statement's suggestion that these books' purpose as an aesthetic, decorative object is preferable to their content may be tongue in cheek and having a bit of fun but to the romance reader, it sends the message that their reading choices are inferior. To the non-romance reader it sends the

message that the librarian (presumably perceived as an authority figure) is disdainful of romance, and therefore romance must be inferior if the authority figure says so.

Some librarians want to deny that particular titles are examples of romance fiction. I was talking with a librarian who wanted some contemporary romance recommendations for a display he was preparing. I suggested to him that Jennifer Crusie was a good start and his comment was 'Oh. But Crusie transcends the romance genre. Her writing is highly commendable'. To transcend a genre is what happens when a reader discovers that the book they have just read and enjoyed is genre fiction but they don't want to identify themselves as having read genre. Romance fiction is not alone in attracting this response. Margaret Atwood has transcended fantasy. Peter Temple has transcended crime. Readers of romance fiction may prefer to use the phrase 'these authors benchmark their genre'.

Legal Deposit of romance titles in Australia and NSW

Williams points out that it is impossible for a culture to be completely aware of what in our everyday life will prove to be important in the future (Williams 1961, 333). Legal deposit libraries are obliged to preserve all the material that is lodged with them as it ensures that 'the works of authors and publishers survive for the use of future generations' amongst other reasons.

'Legal deposit is a statutory provision which obliges publishers to deposit copies of their publications in libraries in the region in which they are published. Under the Copyright Act 1968 and various state Acts, a copy of any work published in Australia must be deposited with the National Library of Australia and the deposit libraries in your home state or territory.' (National Library of Australia) Just as publishers are required to lodge their publications with the appropriate deposit libraries those libraries are obliged to preserve them. Yet preserving these books does not necessarily mean cataloguing them and making them available for reading.

The National Library of Australia has the most comprehensive romance collection in Australia as they catalogue all the titles they receive through legal deposit. The State Library of NSW creates full catalogue records for all romance fiction written by Australian authors and these items in turn become part of the Mitchell Library collection. Other titles by non-Australian authors are not catalogued; they are stored in an offsite repository and accessible only if the reader knows the publisher, the month and year that they were published.

Sydney University Library is also a legal deposit library for New South Wales. According to its catalogue, it has few of the romance publications that would be expected to have been lodged with it through legal deposit. Authors such as Stephanie Laurens, Bronwyn Parry, Helene Young and Anna Campbell are collected. However, Anne Gracie, Sarah Mayberry and Kelly Hunter, Barbara Hannay or Marion Lennox, all of whom have won awards both nationally and internationally, do not have any of their books listed as being held at the University Library. In spite of having no romance collection, the University does have significant genre collections in both Science Fiction and Crime Fiction. (The University of Sydney)

Ebook Acquisition

At the time that the Veritas award was instituted, the Web had just launched into the public sphere and it has subsequently changed culture and commerce. Traditional brick and mortar shops are now beseeching readers to reject online retailers as it has impacting on this traditional business model(Perkin 2011). Print books can be ordered from online bookstores such as Amazon whose website structure allows for easy browsing of the romance genre and its sub-genres including anthologies, contemporary, erotica, fantasy, gothic, historical, multicultural, regency, religious, romantic suspense, time travel, vampires and western (Amazon.com). An important omission from this list of browsable sub-genres is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender romance. Notably, Australian online bookstore Booktopia features their romance category and provides a monthly romance newsletter and blog called the Romance Buzz (Cuthbert 2012). Further to this romance ebook purchases have been possible for both through publisher and retailer websites.

Romance readers are leaders in adopting ebook technology for their reading needs. Harlequin Mills and Boon have received many international awards for publishing innovation and digital publishing, and romance readers are acknowledged as leading in the uptake of ereading, with Peter Smith from the TechoFile blog (Smith 2009) saying that 'The success of the e-book is being fueled by the romance and erotic romance market'. As well as traditional publishers such as Harlequin Mills and Boon adapting an ebook distribution model in the mid-2000s, newer digital only imprints such as Carina Press and Samhain, specialising in romance and erotica ebooks, also emerged at this time.

To add to this, Australian romance author Fiona Lowe was awarded the RITA Award for 2012 Best Contemporary Single Title, putting her in the field of such best-selling authors as Nora Roberts, Susan Elizabeth Phillips and Rachel Gibson. The standout feature of

Lowe's win is that her book was a digital first imprint (James, 2012). This win will have major implication in the future of ebooks and epublishing. It may also challenge the way that libraries supply reading materials to their users. Just as the traditional publishing industry is in a state of transition from an offline business model to an online business model, so too are libraries. The information and reference shift has been in place for many years but it is only recently that the shift is following in terms of reading for pleasure.

It will be interesting to see what trends will emerge with ebook lending. In the blog *The Digital Shift* in April 2012 reported that ebook lending data in the US showed that 'nearly 60 percent of readers browsed public library ebook collections to discover new content, rather than searching for a specific title. Among those, romance was the most popular genre followed by all fiction, mystery and suspense, historical fiction, and science fiction and fantasy'. (Schwartz April 17, 2012)

The first public library in Sydney to lend ebooks was Randwick City Library in 2009 and there are now more than 40 councils in the Greater Metropolitan Sydney area that provide ebooks. An analysis of the online catalogues of public libraries carried out in July 2012 showed that of the libraries that subscribe to ebooks services, the only ones that did not include romance titles are also the ones that do not subscribe to any adult fiction. Of the libraries that provide ebook for adults, all of them held romances. Proportionately, they all varied but overall they were available.

Though every library purchased romances, half of them did not purchase category romances such as Harlequin/Mills and Boon. Single title romances are found in libraries much more readily than category romances and this policy from the acquisition of hard copy books is mirrored in is the case with the ebook subscriptions also. Amongst the other libraries that did purchase category romances, there were some libraries that demonstrated an awareness of their popularity with one of library having a specifically marked 'Mills and Boon Room' on its ebook home page recognising that this is one of the major ebook genres that their library users want to access. However, at the date of writing, holdings as indicated by the National Library of Australia's database Trove, show only 22 print copies of Fiona Lowe's The Boomerang Bride (Lowe 2012) being available and no copies of the ebook in Australian libraries. This is inspite of her book being on the RITA longlist and shortlist for several months prior to her win. Of course, time is the best indicator in such matters. Lowe's book was first released in print in Australia on the 1st of July, 2012 and momentum may not have been achieved as yet.

Another indicator of the importance that libraries place on their romance ebook collections is looking at the placement of romance subject browsing within the architecture of the ebook websites. Library catalogues are all similar and the same can be said for the ebook catalogues that libraries use. In most instances, libraries custom-design their own web interface to reflect their brand and their reading communities. Only a third of the libraries in Sydney had romances browsable high up in their architecture where they appear alongside other genres such as crime, science fiction and literary fiction. However, the majority of libraries don't make romance a browsable field and the only access to the list of romance titles available is via the advanced search fields. An experienced user would eventually find this information, but it hinders access to people unfamiliar with the website interface.

The substantial number of ebook romances in Sydney libraries show that there has been a positive move towards the inclusion of romance fiction in libraries. Libraries, unlike 17 years ago when Mosley, Charles and Havir won the Veritas award, are more readily purchasing the materials that their readers are searching for. But the difficulty in discovering romances through browsing ebook catalogues due to their placement in the website design hierarchical structure hints towards a persistent lack of understanding of the romance reader's importance in engaging ebook usage by library members. Further to that, there still seems to be an underlying attitude that category romances are still perceived as not having a place in library collections, whether in print or in digital.

Conclusion

Juliet Flesch observes that when it comes to the romance paperbacks many public libraries 'depend heavily on donations of recent titles from their patrons, thereby freeing acquisition funds for other titles' (Flesch 2004, 59). Depending on your council library, their perception of romance, their perception of reading - is it reading as a ladder or reading for leisure (Ross 2009, 632-656) and how they build their relationship with their readers will impact on the types of books that get donated and are consequently accepted as part of the collection. Though many libraries allow for patron led acquisition practices they still have core collections that are co-ordinated by collection development specialists. To plan all collections with the exception of romance means that the romance reader's needs are not being met.

Evidence has been presented throughout this paper showing that current library practices marginalize romance readers. Inconsistent acquisition practices, the lack of basic level cataloguing of books and the lack of academic and legacy romance collections suggest that libraries do not reflect the reading interests of all the public. In

light of the popularity of romance fiction, libraries risk being perceived as not having relevant collections that cater to romance readers' broader social and informational needs. In the highly competitive information and cultural public marketplace, lacking relevancy to the readers of the highest selling fiction genre could have long-term implications for maintaining lifelong library patronage.

In the words of Raymond Williams, as librarians, 'we need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it' (Williams 1961). Current practices in public libraries are preventing a very popular aspect of contemporary culture, the reading of romance fiction, from becoming a part of the institutionalised culture of the future. If the collecting institutions such as public libraries do not value expressions of popular culture and integrate them fully in the collections and services of the library, as Williams explained, romance fiction and other examples of popular culture will remain marginalised and libraries and the wider society will be the poorer.

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The selection, acquisition and collection of romance fiction

Veros, V. 2020, 'The selective tradition: the role of romance fiction donations, and public library practices in New South Wales, Australia', *Information Research,* vol. 25, no. 2.

This article explores the relationship between the selective tradition (Williams 1961) and the acquisitions and collection development practices of public librarians in relation to romance fiction. It uses Bourdieu's concept of "structuring structures", the systems that are in place guiding librarians to make these collection selection and acquisition decisions, establishing the professional frame within which such decisions are made.

In exploring the different ways that an item is accepted into a public library collection, that is either purchased through the decisions made by librarians or through donations from the community, the role of the selective tradition within the public library becomes evident. The study found that romance fiction is predominantly a donated collection – one reflecting collection expectations of the community. In understanding librarian's attitudes towards donated books which are accepted into the library collection, the study demonstrated how fiction's entry into the library collection carries value statements.

Raymond Williams's selective tradition conceptualises the research, bringing an understanding of how library collections both reflect the lived culture and shape how lived culture is represented. The selective tradition is the mechanism through contemporary popular culture gains authority in a society and can become part of the cultural memory of the time. The article also draws on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the structuring structures allowing for an understanding of the various levels of governance and professional core values that frame librarians' practices that inform selection and acquisition. The significant literature of practice presented here includes Peggy Johnson's procedural instructions on planning collection development plans, the role of donations discussed by Juliet Flesch (2004), the extensive study of romance fiction in public libraries conducted by Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill writing about romance fiction collections in public libraries in Missouri (2006) and the whole of the US (2008) , and the *Genreflecting* guide to romance fiction collecting for public libraries edited by Kristin Ramsdell (2012).

The research method for this article positioned itself in the ethnographic tradition by gathering documents from the organisations that inform the library profession to be able to investigate the structuring structures, that influence the local policies and practices of librarians. The data collection included 26 collection development policies from a range of New South Wales public libraries – metropolitan, rural, outback as well as single council and networked council libraries

identified through the websites of the library services. Document analysis was conducted to identify key organisational influences and semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff from libraries identified as having collections of romance fiction that were not fully catalogued (see my article 'A Matter of Meta' below). This article fits into the broader research method in that it identifies and positions the organisations that influence and guide the work of public librarians at a state, national and international level.

The use of the concept of the selective tradition (Williams 1965) in the development of this article shows how the community donations of romance fiction are considered to not have as high a value as the materials that have been purchased through the library gatekeepers – vendors, library specialists and selectors. The librarians position themselves as having the cultural competence to make decisions on behalf of their community on the books that are significant for their community. In doing so, they are in a position to guide communities in understanding what should be considered part of contemporary culture. Identifying that romance fiction donations are accepted into the library collection is a sign of recognising community interests. However, not treating these community acquisitions in the same way as the librarian-endorsed acquisitions indicates that these books are not to be considered with the same value and this in turn results in the marginalisation of these books.

[Erratum Note]: *There is a typographical error in this article on Page 71. The text should read that there are 102 local councils rather than 112.*

The selective tradition, the role of romance fiction donations, and public library practices in New South Wales, Australia

Introduction. This study uses Williams's notion of the selective tradition and the development of recorded culture to explore collection development practices, with a specific focus on librarians' attitudes towards donations. It explores how a group of public libraries marginalise romance fiction which is acknowledged as a significant aspect of popular culture.

Method. Collection development policies from public libraries across New South Wales, Australia, were compared with statements from professional bodies such as ALIA and IFLA, and legislation. Semi-structured interviews were held with librarians to identify the ways materials are selected and acquired and then integrated into the collection.

Analysis. Responses and data were analysed using a priori coding developed from the statements of professional bodies as well as thematic analysis.

Results. The practices used to select and acquire romance fiction differ significantly from those used with general fiction. In particular, since most romance fiction titles appear to be acquired through donation, they cannot be considered to be included in the selective tradition.

Conclusions. There is a misalignment between the interests of the community whose enthusiasm for romance fiction make it a huge part of the publishing market and the practices of public librarians in including these books in library collections.

Introduction

Romance fiction is an important aspect of popular and everyday reading culture. According to the identical definition provided by the Romance Writers of Australia (2018) and the Romance Writers of America (2018), romance fiction is defined as a narrative which has two elements: the romance relationship is the central narrative, and there is an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending; it is *'a central love story and optimistic, satisfying ending'*. Romance fiction produces considerable economic capital.

Fletcher et al. (2018), in their research into Australian publishing in the 21st century, note that *'the number of romance titles published per year has increased from less than two hundred titles per year in 2000–01 to just under nine hundred in 2015–16'* (p. 1001).

Kristin Ramsdell, librarian author of the *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, reports that the romance genre is an over $1 billion industry, accounting for 29% of all fiction sold across the world in 2015 according to Nielsen Bookscan (2018, p. xix). However, its acceptance as part of literary cultural capital continues to remain low, *'the least visible in public literary culture'* (Fletcher et al., 2018, p. 218), because it is not selected to appear in sources that help to create cultural capital, such as library collections and book reviews. To the extent that romance fiction books *are* found in public libraries, they are very likely to have been donated by members of the community (Adkins et al., 2008, p. 60; Flesch 2004, p. 59; Ramsdell 2012, p. 37), a practice that may result in cost-savings, but which does not lead to a sound strategy for collection development. Further to this, romance fiction collections in public libraries are often not catalogued correctly or given any meaningful metadata resulting in the titles not being visible on library catalogues, nor being added to Libraries Australia, the National Library of Australia's library holdings database (Veros, 2015). Despite its significant position in the publishing industry, romance fiction is not similarly reflected in the reporting of the highest borrowed fiction, a place held by crime fiction (Australian Library and Information Association & Civica, 2018), which is the smallest genre in terms of published output (Fletcher et al., 2018, p. 218).

This study explores the practices in public libraries in New South Wales which lead to the position of romance fiction as being the least visible in public literary culture. It uses Williams's (1965) notion of the selective tradition to frame the impact of the practices of selection, acquisition and cataloguing of romance fiction.

Selective tradition

Public libraries' systems for selecting material are systems that, in principle, should reflect their communities' reading interests; that is, the books they are reading are representations of everyday, popular culture. Everyday culture is the lived experience and engagement of people in their society. Raymond Williams (1965) positions everyday culture as the practices of the majority of people in a community rather than culture as reflected by museums, galleries and literary institutions. The practices of these communities engaging with popular products are a reflection of their everyday values and interests, and of their full participation in the lived culture of a particular time and place (Williams, 1965, p. 66). Williams argues that the tradition of selection is

a *'continual selection and re-selection of ancestors'* (p. 69) and describes culture as consisting of three levels. The first is the aforementioned *lived culture* of a community; second, the *recorded culture, of every kind, from art to the most everyday facts*; and third, the *culture of the selective tradition*. The culture of the selective tradition connects the culture of everyday to the culture from the repository of recorded documents (texts), and identifies those aspects of the lived tradition which are deemed significant to merit inclusion in the reflection of the culture of that time. He indicates there will be criticism that some of what is selected is of little or no value, but that institutions involved in the selective tradition must resist this criticism, because otherwise they will misrepresent everyday culture, although he does acknowledge that these assessments of value are difficult to make.

This notion of selection is fundamental to the everyday practices of librarians in public libraries. In developing collections, they engage with the products of publishing, with their own data on borrowing, and with the characteristics of the community. They also make choices about how to create a record of the resources they have selected for the collection through cataloguing practices. These practices reflect Williams' *culture of the selective tradition*. He acknowledges that there may be significant aspects of *living culture* that are not included in the selections made in creating the record of a community.

Collection development and its societal context

Collection development policies are tools that guide libraries in the acquisition of materials and resources to meet the needs of their community. Collection development policies have served differing purposes over the past centuries, from short statements of selection philosophies (Gardner, 1981) to 'blueprints for the operations of a library as a whole' (Johnson, 2018, p. 29). In the Australian context, documented collection development policies constitute 'good collection management' (Kennedy, 2006, p. 11), although they tend to be material-centred rather than user-centred (Kelly, 2014, p. 59). Through the process of articulating collection development policies, public libraries validate particular books and their authors, and in the process, reflect everyday culture and *the culture of the selective tradition* (Williams, 1965, pp. 66–67).

Collection development policies also reflect the ideologies and core values of professional bodies and international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), as well as international conventions, and national and state

legislation. Bourdieu and Nice (1977, p. 53) refer to these as *'structuring structures'*: the organisations, the legislature and policy and governance that shapes and forms the way an institution functions. Higher level organisations, in their role as *structuring structures*, inform and provide the guiding principles for local level libraries to reinterpret and to build into their own organisational goals, which in turn provide the framework of guiding principles for the community-facing local public library. This research project focuses on the state of New South Wales whose public libraries provisions are bound to the Library Act of NSW 1939. The Library Council of New South Wales is one of these organisations as it is the governing body of the State Library of New South Wales with *'specific responsibilities to monitor the operation of public libraries'* in New South Wales. *Living Learning Libraries* are the standards and guidelines formulated by the Library Council to assist councils in their delivery of services to their communities (2019, p. 3). The Library Council's framing of key practices influences public library policies and operations in New South Wales. Using Bourdieu and Nice's notion of *structuring structures* as a frame for analysing collection development policies can reveal how the principles of collection development are understood by librarians and how they may impact on the inclusion of romance fiction within the selective tradition implemented by public libraries.

Methods

Public libraries in this study are identified as the library services that are provided by local government areas of New South Wales and are recipients of funding both from their parent council area and state funding as outlined by the Library Act of New South Wales. The Websites of local government areas in New South Wales were used to identify publicly available collection development policies and statements. Of 112 local councils, an analysis was made of the documents that guide collection development for twenty-six public library services (that is, just over a quarter of the council areas in the state once adjustments are made for councils that have an agreement in place for the delivery of joint services). Specific collection development documents existed for twenty-one library services. Document names varied with the words plan, policy, strategy, statement and guidelines all used seemingly interchangeably. A further five library services had a collection development section within their broader library strategy plan documents. These documents range in form and style from procedural and specific operational documents to brief, generalised policy statements. Several services make philosophical, aspirational and inspirational (see Gardner, 1981) claims for their service delivery expectations as well as presenting goals and objectives for their member communities.

Libraries are not identified in the paper. To maintain the de-identification of each library and their local government organisations, documents are referred to generally as collection development policies from here on. Further to this, grammatical and representational changes have also been made, such as the removal of dot points and numerical ordering systems, so as to further de-identify the information that is presented. The text of each document has not been altered.

The collection development policies were analysed using *a priori* coding developed from the documents identified as being part of the structuring structures. This approach provided a way of elucidating the practices of public librarians, their relationship to the creation of cultural capital from popular culture and the place of romance fiction in the collections of public libraries.

Eleven librarians from seven library systems across New South Wales were interviewed. The librarians represented metropolitan coastal, regional and rural libraries as well as joint library services networks and single council library services and the librarians' identities have been made anonymous by representing them as a number and not referring to their specific staff position. The purposive sample identified libraries all of which had donated romance fiction collections that were identified through their catalogue records. All the interviewees were female librarians, whose roles involved collection development as well as programmes and readers' advisory. They were chosen to participate in the study by the management of their library. The number of interviewees was a reflection of each library's organisational structure as well as their size, with smaller library systems having only one person in a collection development role and larger systems having several staff members working in a collections section of their library. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the library with each interview lasting an hour. The transcripts of the interviews were analysed using the same *a priori* coding frame as the collection development policies. Thematic analysis was also used on the interview transcripts.

Results

Introduction to results

The practices of collection development in relation to the selective tradition are reported here, firstly within the context of general public library practices, and then with a particular focus upon the practices that relate to the collection of romance fiction. The twenty-six public library collection development policies analysed in this study reflect the ideologies of professional bodies and international organisations and these were named in many of the collection development policies, as was expected. The statements that

are referred to include the ALIA Free Access to Information statement (65%), ALIA Core Values (19%), the ALIA Statement on public library services (38%) and the IFLA/UNESCO Library Manifesto (19%). The collection development policies refer to governing state library bodies (the State Library of New South Wales and the Library Council of New South Wales, 54%), as well as each library's local government body. The State Library of New South Wales's Living Learning Libraries guidelines was referred to by 23% of the policies. The naming of the national and international bodies in their collection development policies show that these organisations' values underpin at least some local libraries' practices.

Key principles that emerge through the analysis of the collection development policies include the right to information, the right to read, and the library as a place for the community to access information, literacy, education, culture, imagination and creativity (ALIA, 2018d; IFLA, 2018b; Niegaard, 1994) with various related documents including the libraries' responsibility towards authors and creators, especially in the context of copyright (ALIA, 2018a; IFLA, 2018a). These key principles also appear in ALIA's (2018c) statement on professional conduct such as their point on *'recognising and respecting the intellectual property of others'*. However, this responsibility is not mentioned in the State Library's *Living Learning Libraries* guidelines which acts as a model for the libraries investigated in this paper, with its content being paraphrased in all the public library collection policies despite not being mentioned by all the libraries.

Collection development policies also refer to, and are shaped by, the legislation which governs their organisation, including the Library Act of New South Wales (54%) and its associated Library Regulations (35%), and federal acts: the Copyright Act (23%), the Classification Act (35%), the Local Government Act (15%), the State Records Act 1998 (8%) and a variety of other Acts, each mentioned once. In this consideration of the structuring structures which shape the collection development policies, one piece of legislation is conspicuous by its absence and that is the Public Lending Right Act. This Act recognizes the rights of authors to be recompensed for potential loss of earnings from books held in library collections. IFLA (2016) has a clear position on the public lending right stating:

1. *PLR [public lending right] may be a copyright that grants to the owner of a protected work the right to authorise or prohibit its public lending, through licensing and the payment of royalties to authors through collecting societies; or*

2. *a "remuneration right," or right of the author to receive compensation for public lending of his or her work.*

However ALIA does not have a similar statement though they state in their History of the Association that they *'contributed to the Office for the Arts review of the Public Lending Right and the Educational Lending Right'* in 2012 (ALIA, 2019).

Collection development policies from the twenty-six libraries fall into two categories. Broad statements of principle were found:

> *This policy guides the development, management of and access to [Y] Libraries' collections ensuring that they meet the information, education, recreation and cultural needs of the community. (Library Y)*

as were detailed strategic and/or operational guidelines:

> *The Collection Development [plan] … will be used as a tool for responding to client needs and demands, a public document which indicates to the community the nature and depth of the Library's holdings, a guide for library staff in the selection of materials. (Library B)*

Collection development policies set the framework for the types of resources that a public library may select for its collection. This framework acts as the guiding principle within which the selective tradition needs to manifest. The practices of selection and acquisition are the mechanisms through which titles are added to the library collection, with selection being the practice of choosing resources for the collection, and acquisition being the practice of gathering these resources. These practices may overlap, as in the case of the 35% of collection development policies which explicitly state the use of library vendors, and 54% indicating the use of standing orders. In these cases, the supplier is responsible for making the selection and for providing the books. Finally, twenty-three of the collection development policies (88% of the sample) indicated that their library service accepted donations. The following sections present findings on the practices of selection and then on the practices of acquisition.

Practices for selecting fiction

Collection development policies from 92% of the library services described using a variety of selection tools that come from the aligned field of literature and reviews. Policies from 81% of services indicated they take purchase requests for resources for the collection from their community.

> *I take requests from customers into consideration … generally I aim for something that will have more than that one person interested in it.(Librarian 6)*

Other selection criteria included popularity (69%), bestsellers (65%), award winners (54%), classics (46%), and the publisher's reputation (35%). Genre fiction was specifically mentioned in nine (35%) of the collection development policies where it was related to popular fiction and leisure reading. Genre fiction included *'westerns, romances, science-fiction, family sagas and fantasy, including emerging and high demand but short-lived sub genres'* (Library J). Genre fiction was also referred to as *'ephemeral fiction'* (Library G). Westerns was the only genre given its own subsection in a collection development policy (Library R). Two libraries indicated that books within specific genres will be identified with stickers (Library A and Q).

The influence of accepted but undocumented practices within a library were also apparent as criteria for selection:

> *A lot of library staff have been working in the library for a long time, we've developed informal ways of doing that [selection]. (Librarian 7.1)*

Literary reviews lend cultural legitimacy to books resulting in heightened engagement with the books by cultural and education institutions. Using different reviewing agencies to facilitate the selection of material is a way to filter the many publications that are available, contributing to the shaping of the libraries' selective tradition. The choice of review sources is made by both the professional staff from their familiarity with the literary field, and borrower requests for purchase. Of the review sources that the interviewees identified, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (a daily newspaper published in New South Wales) was mentioned by 23% of the interviewees and *Goodreading Magazine* by 19%. Other review sources mentioned by the interviewees included *The Australian, The Age, Bookseller and Publisher, Library Journal, Magpies, The Women's Weekly* and *The Australian Book Review*.

Vendors are commonly contracted by a library to select materials on their behalf based on a trust relationship established with the library and they often act as a conduit between the library and the publisher:

> *In fact, it's [selection of resources] done with our suppliers. They do our selecting for us based on the criteria we have given them. (Librarian 1.1)*

> *We deal with bookseller vendors rather than the publishers. (Librarian 7.1)*

However, two librarians noted that using a library supplier can also negatively affect the development of the collection since a vendor may overstep their role as an intermediary between library and publisher:

We haven't found that outsourced model works perfectly for us so we are going to claw back a little bit of the selection but leave the processing with the supplier. (Librarian 1.2)

Practices for acquiring fiction including romance fiction

A library's acquisitions are either budgeted and purchased materials or materials that have been donated. Budgeted fiction is acquired through vendors and library suppliers, individual purchase by librarians, and standing orders. Most often, library suppliers respond to the parent council's call for tenders and as such must adhere to government reporting and transparency requirements.

For the libraries that have their own selection process, the vendors and library suppliers often do the actual procuring, cataloguing and processing, delivering fiction as *shelf ready* (i.e., ready to be borrowed). The library staff verify that the resources match their orders and that the catalogue record is reliable, with Librarian 3.2 saying that her job requires *'checking for errors and enhancement of the catalogue.'*

Public libraries acknowledge that individual purchases need also to be made independent of their vendor agreements. These can be either through bookseller visits or visits to bookshops, through purchase suggestions from community members and staff, and as specific purchased from individuals whose work is of local interest such as in the case of local authors (Libraries H, L, M, O, R, and U).

Standing orders are a process whereby the library identifies authors whose creative outputs are automatically requested for purchase, bypassing the necessity for selection. A standing order is an acknowledgement of an author's cultural capital and literary legitimacy because their books will be selected regardless of literary merit. Predominantly, it is *'established authors'* (Library G) who are placed on standing order lists, which is an affirmation of the selective tradition. It is generally the vendor who provides the initial standing order options from which librarians choose:

That tends to be the one vendor and it's also they have their own suggested list and we'll cherry pick from that to create our own. (Librarian 7.1)

However, cultural capital is gained through economic capital and community engagement. Popularity of sales and loans is an indicator of the need to either add or delete an author from a standing order list:

We might go from getting two copies by that author to just one. So, it's just a matter of monitoring. (Librarian 3.3)

The interviewees indicated that romance fiction was available from their vendors and that they often select this genre due to its popularity. However, when asked if they also selected Mills & Boon (a well-known romance fiction publisher), a different picture emerged:

> *No, we never buy Mills & Boon. We do happily get quite a bit donated so we don't have to spend as much money on it if we didn't get those donations. (Librarian 3.3)*

> *In regards to that sort of series [Mills & Boon] we don't actively buy it but because we find we get lots of donations. (Librarian 5)*

Budget allocation towards romance fiction is not seen as necessary nor is it prioritised as the donations from the public seem to suffice as a point of entry into the library.

Donations as an acquisition practice

Donations are a significant source of materials for library collections. According to the Public Library Statistics for 2016-2017 (State Library of New South Wales, 2018), donations made up close to 15% of New South Wales public libraries' acquisitions. With 1,387,643 titles acquired in the 2016-2017 financial year, the reported 92,955 donated resources make up this substantial amount of 15% of materials acquired by public libraries. The analysis of the collection development policies showed that the inclusion of a donation statement was the most frequently occurring element and present in twenty-three of the twenty-six library policies, of which only one stipulated that it does not accept any donations. Library M's donation statement is representative of what is found in the policies:

> *The Library is pleased to accept gifts and donations, but reserves the right to decline or redistribute them as appropriate if they do not meet the selection criteria.*

Donated materials do not always become part of a library's collection:

> *We accept donations but use very few. They usually end up in our book sale. ... We have a policy for donations in terms of currency and physical condition. They have to fit in with our collection development policy. So, a lot of them don't get through the door. (Librarian 3.3)*

Donated materials that have been accepted for the library collection may still not be treated the same as purchased items, with practices related to cataloguing and shelving implying that donations have a lesser value:

If it doesn't fit our selection policy for a new resource then it won't get put on the system and then we shall have them shelved in a separate area and they are often just barcoded as an uncatalogued item. So, people could still borrow them but they are not part of our collection. (Librarian 1.2)

In at least one library, romance fiction donations are shelved below a sign and marked with a label that says

These books have been kindly donated. There is no need to scan. Please return next time you are in the library. (Library U).

Often, rather than providing a complete catalogue record for each resource donated, a single catalogue entry is applied to many donated books. These records are a sub-par catalogue record because key identifiers, such as author name, are absent. Of the twenty-six libraries whose policies were analysed, 65% used this type of sub-par catalogue record for their romance fiction collections with titles including *Adult Paperback Donation* (Library A), *Romance Pb [paperback]* (Library S), *Light Fiction Romance* (Library O), and *Donation Paperback* (Library P). This practice was in place for six of the seven libraries where the interviews with librarians took place. The seventh library had shifted to full catalogue records in the previous year with the librarian recalling the former practice of using sub-par catalogue records as one that she did not like. In one library, despite the romance fiction titles being part of the library's purchase plan, there were sub-par catalogue records for these items indicating that the library instructed the vendor to supply the books without a catalogue record.

One of the librarians explained how uncatalogued items are shelved within the library:

So those ones aren't actually catalogued … all we do is stamp them with an ownership stamp and do the sticker and they're just from people's donations and they just go on … that carousel, it's just a browsing collection. (Librarian 5)

Another intimated that key performance indicators such as circulation statistics were not captured as a consequence of this practice:

We have always circulated donations but they weren't barcoded so we actually have no idea how many were being circulated. (Librarian 1.2)

In at least one library, donated resources are separated according to their content. The popular, high turnover romance fiction collection is given a single catalogue record with the title Romance and this record has over 800 barcodes (i.e., 800 unique borrowable items) attached. Conversely, in the same library, popular fiction is given a complete and

unique catalogue record including a Libraries Australia holding record thus making the items searchable through the national database. The relevance here is that the donated high-turnover fiction is given linked data thus making the resources searchable from the National Database, yet the romance donations are not given any even searchable metadata let alone providing linked data:

> *We do have another donated collection that we call quick picks that we have been running for a few years. And that is basically high turnover fiction - not always fiction…they are primarily donated but they also have a Libraries Australia record that we bring in. (Librarian 7.1)*

Donations play a significant role in the collections of some libraries. However, most librarians in this study reinforce the view that donations are considered lesser items than those that are purchased.

> *It's donated material. They're not worth – which is a value judgement – they are not worth the effort to original type catalogue [entries]. (Librarian 7.1)*

Perceptions of donations

Librarians had insights into why they believe community members donate their books to libraries. Some members are seen as wanting to share their reading:

> *When they bring along a fiction book they have enjoyed you can see the sparkle in their eyes. You know, they want to share it with someone else. (Librarian 2)*

Others are perceived as wanting to contribute to the community:

> *I don't know if it is because they think the library is a better place for that book to have a future life as opposed to the op shop [charity shop]. (Librarian 6)*

Some librarians assumed that the books donated are not particularly important to the donor:

> *To me, I think that people donate books if they don't have a special place in their heart. You know they don't think they are going to read them again. (Librarian 5)*

Others thought donors considered them unwanted, rubbish to be disposed of:

> *I'd say three-quarters just want to get rid of them. They are cluttering up the place, they don't want them anymore. (Librarian 3.3)*

The treatment of donations demonstrates that even when romance fiction is accepted into a collection as a donation, it may not be fully integrated into the collection or treated as having the same value as the fiction acquired through the process of the selective tradition.

Discussion

Collection development policies and the selective tradition
Collection development policies form an ideological framework within which library professionals work. The ideology in the documents reflects a popular culture or everyday culture through the emphasis on meeting the needs of the community and becomes a lens through which librarians view popular culture which they then express through creation of the book collections. That is, conceptually, a collection development policy can be seen as guidelines for the building of the selective tradition.

The wider study confirms Flesch's (2004) assertion that romance fiction collections are built through donations, and extends Ramsdell's (2012, p. 37) discussion that relying primarily upon donations creates a second rate collection. This paper's analysis of the interviews and the collection development policies focused on the attitudes of librarians towards library donations thus building upon Adkins et al.'s (2008) survey results on the attitudes of librarians towards romance fiction.

Collection development policies can be considered to be statements of best practice, which is evident due to the mirroring of the Library Council of New South Wales (2019) *Living Learning Libraries* in the policies. The international (IFLA) and national (ALIA) library bodies' value statements, although recognised, do not always get carried down into the frameworks guiding libraries at the local level. An example of this, relevant to the consideration of the selective tradition, is the importance of respecting and recognising the intellectual rights of authors. Even though the values are recognised and believed to be implemented, it is only when the practices used for general fiction are compared to the practices used for romance fiction that inconsistencies emerge. It would even appear that in some instances, the librarians are unaware of the guiding principles that underpin the practices of selection, privileging instead their personal values and preferences.

The collection development policies, and the documents on which they are based, position the public library as an organisation upholding the selective tradition. The policies guide the practices of librarians who have the responsibility for the selection of books into the collection which can be seen as gatekeeping. The findings show that

these practices marginalise the selection of romance fiction. Reviews and awards in principle support the selective tradition but they are not evident in the selection of romance fiction. Library suppliers may be seen as facilitators of acquisitions to public libraries, with plans developed through community consultation.

Everyday culture and the role of donations

The public library has an important role to play in the cultural life of its community. Library collections are an expression of the everyday culture of their community, and the collection development policy therefore becomes a cultural symbol that frames, reflects and represents the community's everyday interests. Firstly, the policy demonstrates the reading culture that the library aims to build; secondly, it reflects the publications and products librarians anticipate and expect to meet the needs of their reading community. The library collection provides the community with a representation of everyday reading culture, and through the collection they make their judgements on what constitutes their reading culture.

All of the librarians interviewed in this study acknowledge that their libraries accept romance fiction donations to build their collections. However, these books are to some extent prevented from being fully included in the fiction collection from the differences in acquisitions processes and cataloguing records. As the findings have shown, donations of romance fiction books are not treated as having the same value in the collection as purchased fiction, and quite often are not treated the same as other types of donated books.

Note that an accepted donation has successfully met the selection criteria required for inclusion into the collection. However, meeting selection criteria does not necessarily mean that the item will then be considered to have the same merit as purchased and library-sourced materials, though this varies across the library systems studied. As the results show, a popular bestseller donation is given a full metadata as well as its National Libraries of Australia database link, while a popular romance title is not given any meaningful metadata. An unintended consequence of this practice is that the creative outputs of some authors are not valued in the way that the IFLA statement, which has guided the development of most collection development policies included in the study, would indicate.

In considering this approach to managing institutionalised popular or everyday culture of the kind that Williams refers to, it is important to reflect on how the donations come into a library collection. Unlike purchased materials, which may have been selected based on reviews or come from the plan drawn up by a bookseller or vendor as part of a

commercial transaction, these publications come from members of the community, the very people who create everyday culture. The reflections of librarians on why people donate books to the public library show the disconnect between the principles of a community-based approach to the selective tradition and the dismissiveness of a particular genre of popular culture. On the one hand, librarians acknowledge that people see the library's role in supporting popular culture and consider books more relevant to this role than to the aims of the charity shop; they recognise that people who are passionate about reading want to share their experience. On the other hand, librarians see most donations as being of no value to the collection, and clearly consider one romance title to be no different from any other, as evidenced through an institutionally endorsed, sub-par catalogue record for large numbers of unique titles. This practice shows that romance fiction may contribute to organisational key performance indicators such as meeting acquisition targets or raising the library's circulation statistics however through the lack of valuing these books, they are not afforded the cultural symbol of being held in a library collection. However, it fails to recognise the author, and the library's responsibilities under Public Lending Right, and it does not inform the selective tradition where popular authors and titles become evident through the trends observed in the loans statistics. Though not creating or purchasing a bibliographic record is stated as an economic decision based on limited funds, this is not evident with the treatment of other donations and other collections.

The library practices that marginalise
The statements of collection development policies (the *structuring structures*), which are in place to guide selection, often become diluted in the process of shifting from a statement of philosophy to becoming a working tool. For an author's work to become a part of the selective tradition, it needs to be included in the selection process and be valued at the point of acquisition. Collection development policies may be developed by libraries with staff members and the broader community library users in mind (Johnson, 2018, p. 29), however it is imperative that valuing the creative output of authors is integrated into the library's policies and processes as well. Otherwise, authors whose publications are treated differently to the other fiction in library collections do not become part of the selective tradition despite being part of everyday reading.

The collection development policy and the selective tradition that it frames for a local library should also be a reflection of the library's community identity. Through their provision of romance fiction donations, the community is shaping their collection expectations for selection and provision of everyday reading options. The general fiction collection is selected based on a range of writing and publishing criteria, but in contrast,

romance fiction is chosen according to its aesthetic appeal, anachronistic cover models and colour branding, reflecting a lack of understanding of the genre's position within the field of publishing and in the notion of popular culture accepted by a significant proportion of the local community.

Conclusion

Williams's notion of everyday culture and the selective tradition intimates that a public library acknowledges the value of everyday culture and the need to reflect their communities' reading interests through its collection development policies. The policies are statements of ideology, principles and values. However, through an interrogation of selection and acquisition practices, we see that in the case of romance fiction at least, the values expressed in the collection development policies are not implemented in a consistent manner. The evidence indicates that the practices for implementing collection development policies tend to present literary fiction as everyday reading whilst excluding romance fiction. This happens in spite of the fact that the collection development policies themselves do reflect the importance of building a collection relevant to popular culture or everyday culture, as is seen in the emphasis on meeting the needs of the library's community.

These processes of selection of materials into a library collection are, as Williams indicates, part of the process through which an understanding of popular culture is created. Libraries have an important role to play in normalising popular culture in a society. Community members who donate books seem to recognise this: they have an expectation that librarians will treat these books better than they can themselves, giving them a recognised place in a collection, which is also a record of what people in the community read.

This study concludes that, at least with respect to romance fiction, the collections of public libraries are not reflections of popular culture as presented by Williams's notions of the selective tradition. Romance fiction might not be incorporated into the practices of the selective tradition, but nonetheless it continues to find ways to be included at the margins, largely through the actions of its readers as contributors of donations to their public library. Implications of everyday practices of librarians and the role of donations in contributing to other aspects of library collections such as local studies, other genre fiction such as crime fiction collections, or non-fiction collections are topics for further study. Another important aspect for further study is librarians' understanding of the role of popular culture in their community.

Acknowledgements

About the author

Vassiliki Veros is currently a doctoral candidate in Information and Knowledge Management/Digital Information Management at the University of Technology Sydney. She can be contacted at vassiliki.h.veros@student.uts.edu.au

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Note: A link from the title is to an open access document. A link from the DOI is to the publisher's page for the document.

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Cataloguing, classification and metadata

Veros, V. 2015, 'A matter of meta: category romance fiction and the interplay of paratext and library metadata', *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1.

This article was written to reveal how the practices of cataloguing and classification through the analysis of metadata applied to romance fiction held in public libraries can reduce the visibility of these books, leading to a cultural devaluing as well as to a possible reduction in the earnings of authors. This article was a response to the starting point for the study, the comment from the author referred to in the Introduction chapter. Thus, the practice of not cataloguing books had already been identified from the perspective of an individual. This investigation of the practice of cataloguing and the significance of metadata focused on the extent of the practice. The lack of findability and discoverability by readers' advisory librarians as well as by borrowers has implications for the development of cultural capital as well as an impact on the economic capital of authors and publishers.

This article draws on the concepts of Bourdieu's cultural capital (1984) and the role of libraries as sites for the development of cultural capital. Gérard Genette's notion of transtextuality (1997a) sets the context for the exploration of metadata as metatext. In the context of popular culture, the relationships among and between a text, in this case a book, and other textual elements such as cataloguing records can be important in shaping the position of the text itself. The cataloguing process creates metadata as a way of conveying information about the book. Here, metadata is conceptualised as metatext in that the application of metadata becomes a commentary upon the text, which in turn enables an understanding of how the book is positioned culturally within the public library. A library's catalogue stands as a surrogate for the books in the collection, so that the absence of metadata results in a disappearing of the book (and its author). If inclusion in a library's catalogue can be seen as a "benchmark for gaining legitimacy from cultural institutions", then exclusion is evidence of lack of that legitimacy.

This part of the study assumes that the catalogue records which can be found in the websites of every public library in NSW are evidence of the practices of public librarians. Thus, the analysis of each of those catalogue records stands as a form of participant observation. This systematic analysis was supplemented by observations in the libraries where public librarians were interviewed. In searching through library websites for the practice of not adding representative metadata to romance fiction books, the saying, "an absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" was a useful reminder of the need to ensure that data collection was rigorous. Searching

for books that had been obscured from the catalogue was a challenge that in some of the libraries was only substantiated through a visit to the actual library premises.

Contextually, this part of the study positions the research across the fields of popular culture and librarianship, showing how perspectives from both fields can lead to a richer understanding of the impact of the practices of librarians. It also demonstrates how analytical tools such as Genette's transtextuality, which is traditionally used in literary scholarship, can bring insights to other fields of study, meaning that data that otherwise might be seen only as statements of values, is placed in its wider context of cultural relationships. As part of an ethnographic case study, this part of the study not only facilitates a deeper understanding of librarians' practices of cataloguing, but also shows how that practice is linked into a wider society.

Veros, V. 2015, 'A matter of meta: category romance fiction and the interplay of paratext and library metadata', *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1. is licensed by CC BY-NC 4.0)

A Matter of Meta: Category Romance Fiction and the Interplay of Paratext and Library Metadata

By Vassiliki Veros

Abstract: Authors of romance fiction create vast economic capital but this does not necessarily lead to cultural capital. Libraries are collectors and endorsers of cultural capital evident through the selection of materials for library collections and the creation of metadata and metatexts to connect the cultural product to a potential user. By using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Gerard Genette's notions of paratext, this article will explore romance fiction collections and the interplay between cultural institutions and the impacts to this interplay when there is an absence of metadata. Library practices such as acquisitions, cataloguing and readers' advisory are used so as to ultimately meet the needs of library users. However, if that information is kept to a minimal level, the library user is unaware that the materials they are seeking are available. In exploring basic catalogue records of paperback category romance fiction collections in Australian public libraries, this paper will illuminate the impacts that the lack of metadata has upon readers' advisory services, upon Public Lending Rights payments as well as marginalising romance novels and their creators thus rendering their cultural capital invisible.

About the Author: Vassiliki Veros is currently a doctoral candidate in Information and Knowledge Management at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has been a public library practitioner and educator since 1989 and a founding member of the NSW Readers' Advisory Committee since 2005. Her research interests are in marginalisation, library practices, reading practices, romance fiction, popular culture and paratexts.

Keywords:

- category romance fiction
- collection development
- metadata
- paratext
- public lending rights
- public library practices
- readers' advisory

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Authors of romance fiction create vast economic capital but this does not necessarily lead to cultural capital. Libraries are collectors and endorsers of cultural capital evident through the selection of materials for library collections and the creation of metadata and metatexts to connect the cultural product to their user. [**End Page 1**]

In this article, I will be focusing on print/physical book collections and I will discuss how the practice of applying a generic "Romance" or "Mills & Boon" as the catalogue title for books on paperback display stands in libraries creates an absence of metadata which in turn prevents the interplay between cultural capital and economic capital. I explore this interplay by examining Australian cultural institutions, the readers' advisory process and the way paratext and metadata are used as tools in cataloguing processes so as to facilitate the reader.

Matching a reader to a book is recognised as a core practice of public library work. In library practice this is referred to as readers' advisory. "Every book has its reader" (Ranganathan 75) is the idea at the heart of Readers' Advisory services which are user-centered. Joyce Saricks defines readers' advisory as "patron-oriented library service for adult fiction readers. A successful readers' advisory service is one in which knowledgeable, nonjudgmental staff help fiction readers with their reading needs" (Saricks and ebrary 2005, 1). Readers' advisory staff work directly with their readers in delivering reading suggestions but also in developing programs and marketing collateral such as booklist pamphlets, shelf recommendations, posters and displays as well as taking part in staff training in understanding current reading trends, genre studies and service delivery. Amongst the various tools that readers' advisory staff use to deliver services to readers, the library catalogue allows librarians to access the fiction that will

deliver a satisfying service to the reader requesting assistance with their seeking of reading material. The catalogue, more so than any other reading aggregation tool, connects the user with the loan item that is held within the collection. If a book does not have a record in the catalogue, it is placed outside the resources that readers' advisors can use. E-books remain outside of the scope of this paper as this is not a practice that extends to digital collections.

Conceptual Framework

Bourdieu explores the interrelationship between social, economic and cultural capital within fields and explores them in relation to the influence of power (Bourdieu 126). Cultural capital can be objectified, embodied and institutional. Objectified cultural capital is found in cultural objects and goods such as art, music and literature. Embodied cultural capital is knowledge, tastes and dispositions that are acquired through experiences in the context of home and family, work, community and society. Institutional capital is the capital that is recognised through official structures such as educational institutions. The bestowing of meaning on cultural objects is embodied through cultural capital—that is, the cultural capital that is created and promoted through educational and cultural institutions. Librarians engage in the creation of cultural capital through their practices of selection, cataloguing and promotion of texts deemed suitable for library collections. The authors of romance fiction create economic capital through the sales of their books. It is well documented that sales of romance fiction surpass all other fiction genres (Romance Writers of America; Ramsdell 2012, 15).

Bourdieu writes about the interdependency between the capitals: economic capital should lead to cultural capital and cultural capital to economic capital, but they are not fixed, rather they shift and are influenced by one another (Bourdieu 80). For example, "literary" fiction is bestowed cultural capital through institutions, such as the review **[End Page 2]** process and library collections, thus leading to economic capital. Romance fiction creates vast amounts of economic capital as it is commercially successful, yet it lacks cultural capital evidenced through the lack of literary reviews, social criticism and lack of collection (Curthoys and Docker 35; Flesch 12; Selinger 308; Ramsdell 1994, 64). Libraries are cultural intermediaries and library use "is accepted as a sign of cultural participation and an indicator of cultural capital, suggesting that libraries can be regarded as sites for the production, dissemination and appropriation of cultural capital" (Goulding 236). Libraries have various roles in society and are institutions of cultural capital. I will explore how cultural, social and economic capital co-exists and intersects in relation to libraries and romance fiction.

Romance fiction and libraries

Despite the significance of romance fiction in contemporary culture, as evidenced by sales figures that make it the most popular of all genres, writers and readers alike are routinely marginalized (Flesch 109; Brackett 347; Vivanco 114). This extends to public libraries, with incomplete catalogue records and unplanned acquisition practices.

In this paper, romance fiction refers specifically to category romance fiction defined as "works of the Mills & Boon type" (Vivanco 11). Juliet Flesch in *From Australia with Love* also limits her research to the books referred to as category fiction, that is, books published under a series imprint. In Australia, this has predominately been Mills & Boon. She states that "[a] problem with the study of Australian popular romance, even if one excludes from consideration – as I have done – historical romances and longer contemporary novels, is the sheer volume of material for study" (Flesch 43).

Romance novels have yet to receive critical acceptance, which perhaps will be the benchmark for gaining legitimacy from cultural institutions. There have been positive changes in the perception of the romance reader and the literary appeal of romance writing, as well as the emergence of dedicated librarians who develop romance readers' advisory tools and guides to reading, programs, selection guides and scholarship, through to the establishment of romance fiction review sections in library trade publications (Ramsdell 2012; Adkins et al.; Charles and Linz; Mosley, Charles, and Havir; Ramsdell 1994).

In libraries, as Kristin Ramsdell has noted,

> *Romances tend to be haphazardly acquired (often through gifts), minimally catalogued and processed (if at all), randomly tossed onto revolving paperback racks, and weeded without thought of replacement when they fall apart (2012, 34).*

This suggests that these books are not considered to possess cultural capital. Other examples of this bias abound. For example, in 2012 on the blog of Library Journal, a leading industry publication in the US, the blog's Annoyed Librarian commented about readers, stating, "it's also hard to feel sorry for customers who were duped into buying a 'bad' romance novel by a good review. After all, they're all bad books. It's not like people are reading romances for their literary quality" (Annoyed Librarian). To be clear, there was **[End Page 3]** substantial backlash from practitioners in the comments on this blog post, but the authority remains with the industry-endorsed blogger. The National Library of Australia's blog post regarding their Mills & Boon legal deposit collection is headed with "Who'd have thought: Mills & Boon at the National Library," carrying a tone of

incredulity rather than a tone of "here is an interesting collection" that other special collections are afforded in their description on the Behind the Scenes blog (Maguire). Richard Maker, in discussing the genrefication of library spaces and the reader-centred approach, states that,

> *Most readers who like literary fiction are not primarily concerned with genre. They tend to be more eclectic in their tastes, therefore, the first category, 'Literary Fiction', overrides the second [Science-Fiction]. (In terms of the selection of books by the reader the converse is also largely true. By definition the patron who prefers only Romance novels usually has a narrower reading range) (175).*

In libraries, cultural capital is recognized through practices such as cataloguing and collection development. Cataloguing involves the description of a book or other item by its author and title and can include the assigning of subject headings. In Bourdieu's terms (471) these practices have become "doxa". In other words, they are unquestioned and acceptable practices within the field of librarianship. Joyce Saricks identifies and discusses this library practice for paperbacks that are not catalogued other than with an accession date and barcode item. She states:

Why would you have a collection that you have no access to? The cost of adding them to the database must be far less than the staff time spent trying to find them, day after day, for patrons. Looking for uncatalogued material, which may or may not be on the shelf, is exceedingly frustrating for both staff and patrons and the collection becomes less useful. Unfortunately, many administrators fail to calculate this on-going staff time when they decide not to put items in the database (Saricks 422).

Paperback romance fiction in the past was commonly added to library collections only through donations (Flesch 59), not through a thoughtful, deliberated selection process. Though this is no longer the case for all libraries, it is a practice that is still in place. Romance fiction is not afforded full catalogue records through budgetary constraints at the detriment of the library service to the reader yet romance fiction should be afforded the same treatment as other genres (Ramsdell, 2012 37).

Cataloguing and the Interplay between Paratexts and Metadata

To understand the basis of library cataloguing practices and the creation of catalogue records conceptually, it is important to explore the levels of access to a cultural object, in particular, paratext and metadata. Gerard Genette in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* describes paratext as the material that is at the threshold of the text (2): that is, all the art, acknowledgements, prefaces, covers, advertising, distribution and

intertexts **[End Page 4]** and interviews with the design team (publisher, author, designer) of a text. Genette says that without the paratext the reader cannot access any of the text (Genette and Maclean 261). Paratext has two elements. Epitext are the items that are attached to the actual codex, such as the cover art, blurbs, title, author and publisher information, index and contents pages. Peritext are the collateral that promotes the text, that is, author interviews, marketing and publicity materials. Genette shows how liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader.

A text also has metatextualities: that is, the metatext, which is the data and information that is developed in relation to the text by users outside of the text's creative team. "All literary critics, for centuries, have been producing metatext without knowing" (Genette xix). Metatext is created by people such as literary critics, cataloguers and reader reviewers. Literary criticism, for example, is metatext; it cannot be controlled by the creators as it is published outside of the paratextual threshold. This is not to say that there is no communication between the paratextual team and the developers of metatext. Publishers send information to national libraries to consult on the Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) record and publishers send reviewers and critics copies of their books. CIP is a catalogue record that is created by national library cataloguers who receive title pages, author names, blurbs and a synopsis of the book sent by the publishing team (Intner and Weihs 5). Often, the metatext can be hard to disregard as it carries authority (Genette 339). Literary critics, reader reviews and fanfiction are all part of a novel's metatexts as is a library catalogue record which is a book's metadata (Van der Veer Martens 582). Metadata is structured data that supports the function of its object or text (Greenberg 1876).

Here, the concern is with the creation of a cataloguing record as metatext. Professionals in roles such as cataloguers and database administrators make high-level decisions on the information that is made available for both the end users (readers) and the intermediary (librarian), helping the reader access the text. Books have their subject headings decided upon by third parties (cataloguers), unlike metadata that is generated by the creator, for example, fanfiction whereby the creator tags their work with subject headings that are either preset or of their choice (Lawrence and schraefel 1746). Metadata is an instrumental part of a reader and a librarian accessing the items that are available in a library. This structured data acts as a resource description and discovery tool. Institutions use international standards, such as MARC/RDA records in catalogues, which subsequently are used in readers' advisory and reference searches. Paling, in *Thresholds of Access: Paratextuality and Classification*, describes the cataloguing

process as belonging to the paratext. Librarians, and more precisely, cataloguers, are not part of the creative process. Instead they are third parties in the selection of descriptors to be assigned to a book (Paling 134). In this process, they create access to the cultural object, thus enhancing its cultural capital.

Cataloguers are professional metadata creators because they make "sophisticated interpretative metadata-related decisions" so as to classify and give value laden attributions to content created by other individuals (Greenberg 1882). Raymond Williams in his discussion of culture notes that, "we need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it" (363). This is particularly true for cataloguers who are creating the attachments that bring the reader to the text. The guiding ideology for cataloguing since the **[End Page 5]** late nineteenth century has been based on Cutter's principle of user convenience in which "the convenience of the user must be put before the ease of the cataloguer" (Caplan and ebrary 54). Cataloguers are attributed with the ability to decide upon interests and values that need to be attached to a text they have received, whether through legal deposit requirements or through the CIP scheme available to authors and publishers pre-publication (Chapman 114). Third-party metadata is also created for items that have been selected for a library collection through outsourcing, for example, by library suppliers and not by the library staff themselves—though they would have been responsible for giving cataloguing instructions to the supplier (Edmonds 125). This metadata needs to be enriched so as to enable other library service provisions, particularly in reference and readers' advisory services. The cataloguing decisions of a public library, whether it is in a local council, district, county or shire, differ greatly from the role of a cataloguer in a national or state library, which may indeed have a more open line of communication with a book's creative team due to the CIP process (Genette 32; Paling 140). Using CIP data, cataloguers select suitable subject headings that are then sent back to the publisher for inclusion in the books' paratext, i.e. on the verso of the title page. Occasionally, a publisher may request for a change of subject headings but this depends on the awareness of the author and/or publishing team in how these subject headings are created (Intner and Weihs 6).

Catalogue records exist on national bibliographic databases for published books due to a number of accepted practices between publishers and national libraries including CIP, legal deposit requirements and International Standard Book Number requests which assign a unique number to books. This core level metadata is made available for public and local libraries to download through copy cataloguing practices and for readers to search, either through their own national libraries or through World Cat—a collaborative

database allowing a federated search of subscribing libraries and booksellers across the world through the one portal. Many libraries rely heavily on copy cataloguing and preexisting catalogue records can be obtained and local modifications can then be made to the record (Caplan and ebrary 57).

The catalogue record not only contributes to the creation of cultural capital: in Australia it contributes to the development of economic capital. The metadata entered into a local library management system is not only utilised for connecting a reader to a text and for staff to create resource lists, displays and programs using the materials that are held by the library, but, just as importantly, it is used as a system for administering and managing resources including copyright, digitisation schemes and payment schemes such as the public lending right. The Australian Ministry for the Arts describes Public Lending Rights (and Educational Lending Rights) as:

Cultural programs which make payments to eligible Australian creators and publishers in recognition that income is lost through the free multiple use of their books in public and educational lending libraries. PLR and ELR also support the enrichment of Australian culture by encouraging the growth and development of Australian writing (Public Lending Right Committee).

Public Lending Right is a program with which authors receive economic capital on the basis of having received endorsement by cultural institutions. That endorsement comes from the **[End Page 6]** cataloguing record and the record of borrowings of that item. Thus, it can be seen that it is not just the cultural object itself which is part of the interplay between cultural and economic capitals. As Pecoskie states, although the book itself is central to what she calls "the informational sphere", following Genette and Bourdieu, it is other elements including the cataloguing record that create the links between writers and "cultural agents (including libraries)" and consequently between the cultural and the economic (Pecoskie and Desrochers 232).

It is the metadata connected to books that is instrumental in connecting authors to cultural capital and, by extension, institutionalised economic capital. The catalogue record is the form of metadata that allows readers' advisors to promote and endorse the text that is waiting to be discovered. In the absence of any catalogue record, the text cannot be discovered. But that text cannot be discovered if the metadata does not exist. Paratextual conventions serve a functional and informational purpose as they are the access point for information (Pecoskie and Desrochers 232). Readers' advisory services are already making some use of other aspects of the paratext in order to bring together titles that have similar characteristics (Pecoskie and Desrochers 236). These are reader

appeal factors (Saricks and ebrary 2009, 40) that connect works across genres. Pecoskie writes, "Libraries can capitalize on the documented information regarding award nominations and prizes won […] in order to bring together titles that may have similar characteristics – or, to speak in cultural terms, have been deemed worthy by the application of similar criteria" (236). If there is no cataloguing record for romance fiction, there is no starting point for adding other elements of paratext, such as award status or best seller listings. If libraries do not produce metadata for romance fiction, books cannot be found as the result of a catalogue search, and they remain invisible to the readers' advisory team and to readers. Thus, they cannot be recommended to readers and within the cultural institution of the library, their cultural capital does not increase through borrowing. And even if the books are borrowed, the lack of cataloguing records means that the borrowing of the particular book is not recorded. The loan is recorded only as a generic item. This in turn, through Public Lending Right, affects the creation of economic capital, because there is no evidence on which to base payments to these authors whose works are held in the public library.

Evidence of practice

Cataloguing records are used as the basis for recording loans of books. As already noted, in some Australian public libraries, paperbacks are often not catalogued with a full author and title entry. Instead, a record is given a generic title such "General Paperbacks" and then an accession number is given for each item that is attached to this record. This practice, which is not found in every public library, has grown out of the resistance to paperbacks since their introduction to library collections (Mosher 3). Paperbacks were seen as quick reads, disposable and many libraries chose to keep them physically separated from their hardback fiction collections as well as giving them base level accessioning.

This practice, then, identifies each book only by a number. It is no longer seen as having been created by an author; the book becomes detached from its creator. It is also detached from its title. By removing not only the author but the title and all other paratextual and metatextual elements that connect the book with its potential readers, **[End Page 7]** both the author and the reader cease to exist (Barthes 55). Romance fiction is a genre where name recognition is very important (Proctor 16) as readers often read an author's oeuvre rather than a single title. In the library context, an author has to be acknowledged as it is often the most authoritative and effective way of accessing their body of work. In creative practice, Australian authors of romance fiction are aware that this practice is impacting their visibility (Veros 302).

Evidenced below are library catalogue records which show this practice. Each title has listed the number of copies attached:

Fig 1. 'Mills and Boon 2013': Catalogue record/retrieved 13 April, 2014

A detailed display of the items in this record shows only the collection, shelf number and availability status of the copies:

Fig 2. Detailed display: Catalogue record/retrieved 13 April, 2014

[End Page 8] This practice is not confined simply to romance fiction, but to other paperbacks such as thrillers, westerns and Science Fiction as well, as the following example shows:

11	XXGeneral XXFantasy XXPaperbacks			
	PBACKS	BROWSING PBKS	2010	Copies: 81 Available: 76 Reserves: 0

12	xxGeneral xxRomance xxPaperbacks			
	PBACKS	BROWSING PBKS	2010	Copies: 655 Available: 547 Reserves: 0

13	XXGeneral XXPaperbacks			
	PBACKS	BROWSING PBKS	2010	Copies: 125 Available: 113 Reserves: 0

14	XXGeneral XXFamily Saga XXPaperbacks			
	PBACKS	BROWSING PBKS	2010	Copies: 61 Available: 54 Reserves: 0

Fig 3. Catalogue record/retrieved 13 April, 2014

These collections are rendered even more unsearchable through the use of unnatural language for their titles. xxGeneral, xxRomance, xxPaperbacks are terms that readers will not search for when they are accessing the library catalogue.

This practice, however, sometimes leads to unexpected consequences. Public library collection management systems are being updated to include features which promote the most popular items in the library catalogue. A letter received recently shows how the practices which were intended to show that an item was not deemed an integral part of a library collection actually led unintentionally to the creation of cultural capital in a different way.

When we installed a new LMS in 2010 it had a few new features that we didn't have in our old system. Most obvious was the box on the main catalogue search screen called 'What are others are reading' this box displayed the Hottest Title, Hottest Author and Hottest Subject as a teaser for readers. It wasn't long before our library's hottest title was established – Mills & Boon. It made the list and stayed there for months. This upset certain staff, including our manager, as they would have preferred to see 'real' books listed (personal communication).

The letter went on to explain that the IT team discovered that the one title kept showing up as there were large numbers of items attached to the one record.

Since they weren't 'real' books that also meant they didn't need a title, author or ISBN – just a barcode. Every single Mills & Boon we received was added to that single record – for decades. You could borrow them but you certainly couldn't search for them as we had no idea what titles we actually had. And **[End Page 9]** borrow them people did –

Mills & Boon books are one of our highest turnover items and as they all linked to the same record it was a clear winner in terms of loans (personal communication).

The concern of the manager and other staff was that they didn't want their library web page to show that "Mills & Boon" was their highest loaned item as they wanted a variety of titles showing up on the "Hottest Title" lists.

The issue was finally resolved by 'blocking' that record from the display list so 'real' book titles could be displayed. There was (and still is) great resistance to actually cataloguing individual Mills & Boon titles (personal communication).

This example shows clearly that library practices are intended to minimise opportunities for the creation of cultural capital from category romance fiction. The consequent impact on economic capital for the authors does not seem to have been considered.

Conclusion and implications

This paper has shown that the cataloguing practices in some Australian public libraries do hinder the interplay between cultural capital and economic capital. The impacts of cataloguing practices, which may in the first instance appear to be a cost-saving measure within the library, can be costly in terms of lack of service provision to the reader. Further, the practices can diminish the case that public libraries can make for the use of the services they provide. Circulation figures are often used as a justification for funding from their parent organisations and similar to the retail success of romance fiction, collections of paperback category romance fiction are highly borrowed and highly used. Yet the books which do not merit even a partial author/title entry into a library catalogue remain invisible to anyone other than the physical user who accesses collections by being physically present in the library and discovering their reading choices through browsing. This may have been suitable in the twentieth century when the only access to collections was to physically visit the library but library catalogues have for many years been accessible through the internet. People make their reading choices from browsing the catalogue thus necessitating the Library of Congress to expand subject headings to allow for fiction titles (Saricks and ebrary 2005, 8).

As Intner and Weihs indicate, when a library makes a decision to diverge from standard practices, "no visit from the Catalog Police to the agency will ensue" (Intner and Weihs 11). However, changes to cataloguing practices are not impossible. These practices tend to be formulated through a mixture of "peer pressure, institutional culture and what is acceptable within that institutional culture" (Adkins et al. 65). While peer pressure is slowly bringing about change, it is still the case that the very common form of catalogue

entry, which is one record with many attached items, lacks meaningful metadata. Thus it is that category romance is rendered unsearchable through the library catalogue. Non-existent metadata leaves no cultural imprint in institutional collections for scholars and archivists and the public to reflect on the presence of romance fiction in Australian society. **[End Page 10]** Cataloguing of literary fiction, which sells less than a third of that of romance, is comprehensive, yet romance fiction is not catalogued to the same level (Veros 301). This has consequences for systems of institutional payments such as Public Lending Rights: books that remain uncatalogued results in libraries inadvertently withhold payment from eligible authors. In other words, these items do not generate the economic capital which is due to their authors. Aside from any economic impact, romance fiction authors whose books receive this treatment do not receive institutional recognition from libraries for their institutional role as publishers in creating this cultural capital.

"[A] group's presence or absence in the official classification depends on its capacity to get itself recognized, to get itself noticed and admitted, and so to win a place in the social order" (Bourdieu 483). To a large extent, the readers and writers of category romance fiction do not yet have a place in the social order mediated through the library. This finding has implications for practice and suggests the need for further research. From a practice perspective, the lack of recorded metadata for certain types of cultural objects in a public library borders on censorship. The lack of cataloguing record leads to those cultural objects becoming invisible within the constraints of the institution. This in turn can be seen as a form of censorship, because readers' advisors are unable to meet the reading needs of certain readers and the readers themselves use alternative places to find the reading they enjoy, for in their use of the catalogue, the books they would like to read are hidden from them. Further, the lack of metadata for paperbacks in general raises questions about the way that metadata may be assigned to the same cultural objects now available in electronic form as e-books.

This analysis of the role of cataloguing records in the interplay between cultural capital and economic capital has shown that there is a need for further research, at least in two areas. The first is the significance for metadata and paratext in the creation of cultural capital in other forms of popular fiction, including user-generated content such as fan fiction. The second is the importance in economic and cultural terms of the inadvertent withholding of Public Lending Right payments to authors of category romance and other categories of cultural objects which are not given full metadata records in public libraries. **[End Page 11]**

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Floor placement and shelving of library books

Veros, V. 2019 'Nobody puts romance fiction in the corner: public librarians and their dalliance with romance fiction' [Under Review at the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*].

The purpose of this article is to examine the practice of shelving of romance fiction in the library. This study is positioned at the intersection of librarianship and studies of romance fiction in the broader context of popular culture, with the audience being scholars of romance fiction. The approach and style of writing of this article are somewhat different from the other papers in that it deliberately uses C. Wright Mills's ontological concept of playfulness: the metaphor of the dalliance is used as a way to understand how the practices of librarians and their descriptions and justifications of these practices impact their relationship with romance fiction. The article's title is one which would resonate with an audience of romance fiction scholars, making playful reference to the famous closing line of actor Patrick Swayze to Jennifer Grey in the popular culture classic film *Dirty Dancing* (Tzioumakis, 2013). The metaphor of the dalliance is used to make sense of library floor placement along with Pamela Regis's influential framework of romance fiction used here as a "thinking tool" with which to understand librarians' commitment to collections.

This article explores the practices of romance fiction shelving in public library branches across New South Wales and its correspondence to the library catalogue. By linking back to the catalogue record, this uses the research findings from my journal article 'A Matter of Meta' with its understanding of the value of metadata (see above) and applies it to how the catalogue record translates to a floor location and type of shelving. This article is concerned with the development of cultural capital, using Bourdieu's concept in thinking about the broader questions of how the practices of public librarians are related to the recognition of popular culture. Catherine Sheldrick Ross's position on the importance of ordering all fiction using the serendipity of the alphabet as an equaliser gave a yardstick against which practices observed could be ranged.

This part of the study continues the ethnographic case study, using observation within public libraries in New South Wales documented through photographs, interviews with public librarians in seven public library services and analysis of the cataloguing records referred to in 'A Matter of Meta'. The analytical frame used here was drawn from Pamela Regis's *eight essential elements of a romance novel,* presented as the metaphor for understanding how librarians establish and maintain a serious relationship with the romance fiction books in the library collection. Data is represented not only in textual form, but through photographs taken to exemplify some of the stages of dalliance.

This article presents another key practice of public librarians, the shelving of romance fiction books. Like three of the articles presented here, it continues with consideration of the creation of cultural capital, the legitimisation of popular culture and the implementation of the selective tradition. It shows how decisions made about the placement of books in a library can create systems of devaluing and exclusion, removing the equality among fiction books that is perceived through the use of alphabetical ordering.

Nobody puts romance fiction in the corner: public librarians and their dalliance with romance fiction.

By Vassiliki Veros

Introduction

A challenge in exploring the relationships between librarians, library practices and romance fiction is that there is no strong conceptual frame on which to base it. This study finds the metaphor of the dalliance a useful one through which to explore these relationships. The work of Pamela Regis in identifying the "eight essential elements" in the building of the romance fiction narrative provides the structure for exploring such a metaphor(30). In this study, these elements flesh out the metaphor, providing what Bourdieu would refer to as a "thinking tool" (Wacquant 50); in other words, Regis's elements are used as a way to think about the relationship between librarians in public libraries and the romance fiction books in the collection. The metaphor permits an observation of how librarians, through their practices, enact a courtship with romance fiction books, but also how their relationship is seen to be a trifle, a frivolous, casual involvement that amounts to toying rather than one of commitment. The metaphor is played out through an exploration of the physical shelving placement of romance fiction in public libraries and its representation on the library catalogue, which will be supported by the perceptions of romance fiction expressed by a number of librarian interviews.

The Society Defined

In coming to a definition of romance fiction, Pamela Regis identifies the "eight essential elements" that are required for a narrative trajectory that takes the central protagonists "from encumbered to free"(30). She identifies them as: the society in which the encounters take place, the meeting, the barrier to love, the attraction, the declaration of their intentions, the point of ritual death – the low point in the relationship, the recognition in being able to move the relationship forward and finally, if at all possible, the betrothal and the essential inclusion of the happy ending, without which the genre of romance fiction is "rendered incomplete"(22). This paper will use these elements as the narrative trajectory for the report of this study. Regis draws upon the work of Northrop Frye to say

that "the essence of romance is the 'idealized world' it embodies in its texts" (Regis 20; Frye *Anatomy* 367). Librarians present their libraries as democratic places providing social capital (Goulding 3), in a sense they are positioned as informational utopias aiming to provide their communities equal access to resources, including fictional reading. Here, libraries too are "idealized worlds" that are embodied through the texts they make available to their community and the services provided.

A literary experience can be found in every work of literature even when it comes from a popular core(Frye, *Educated* 265). This reflects the argument of this paper that all romance fiction is a literary experience. It is from this position that the assumptions of librarians, as cultural custodians who work with the "world of words" (Frye, *Educated* 266), are examined by looking at their treatment of romance fiction. Fiction collections and provision of reading selections are core to public library services. There is significant evidence that romance fiction novels are included in library collections, however this study goes beyond looking at the holdings of the statewide library system of New South Wales and explores the shelf placement, the library catalogue records and their level of completeness, and the extent of staff engagement with romance fiction collections. For this to be achieved, interviews with librarians were conducted, and shelf classifications with their corresponding floor locations were examined through the enactment of physically entering libraries and examining the placement of romance fiction in relation to the rest of the fiction collections in the library.

Librarians meet Romance Fiction

Public librarians pursue a rhetoric of developing collections that meet the reading interests of the broader community. Public libraries include romance fiction in their collections in a variety of ways, through purchases and through donations. Discussions on the need for romance fiction to be included into public library collections led to the need for romance fiction reviews in the library trade journals (Chelton 44) to assist in its selection. Subsequently, Kristin Ramsdell in 1999 published a *Genreflecting* guide to the romance fiction genre, including definitions, library information issues and review materials to aid library selection and acquisition. A second edition was published in 2012. From the "professional tools" of the library information trade (Ross, *Reader* 634), emerged Denice Adkins, Linda Esser, and Diane Velasquez's scholarly research conducted into understanding public librarians' perceptions of romance readers in Missouri(*Perceptions*). That study, and its subsequent publications, provide insights into the motivations of librarians for including romance fiction in library collections. They note that that despite their professional training in non-judgemental approaches to reading,

librarians continue to regard romance fiction "as less worthy and low culture" (Adkins et al., *Relations* 61). Catherine Ross examines differing models of reading as they are understood by public librarians(*Reader* 635). She is critical of descriptions of the romance reader that depict her as a woman with little education and no prospects calling it a "fiction" and one where "the romance reader is the Other"(Ross, Reader 636). The potential conflict between the acknowledgement of romance fiction as being part of a library collection, but at the same time being disdained because of its readership is the meeting point in this relationship.

The Barrier

There is sparse discussion on the placement of romance fiction in public libraries. Catherine Ross, using the language of a romantic liaison, says of romance fiction that public librarians use the practice of shelving genre books together as a method for actively courting the pleasure reader (*Reader* 634). Adkins, Esser and Velasquez reiterate this sentiment saying that separate shelving for romance titles is a promotional strategy (*Promotions* 43) for librarians.

Shelving is used as a point of access into the collection. Author/title searches through a library catalogue is the most common way that readers access their selections, followed by browsing the shelves (Saarinen and Vakkari 738). The catalogue search requires, at the least, a basic record with author/title information for fiction to be findable, though often this basic level of metadata provision is often not afforded to romance fiction ([Author]) with incomplete catalogue records ranging from basic author-title entries to sub-par metadata rendering each book unsearchable. Catalogue records also contain corresponding shelf locations indicating the floor locations for collections. In selecting their fiction, romance readers search by author, blurbs, chapter samples, reviews and a combination of factors so they can make their purchases (Australian Romance Readers Association 30). These strategies are similar to those used by readers of other fiction and align with "author's name, text on the book's back cover, and scanning the novel" that Saarinen and Vakkari (748) identify as the elements that are used for finding reading selections.

Browsing for items begins at the returned books shelf, new books shelf, and specific displays as well as alphabetical browsing. Libraries vary in their ordering systems for fiction with some libraries separating their collections by genre and others maintaining a single alphabetised sequence ordered by author surnames. Catherine Ross says "As an ordering principle, the alphabetic arrangement offers the serendipity of arbitrariness" and that with it comes the possibility of "all-inclusiveness" (*Pleasures* 1). This all-

inclusiveness points to a situation whereby any fiction that is not included in the alphabetic arrangement can be considered as not fully part of the collection. This arbitrariness is further illustrated in Phyllis Rose's *The Shelf,* where she decides to read every book on a specific fiction shelf (LEQ-LES) in the New York Society Library allowing the library's arbitrary alphabetised ordering principle to dictate her choices. Forgoing the catalogue she seeks out a single shelf. She writes that she read

> *"Twenty-three books. Eleven authors. Short stories and novels. Realistic and mythic. Literary fiction and detective fiction. American and European. Old and contemporary. Highly wrought and flabby fiction. Inspired fiction and uninspired. My shelf covered a lot of ground". (235)*

But what Rose doesn't find is romance fiction.

In considering library shelf placement, it is important to take note of the medium of the shelf. Marshall McLuhan says that the "medium is the message"(19) and carries its own importance independently of its content. In the context of understanding shelving locations in public libraries, the shelves themselves are in essence, "the medium". As a medium, the shelves in a library are not neutral, but instead they impart cultural and societal cues about the items that they hold; the shelf conveys information through its patterns and placement, leading toward a perception upon the way that shelves reflect meaning in relation to the whole library space.

Lydia Pyne says that "bookshelves are dynamic, iterative objects that cue us to the social values we place on books and how we think books ought to be read"(1). Shelves communicate form and function, and sturdiness in their ability to hold a book. Also the shelf location of collections is in itself a system of applying cultural values to materials., often restricting and making collections inaccessible through the floor locations that they are given., McCabe and Kennedy identify "power spots" where books catch the eye, and transition zones which are places of movement between sections of the library where library users pass through "and don't look at products"(81).

Romance fiction is usually shelved on a paperback stand or in a separated shelving area. Wayne Wiegand noted that in 1998 a Chicago Tribune reporter wrote "Librarians have historically been a tough sell for romances, often relegating the well-worn 'silly' paperbacks, uncatalogued, to a free-standing rack or donation shelf,"(Wiegand, 229).

Initial Attraction

Librarian Annie Spence in her book *Dear Fahrenheit 451*, writes love letters to books that are being considered for deselection at her library. This is the letter that she writes to Harlequin romances:

> *"Dear Harlequin Romance Spinner Rack,*
>
> *I never feel as susceptible to warts as I do when I'm weeding you guys. That's not meant as an insult, but you do get around. I mean, you're popular."*(106)

This statement implicitly recognises the high circulation rates of romance fiction. Her letter, with its tongue-in-cheek tone mentions "romantic possibilities", "a full rack of full racks", "an orgy of *Rebel Ranchers, City Surgeons, Billionaire Daddys, and Gentle Tyrants", "*safe words", "get your smut" and "folks who can remember each of the eight hundred Harlequin titles they've read"(107). There is an underlying recognition that borrowers of romance novels read extensively and engage deeply with the fiction. However, in this Harlequin letter, she is not engaged with any of the narratives, instead keeping her distance, judging them by their aesthetics, their titles and the rotating shelf that constrains them.

Spence's letter can bring to mind the idea of a dalliance. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a dalliance as "Sport, play (with a companion or companions); esp. amorous toying or caressing, flirtation; often, in bad sense, wanton toying." and the New Oxford American Dictionary defines dalliance as "a casual romantic or sexual relationship; brief or casual involvement with something". The dalliance in the title of this paper, serves as a metaphor and refers to the sense of knowing that there is value in romance fiction but only in a playful sense, one for leisure with a touch of wantoness and not as a committed part of library service delivery of literature worthy of critical analysis or as a literary experience(Frye, *Educated 265*).

There is an inherent attraction between public libraries and romance fiction. For romance fiction, public libraries are a place to gain readers and cultural capital. The attraction for including romance fiction in a collection is that its readership is broad, allowing for libraries to engage with a wide cross-section of their communities along with reflecting everyday society's reading practices and their popular culture engagements.

The Declaration of Intentions

The methodology visiting 19 public libraries in New South Wales, to examine the shelving practices for romance fiction in the broader context of their relationship to the rest of the fiction collections. Photographs were taken and field notes were made at the time of the visits. Interviews were conducted with eleven librarians from seven of these

public libraries. All of the interviewees were female librarians. The libraries represent metropolitan, rural, coastal and outback communities.

Each library visited in this study had large romance fiction collections. Evidence of romance fiction in the library collections were a number of markers such as floor locations, subject headings as indicated in the library catalogue, a variety of stickers on books such as the heart symbol, the word "romance" and coded dots, such as those that Adkins, Esser and Velasquez's interviewees refer to as "the red dot district" (*Relations* 61) though one librarian interviewee pointed out that the service she worked in deliberately chose to code their romances with a blue sticker as they didn't want to play into the stereotype of red or pink stickers. Other sticker symbols include a high heel, and the hetero-normative male-female couple holding hands. The heart sticker, of all the symbols and alongside the word "romance" is the most inclusive of all these markers. Other markers included collection signs over library shelves and at the end of their bays.

Point of Ritual Death

The observations in the libraries indicate that romance novels are placed at the margins of fiction collections. The shelf placement may reveal practices that do not treat romance fiction like most other fiction, but it is in the interviews with the that the idealized intent of librarian engagement with romance fiction becomes clear and the genuine and committed interest in the genre or passing dalliance emerges.

The Dalliance

Romance fiction on the shelves; they get around:
Of the 19 libraries that were visited, six were libraries that ordered their fiction by genre through separate shelving, often in paperback stands or spinners, or with stickers, with the remaining twelve ordering their fiction in an alphabetical sequence, with one library having a combination of both alphabetized and genre ordered fiction sections. None of the 19 libraries had all their fiction interfiled as they all treated their romance fiction differently to varying degrees. Of the 19 libraries, seven libraries had at least a basic searchable author-title record accessible via the library catalogue, one library had part of its collection catalogued and some uncatalogued collections which varied by individual branch and of these seven libraries, only two added some of their romance holdings on the Australian national database TROVE. Ten libraries did not catalogue their romance collections beyond a generic "Romance Fiction" record with hundreds of books given an accession/inventory number for the purposes of facilitating a loan, with 4 of those libraries omitting this basic record from being searchable on the library catalogue's user

interface. One library had an honour based book swap collection, exclusively romance fiction, that was not included in the catalogue.

Allocated space does not necessarily mean that an item is given equitable treatment in the library. This space allocation points towards a treatment that is different, not on par with the rest of fiction. Across the 19 libraries, there were two different types of library shelves being used with their placement being varying from high to medium to low transition zones:

	High Transition Zone	Medium to low Transition Zone
Shelves - spinners	7	2
Shelves – Fixed	6	4
*Other	1	

One library appears in both lists as it had the romance collection stored in both fixed shelving and a movable shelf. Thirteen libraries housed their collections in high transition zones of the library, with six housing their collections in difficult to access corners and nooks. Three of the libraries placed their romance fiction collection in "power" placements, that is within 12 feet of the entrance and/or the information service desk. Librarian 3.3 says "*But we certainly don't hide it away or anything. It has its very own stand, so it's there.*"

These "power" placements however could also constitute transition zones as they are not destination shelves. Transition zones though constitute spaces of movement, where users "don't look at products"(McCabe ad Kennedy 81). The items that are recommended for these zones are displays rather than whole collections.

The photos that follow show how romance fiction is place in library shelving. Figure 1 shows that placement may be in a high profile location at the entry of the library but the romance fiction spinner sits alongside community information flyers and is in a different zone from the rest of the fiction. In this particular library, though the books were current and well ordered, there was no corresponding metadata visible on the catalogue's user interface despite loans being facilitated through a barcode on each book.

Figure 1.

Ten of the libraries only separated their category romance fiction collection - category romance novels such as those published by Mills and Boon. Of these libraries, five of them shelved this collection at the end of the fiction span, with Mills & Boon transcending the alphabet and being positioned as a 27th letter. Five of the six libraries shelving by genre separated the category romance fiction from the rest of the romance fiction collection, not alphabetically interfiling the thinner publication but instead placing the collection separately from the rest of both fiction and romance fiction. The sixth library using shelving by genre did not collect any category romance fiction.

Figure 2 shows how access to the category romance novels may be in a continuation of the fiction sequence on the same fixed shelving, but by being located on the bottom shelf, the collection is in an awkward and hard to access place. This library too, did not provide any meaningful metadata for each novel instead using a generic "Mills & Boon: [series name]" record and a corresponding floor location for romance paperbacks which is visible on the catalogue's user interface.

Figure 2

Eleven of the nineteen libraries had a physical separation of several paces to create a separate zone for their romance fiction collection. Distancing the romance fiction not only from the fixed shelves of the library but also from the surety of the fixed medium, onto shelves that are moveable, spinnable, and less searchable.

> Librarian 1.1: *"Well, that's where, those that are shelved separately, they are just romance. They are your light romance novels. So we are figuring that people aren't, or people will know to go there because that is what they read or they don't want that style but they might go with the one that is a longer story with a romance thrown in."*

> Librarian 1.2: *"Well, some romance fiction is interfiled and has a heart on it. The special sticker. And the Mills & Boon type smaller publications – they are shelved separately. Maybe because they are…some people who borrow a basket full of them and just pick a foot of romance off the shelf and just take them home.."*

> Librarian 3.2: *"Yep. Only the Mills & Boons are shelved in the revolving stand."*

In Figure 3, the fixed shelves are separated from the romance shelves with a wide corridor. In this particular library, each book has its own, unique catalogue record which

is searchable by the author/title. However, there is no corresponding record held on the national database.

Figure 3

These romance fiction collections are highly read, with one interviewee stating that at the time of the interview, 21% of the fiction collection was out on loan (a seasonal low) however 30% of the romance fiction was out on loan – a higher figure than any of the other fiction genres. She says:

> Librarian 2: [on whether romance fiction is in high rotation collections] *"Never touch. Never touch [gesticulations showed that she meant they never touched the shelves]. And in fact, we have a branch where they are commonly stolen."*

Objectifying the form:
The materiality of the book is an important consideration. There is a focus placed on the format, the size and weight of romance fiction.

> Librarian 6 *"…like Barbara Cartland, or bush romance, or supernatural romance. An actual book - like that [motions] you know it has a bit more weight to it. It will sit on the shelf and you can actually see what it is called without too much difficulty. They get put in the general collection, the normal adult fiction collection. They don't get a heart sticker.*

The term "normal" positions other romance novels outside of the fiction collection.

Librarian 5 *"I suppose that type of format doesn't last well on the shelves so there is quite a high turnover."*

Librarian 1.1: *"In amongst that, we do have the thicker ones. They are still the small ones, thicker ones which are still primarily romance based so we have got a lot of those in there as well. But then you have got the ones that are a story that happen to have a romance bend to it but it is not really the primary focus of the book – they will be filed in the general fiction section but they will have a romance sticker on them. So we will have a little heart sticker on the romance…"*

Where the materiality of the book is considered important, the content is often not considered as an important factor. The library in which this interview took place, had titles from Julia Quinn's *Bridgerton* series in two different floor locations/shelf placements. The Trade Paperback B sized *Bridgertons* were shelved in General Fiction, and the mass-market sized *Bridgertons* were shelved in the Romance Fiction section of the library. In other libraries that were visited, *The Bachelorette* branded editions of category romance titles by Michelle Douglas, Marion Lennox, Emma Darcy and Barbara Hannay were interfiled in the alphabetised general fiction collections, however the same titles and/or authors' Mills & Boon titles were shelved amongst the romance fiction shelves separate from the rest of the fiction collection.

Librarian 5*: "they are quite little books both in the width and the size and if they were integrated into the normal collection they would probably get pushed further to the back of the collection so that's probably a reason as well."*

Figure 4: James Patterson's *One Shots* do not pose a shelving problem at this library.

Book browsing is a casual relationship

Browsing bookshelves is a known search strategy for library users. Making sense of how librarians consider this practice and the way they consider browsing collections emerged through each of the interviews that were conducted. Some browsing collections are also catalogued.

Librarian 5 indicated that the picture books, CDs and DVDs were all browsing collections, along with the romance fiction collection, but that only the romance fiction browsing collection was not catalogued, in a sense, being ghosted. Librarians justified the emphasis on making romance fiction collections browsing collections:

> Librarian 1.1: *"I guess it allows for more serendipitous browsing. You are not locking people into, you know "if you are a mystery [reader] you must go to the mystery section, or you might go "well, I'm not going to go to the romance section because I don't read romance" but if they were searching along, they might actually see and think "well actually that doesn't look too bad", you know.*

> Librarian 1.2: *"We like to cater for the browser as much as the person who is going to look things up on the catalogue."*

> Librarian 4: *"I think partially because the people who access Mills & Boon just shelf browse."*

But the uncatalogued browsing collection practice caters to only the physical browser. It does not offer access to the catalogue searcher who goes across several book discovery tools to locate their fiction before considering travelling to their library. Romance readers use the same search strategies as other fiction readers (Australian Romance Readers Association 30; Saarinen and Vakkari 748). In their responses librarians seem to think that romance readers are undiscerning in their selections thus the librarians' attention to the collection is guided by their mistaken perception of reader behaviours.

Physical appearance is important in a dalliance and in the library setting, it is clear that size and appearance do matter to the librarian,

> Librarian 1.3: *"I think things were easily identifiable like those pink Mills & Boon, you think that is the sort of fiction that you like, people would just walk along and pluck them off the shelves."*

Continuing with the metaphor of dalliance, the reader "plucking" books off to shelf without checking the blurb is judged as undiscerning.

> Librarian 5: *"…So those one's aren't actually catalogued so they all we do is stamp them with an ownership stamp and do the sticker and their just from people's donations and they just go on that shelf and it's on that carousel. It's just a browsing collection. So…."*

Dallying with a collection indicates a lack of care, and a lack of attention, especially when there is force, a "whack", applied to the novels:

> Librarian 6: *"If you are talking about Mills & Boon style paperbacks - no. We get given those by the box load. And we have a section where we put them. They are not catalogued as separate entities. There is just a generic "romance paperback" [catalogue record] and we just whack them on."*

You don't h/look up romance novels

In the dalliance, though the hook up is inevitable, there is no deliberate searching or seeking out. Librarian 1.2 makes the statement that the borrower doesn't *"actually want to go through that selection process"* implying an indiscriminate approach to reading choices, as do other librarians:

> Librarian 1.3: *"I don't think that when people come in to borrow those books, they take it off the shelf, read the back cover or whatever to see what it's about. I think they just take them."*

> Librarian 2: *"See...I guess the borrower [is not] borrowing for the author and title, they're borrowing more for that format. The format of the book. They know that that is what they will find in that book."*

There are instances in the interviews that the relationship between the catalogue record and the shelf placement is disregarded as the reader themselves is not viewed as someone who would consider searching for romance novels by their titles or by the author despite these being stated elements that the reader uses in their decision making (Australian Romance Readers Association).

This capability to search the library catalogue is intrinsic in service delivery for public libraries. However, it is not a practice that is consistently adhered to when considering romance fiction collections:

> Librarian 5: *"in the years I have worked in a public library, I haven't had someone come up and say "Can you look up this author and you know she's a Mills & Boon author". I've never had that one. So I suppose if we are getting asked that question it*

would make us re-evalutate that sort [creating searchable catalogue records] of decision."

Some librarians seem to suggest that readers' lack of requests for specific authors from the romance collection is the reason that the catalogue record is not added. One librarian noted that lack of catalogue records impacts their own ability to conduct professional searches:

> Librarian 3.1: *"I was also, you know, if they would say 'I want to read romance fiction' one of my tactics was – 'OK follow me to the fiction section and see that love heart on those books'…[laughs]…"*

Assumptions are being made as to how people select their romance novels, however the actions taken upon these assumptions leads to a less professional approach in meeting the needs of library users requesting romance fiction.

The Scarlett Sticker ♥

In the dalliance, there is a wink to the relationship, a way of publicly stating that dating is fine, however it is also a public marking of a relationship that is not worth moving forward and for others to take note.

> Librarian 7.1: *"I think [putting a sticker on the book] was just to assist people to know whether a blue dot was suspense and a pink dot was romance and just really to help the borrowers to select especially when there was very very limited catalogue records".*

The suggestion is that the legacy practice of stickers seem to come from a time that fiction catalogue records did not contain enriched metadata. The sticker system assisted library staff in finding fiction as well being a system that guided the library users. The implication in the interviews was that people wanting to have coded systems on the actual books so that they can find materials in a way that made sense to them. This notion of the legacy practices is confirmed by Librarian 7.1 who continues "*And now, because we primarily buy our records in through Libraries Australia, the records are much superior to anything we might have had twenty years ago".*

Librarian 6 who had noted that romance fiction in the normal adult fiction collection is not marked by a heart sticker also noted that she did not know why that was the case. This action of marking/or not marking a book is a system of applying cultural capital to fiction. And here, the mark of the heart is considered a scarlet marking, one were the indication may bring down the cultural value of the book.

> Librarian 2: *""Well, some romance fiction is interfiled and has a heart on it. The special sticker".*

The mark of the "special" sticker is a way of marking the interfiled book for the romance reader, but it also is a way of signaling to the romance disdainer that this book may not be for them.

> Librarian 3.2: *"So [redacted staff name] doesn't like that heart [sticker] for romance because it could be a sophisticated romance story, like with family, tension or something.*

Here, the marking of a novel with a heart sticker is considered a negative. One that detracts from a story that is considered sophisticated, thus anything that has a sticker applied to it, could be considered to not be sophisticated. Librarian 6 reaffirms this with her statement that "*an actual book*" is placed in the "*normal*" or "*general*" collection, as though a book not in the "general collection" is somehow not "normal".

Floor placement and genre identification marks can create quandaries. Heart stickers on books that are already shelved under a "Romance" banner are reductive, however the librarian here is clear that romance fiction, shelved in the romance collection written by Australian authors would not merit an Australian sticker, or even an Indigenous author sticker but would continue to have a heart sticker.

> Librarian 1.3: *"We have a genre for Australian titles but I think romance overrides the Australian … [and] I don't think we have an Indigenous sticker on all the Anita Heiss books".*

Wanton toying

Even with librarians describing romance fiction in what they perceive as a positive tone, there is an underlying sense that the fiction is only for play or toying and that this arises from a position where there is a hierarchy of fiction:

> Librarian 4: *"I think for a while romance was kind of a …librarians can be total snobs and you will find as an industry we can be very sort of highbrow about what we consider literature and stuff like that and I think we tend to forget that reading is meant to be entertainment. You know, and people should read widely and should read whatever they like."*

This toying, however can often cease being playful and becomes a tone of derision and disdain:

Librarian 6: *"I think I get a bit elitist when it comes to books and you know those ones…when I look at them I go "ughh" [a dismissive "ugh"]. They are just romance. They are not worth my time or my b[udget]…."*

When you give it away free

This question of financial resources seems to be the go-to answer for all the respondents in explaining their acquisition and treatment of romance fiction. The budget line is restricted so the easiest item not to give value to is the collection that has been built through community contributions.

Librarian 7.1 explains that romance fiction is not put on the display shelves *"because we are showcasing the other materials. Stuff we have paid for".*

Librarian 4: *"[The librarians in charge of selection] actively will not buy romances and what they will do with the Mills & Boons is they will put them away as "Take one. Just take it." And they will restock their shelves with [romance fiction] donations to be taken. And they don't encourage readers to borrow them or for it to be an active part of the collection."*

Librarian 5 uses the term 'disposable' to refer to romance fiction. She *"would recommend it to people who wanted something like that but I know some people think that it is probably not proper reading…and that it is not seen as you know proper literature or to have literary merit..."*

Caressing flirtation

Understanding the appeal factors of fiction is a standard practice in librarians' professional work. Here the librarians express the reasons that a reader may have for reading romance fiction.

Librarian 7.1: *"Primarily women, just about all of the borrowers of that collection are women, who just want something light to read to fit in with whatever else they do."*

Librarian 1.3: *"Because they are quick to read. I think. I think they enjoy a nice non-threatening story with a happy ending."*

Librarian 1.3: *"I think just as as …a feel good story. Yeah. And perhaps they [the reader] don't want to be challenged. I suppose that is what I mean."*

Librarian 6: *"Oh pure entertainment! Pure relaxation."*

These statements on the surface are positive however once they are interrogated through the use of the concept of "dalliance", they reveal that romance fiction is not

considered to be meaningful. These findings show how the perceived unsuitability of romance fiction leads to its shelving placement in transition zones, tight corners, beyond the alphabet and on spinning paperback carousels rather than on shelves of substance. Their haphazard shelving intersects with their inconsistent catalogue metadata. From this evidence, the dalliance is clear and the fractures in the relationship between public librarians and romance fiction become apparent.

Recognition

The recognition is the point at which a discussion needs to take place as to why the relationship between romance fiction and librarians is still developing, to come to an understanding of past problematic practices and that reparations still need to be made so as to move forward for a better future with each other. Phyllis Rose says *"Fluffy entertainments morph into weighty artifacts. If we've learned one thing, it's that cultural objects are malleable and change in time"(*20). Perceptions of romance fiction have shifted over time and romance fiction's cultural importance is being understood beyond its historically negative aesthetic. The interviews with the librarians reflect an acceptance of romance fiction as being escapist, ephemeral, light, for women, as non-threatening, positioned as encouraging literacy, but it is not considered to be literary or meaningful.

Romance fiction stories with their optimistic ending is an idealized world, as is the public library, where the illusion of meeting the reading needs of a broad community is a strong part of the professional field's rhetoric.

The data collected in this study do reflect that librarians, in their consideration of the role of the literature that is available, that the reading of romance fiction continues to be of a lesser value that the reading of "normal" fiction. This valuing can be seen through the application of the metaphor of dalliance and the examination of the medium that contains the fiction and the message that is conveyed through the varied treatments of the fiction on these shelves.

The interviews show that librarians may support collecting romance fiction in the abstract, but practices are driven by legacy decisions, a negative perception of the novels' content and substance, or their monetary value (often donated). Books bought using the library budget seem to be valued more highly than the library communities' contribution of donated materials that have been accepted into the public collection.

Serendipitous browsing is often presented as a way to give readers broad options. However, this study has shown that the practices of librarians can lead to two types of "locking outs". The reader of romance fiction can be locked out from other options,

because their own reading is not considered to be part of the alphabet, constraining them to the spinning shelves, the corner shelves, the transition zones and inaccessible shelves. The second 'locking out' occurs because the reader of general fiction is also not given the opportunity to discover and engage in a fiction that is recognised as being emotionally charged, that is nuanced literature focusing on intimacy, that follows the minutiae of main characters seeking romance to free them from their encumbered lives (Regis 30), leaving these readers confirmed in their belief that romance fiction is a lesser fiction.

An optimistic ending

> *"A romance novel is a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines. This definition focuses on the narrative essentials of the romance novel— those events, including the happy ending, without which there is an incomplete rendering of the genre."* Regis 22

Exploring the metaphor of "dalliance" through the use of Pamela Regis's eight essential elements of romance fiction as a "thinking tool" from the field, provides a framework for understanding the level of commitment made to specific collections within a library, the assumptions that are being made about the literature by librarians, and the value that is applied to the collection. Dalliance becomes the measure of the degree of engagement with the romance fiction – whether it is a fun fling, a pleasurable one-night read, or a meaningful literary commitment.

Northrup Frye writes that "the conventions of literature contain the experience; their formal laws hold everywhere; and from this point of view there is no difference between the scholarly and the popular in the world of words"(*Educated* 266). Through a dallianced examination of the shelf placement of romance fiction, the interaction between physical spaces and the catalogue records, and librarian interviews, the evidence shows that romance fiction is treated differently to the other fiction collections in the library "world of words". This treatment can be seen through data incompleteness, placement away from other fiction and personal feelings overriding professional practice showing that romance fiction continues to be considered as a lesser fiction, one that is not valued to the same degree as other fictions.

For now there is no betrothal scene between romance fiction and public libraries. Instead, there is a continued discussion of how libraries could move towards a more committed relationship. Until then, libraries cannot be the idealized society they present, as they are an incomplete rendering of the communities they are trying to reflect. This

new understanding could be seen as a Happy For Now keeping within its sights a Betrothal. A final conclusion with the library moving forward.

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Choices of books for Book groups

Veros, V. 2019, 'Metatextual conversations: the exclusion/inclusion of genre fiction in public libraries and social media book groups', *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, *68*(3), pp. 254–267.

This article explores the practice of public librarians linking readers with books and promoting reading, that of book club kit collections, and compares the collections with those found in Goodreads, a book group mediated through social media. Book club kits developed and lent by public librarians are intended to provide opportunities for discussion and critique of texts; online book groups such as Goodreads provide similar opportunities for comment on particular novels.

This element of the study considers how a particular practice, developing and lending book club kits, has an impact of the positioning of romance fiction in popular culture, as fiction that can be discussed, critiqued and publicly commented on. This piece is not solely focused on romance fiction, as it examines the various other genres of fiction present in these book club kits. To focus on a practice of librarians which links readers and books in contemporary times, this part of the study acknowledges that the readers may have a broader context for their reading than the public library, creating traces of popular culture outside of this institutional frame. Thus, it compares online and in person book groups.

Through the continued use of Bourdieu's cultural capital, this article shows librarians as gatekeepers who apply cultural legitimacy to the books they select for the community to discuss. In the context of popular culture, it draws on the concept of librarians as cultural evangelists (Griswold & Wohl 2015), supporting shared literacy and literature experiences. Two other conceptual frames of relevance here arise from the purpose of book groups, being to conduct structured discussions on the chosen book. Popper noted that a mark of knowledge in a society was that it was discussable and criticisable. Genette's transtextuality allows these conversations to be seen as metatextual, commentaries on the original text, the book being read and then discussed.

This part of the study also uses the websites of the public libraries as evidence of the practices of public librarians. The analysis of the titles contained in book club kits identified their main genres, which were overwhelmingly from the literary fiction genre. These were then compared against the genres of book groups hosted in Goodreads, revealing differences in the focus on popular genre fiction and its incorporation into developing popular culture.

The conceptualisation of this study considers the development of cultural capital, through the processes of reading, discussing and commenting on fiction, in a context where the opportunities for such reading and discussion is mediated by decisions made by librarians. Where the sub-studies on which all the other articles were based were concerned with the practices of librarians in dealing directly with issues centred on the treatment of the book, this study concerns itself with the potential informational and cultural exchange of the readers who use the book club kits. Through the publicity materials promoting book club kits, librarians indicate their intention for these books to generate community discussion. This creates Popper's "discussable, criticizable knowledge"; however, excluded from this process of community discussion is genre fiction, and especially romance fiction. This practice also helps to legitimate examples of popular culture, and to re-inforce aspects of Williams's selective tradition. So, in this article, the research shifts from librarian's practices guiding the development of cultural capital in an institutional sense to librarian's practices building the foundations for community members to engage in and create their own cultural exchanges, consolidating notions of the selective tradition.

Metatextual Conversations: The Exclusion/Inclusion of Genre Fiction in Public Libraries and Social Media Book Groups.

Abstract: Public libraries are institutions with a social inclusion mandate that promote reading and literacies through their collections and programs. Public libraries encourage social inclusion and literary engagement through the provision of book kits for book groups, and apportion cultural legitimacy upon the selections made for these groups of social readers. Using Gerard Genette's schema of transtextualities and through a thematic analysis of NSW public libraries book club kits, reading of literary and "literary lite" fiction is given a higher status than genre fiction which is predominately excluded from these collections created by librarians who act as gatekeepers and literary authorities. Conversely, book based social media sites such as Goodreads are inclusive of book groups of all genres, from literary to science fiction to romance and many more. The book club selections in these spaces are created by social readers whose engaged digitally captured discussion imparts literary capital through its metatextuality. As the main purpose of book groups is to make commentary upon a selected book, these discussions constitute metatextual conversations. Evidence from the research shows that the physical book group conversations are ephemeral and remain constrained to the physical group, in contrast to the online book group conversation which leaves a perpetual digital document.

Introduction

This paper sets out with the purpose of examining the cultural capital that is created for book groups facilitated by public libraries as well as online book groups. The focus will be upon examining the inclusion of genre fiction in each of these groups and the role of

metatextual conversations that take place in these book groups. Metatextual conversations refer to the knowledge exchanges and critiquing that occurs in both book groups that meet face to face in the physical world and those that meet in online spaces. This examination will be achieved by investigating data collected from library resources and the online social media book site Goodreads (https://www.goodreads.com/). These knowledge exchanges will be explored within the context of the selected fiction genres being used by these groups. An investigation of this kind must necessarily draw from a range of conceptual bases. These include Genette's notion of transtextualities (1997), Fisher & Naumer's Information Grounds (2005), Popper's Third World (1994), and Bourdieu's cultural capital (1984). Popper's (1994) notion of stores of the Third World, which concerns the development of the world of ideas and the value their discussion generates, is linked to Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital; each is concerned with the value that is placed on knowledge and understanding in a community. Fisher's Information Grounds is a convenient mechanism with which to explore the intent underpinning librarian driven practices and reader driven practices through the materials chosen for book groups. Genette's (1997) concept of metatext facilitates consideration of the differing values that remain after book group discussions.

Public libraries collect genre fiction for their large lending collections, but such genre collections are only viewed as pleasurable reading, and not reading that is discussable and criticizable (Popper, 1994, p. 34). This article evidences this through the collation of data on book-group title selections made in libraries, with a focus on (though not exclusively) the book club kit collections libraries make available for lending. These kits show overwhelmingly that literary and award-winning fiction and non-fiction books dominate title availability, and are not inclusive of popular genre fiction. This is contradicted in the online book groups on the social media site Goodreads (2017), whose inclusion of genre fiction is representative of an extensive range of reading interests. However, this online space comes with its own challenges, which are elaborated below.

A concept of metatextual conversations will be developed through the use of Genette's notions of transtextualities(1997). That is, the relationships from a central text (in the case of novels this would be the central narrative) to the informational attachments associated with the text such as paratext which includes peritext examples - author and title information, publisher details, acknowledgements, blurbs and author information; and epitext examples – publisher catalogues, author interviews and marketing collateral. Paratexts are informational attachments that are driven by the creators of the central text. Metatextualities are the place where commentaries are made upon a central text,

and these commentaries are positioned outside of the creators' product. In the context of book group discussions, these exchanges are considered to be "metatextual conversations" that create commentaries/discussions by readers on a text. As one of the purposes of book groups is to make commentary upon a selected book, these metatextual conversations can either be in the form of a spoken, ephemeral discussion, or in the form of a digitally captured exchange in an online space that potentially is perpetually available. The in-person book-group discussions are both temporal and ephemeral in their nature, but are also metatextual, even if they have not been recorded or documented. This paper will consider whether when book group discussions are documented they can be considered as Karl Popper's notions of exosomatic stores of knowledge, and whether the documented engagements in these online spaces resemble Karen Fisher's Information Grounds (2005).

Public Libraries and Capital

Public libraries are institutions with a social-inclusion mandate to promote reading and literacies through their collections and programs. Anne Goulding says that library use "is accepted as a sign of cultural participation and an indicator of cultural capital. Libraries can be regarded as sites for the production, dissemination and appropriation of cultural capital" (2008, p. 236). As cultural institutions, public libraries recognise, endorse and legitimise cultural capital through collecting, maintaining and making available the products of thoughts.

Public libraries also create social capital (Goulding, 2004, p.3). "Building social capital is a spin off effect of basic information services" so as to be "a truly universal institution"(Vårheim, 2009, p. 377-8). The social capital of public libraries is derived from libraries being positioned as a meeting place that members of the community can use for their recreational reading exchanges.

Librarians are referred to as "evangelists of culture" (Griswold & Wohl, 2015, p. 96), proselytising on the value of reading, the need to advance higher literacies and in the promotion of fiction as educative engagement. Librarians become intermediaries in legitimising and building cultural capital through the selection of materials for their collections. Librarians further assert their position in the literary cultural space through their selections such as the One Book programs (Griswold & Wohl, 2015), that is, programs where a whole community is encouraged to read and discuss the one book in a social setting. Nominating a specific title for a whole community to read is an act of attributing status and giving the title cultural nobility (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 15).

In writing about the interdependency of the economic, cultural and social capitals, Bourdieu explains that these capitals are all interconnected; they influence and impact each other (1984, p. 80). Steven Paling says libraries create "productive interconnections" drawing relationships between the cultural product, social capital and economic institutions (2002, p. 135). Books in targeted library collections such as book club kits, are more likely to be discussed in a social setting by members of the public due to their acceptance and presence in the library.

Book groups and reading selections

Over the past two centuries, book clubs and reading groups have occupied social spaces. Research into book clubs by Elizabeth Long and Frances Devlin-Glass provided evidence that these groups are predominantly female spaces where women readers meet socially to discuss books (1986; 2001). Devlin-Glass notes "Reading groups occur in living rooms and outside institutional frameworks; they are engaged in mainly by women." (2001, p. 571). Book groups became even more popular after Oprah Winfrey "democratized book clubs" in the late 1990s, using the popularity of her TV show to demonstrate that there were "largely untapped portions of the population who are willing and eager to interact with literary texts, and through them, with each other" (Rooney, 2008, p. xiii). The book group is a significant form of cultural critiquing. It is a social and everyday engagement with reading.

Public libraries encourage social inclusion and literary engagement through the provision of book club kits for book groups (Hermes, Hile & Frisbie, 2008, p. 30). Libraries confer cultural legitimacy upon the book selections made by librarians for social readers through their role in supporting the engagement of readers with texts. The provision of book club kits is for both library-led groups as well as groups that have formed in the community independently from the library, which may use the library kits as a source for their reading. Book club kits often contain numerous copies of the same book, as well as other supporting materials such as "author information, book reviews, discussion questions, and ancillary material" (Hermes et al, 2008, p. 30) that act as prompts and facilitate book club members' conversations. Some kits may also include audiobook and large-print copies, and sometimes a DVD if the book has been adapted to film or television. The existence of these kits, and the continued and growing demand for this library service, is evidence of the social capital developed through the community activity of group discussions about books. The book groups meet in places other than the library itself– the library predominately serves as the place from which the text for book club discussion is selected and accessed.

Catherine Sheldrick Ross discusses that readers – and this would include librarians and reviewers –choose a book through an elaborate system of meta-knowledge based on previous readings, knowledge of authors, conventions and recommendations of family and friends, and literary authorities bestowing reviews and awards (1999, p. 788). All this meta-knowledge comes into play when selections for social reading are made. Women readers may connect socially to discuss books but first comes the need for these groups to reach a consensus about the titles that they will read. Elizabeth Long explores the relationship between people who select the books and their book groups stating that they have "been validated by these [cultural] authorities" (1987, p. 308) – the cultural authorities being literary reviews and awards. Long calls this process "the evaluative process" (1987, p. 308). She says that as the selector's literary reputation is at stake, they depend on the cultural authorities to inform them (Long, 1987, p. 310). This takes away their anxiety as the tastemaker. Long says that book clubs are culturally legitimated spaces, and by default the books chosen for them attain a higher literary status. The books chosen for book groups through their selections gain literary authority, much like the process where literary "Best of" lists and award winners also bestow cultural legitimacy upon selected titles, but they also show that selectors are culturally competent. Long says "When questioned about their reading, most members say initially, 'We'll read anything'. But in most cases this is simply not so." (1987, p. 312). She says that "beneath the pluralism of what groups choose to read, an underlying hierarchy of taste" emerges regardless of what their attitude towards it may say (Long, 1987, p. 309). As a further reflection of this, Bourdieu notes that there are "manners of acquisitions" (1984, p. 58) and that there is a tendency to not discuss the less legitimate culture, even if people partake of it.

Just as individuals use title selections as a demonstration of personal taste, librarians too, in their practices, select materials as a demonstration and reflection of taste. Books chosen for book groups in public libraries have an "edulit" role. The book must be one of which the reader can do a close reading, one where the book is perceived as worthy of analysis. This is confirmed by Jim Collins in *Bring on the books for everybody* who says that "amateur" readers look towards cultural arbiters who "convey a passion for books without profit motive or vested interest of any kind" (2010, p. 83). Librarians are "cultural evangelists", who meet these criteria as part of their institutionalised role as "professional members of the reading class" operating at the front-line of reading engagement (Griswold & Wohl, 2015, p. 97).

Online Book Groups

With the emergence of the internet and social media, the online book group has become popular. Book-based social media sites, such as Goodreads, are online information grounds (Fisher, Durance & Hinton, 2004) that allow for readers to register to access book information and to make personal reading lists and annotations, and also join book groups and engage in information exchanges through reading comments and threads online and contributing to discussions using these comments and threads (Goodreads, 2017) with social activities and exchanges that are related to book reading (Kousha, Thelwall & Abdoli, 2017, p. 973). The book selections of book groups in these spaces are made by readers who not only engage with their reading choices, but also make social connections. Online book groups are not geographically constrained, and are driven through like-minded community members engaging with one another. Goodreads, however, in contrast to public libraries, is a commodified space as it is owned by Amazon and, as such, its engagement in the creation of economic capital is clear. The cultural arbiters without a profit motive or vested monetary interests, such as librarians, are harder to recognise in this virtual fiction landscape.

Book group meetings facilitated through public libraries occur in what Ray Oldenburg refers to as "third places" – neutral, informal gathering places outside of the home or workplace (1999, p. 22). These places are levelers and inclusive, a home away from home (1999, p. 42) where conversation is the main activity (1999, p. 28). Information behaviouralist Karen Fisher theorises that Oldenburg's third places are information grounds, places where everyday life information is exchanged (2005, p. 94). Fisher (writing as Pettigrew) writes that an information ground is an "Environment[s] temporarily created when people come together for a singular purpose but from whose behavior emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of information" (1999, p. 811). In the instance of book groups, members come together for the singular purpose of discussing a book; however, in this meeting they will partake in knowledge exchanges. Information grounds are places (and spaces) where people gather for purposes other than information sharing, that are used by different social types with individuals accessing information in alternative ways which benefits them "along physical, social, affective and cognitive dimensions" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 756).

The book groups run through public libraries are unlikely to have formalised methods of recording their discussions, since they exist mostly as social third places. Kousha et al. suggest the online space may be used by librarians as an alternative to book groups due to "the successful combination of book-based information and social activities" (2017, p. 981) that Goodreads mirrors. However, the very process of taking part in an online book

group involves the documenting of thoughts as they are exchanged. The information grounds of online book groups become the sites for the exchange of information that differ from those of book groups using public library resources due to their digital manifestation. The online book groups are, by their digital nature, recording their commentary, evaluations, information exchanges and reviews of the books they are reading.

Metatextual conversations

Important in the creation of cultural capital in the context of a library is the formalisation of the commentaries and evaluations of engagement with works of the human intellect, whether observations of the natural world or works of the imagination. Karl Popper says:

> *"It is clear that it must be a special characteristic of the human language that enables us to have exosomatic knowledge – knowledge which may be put outside ourselves and which thus may become discussable, criticizable knowledge" (1994, p. 34).*

This discussable, criticisable knowledge aligns with Gerard Genette's notion of metatextualities. Metatextualities are texts and commentaries associated with a novel or other creative works, written by those other than the author and their associated creative team. Literary critics, reader reviews and fanfiction (with its own inter- and transtextual meta elements) all become considered to be part of a novel's metatext (1997, p. xix). Genette says that metatextuality is "the transtextual relationship that links a commentary to 'the text it comments upon (without necessarily citing it)". He also says that "All literary critics, for centuries, have been producing metatext without knowing it".

These metatextual conversations are part of the legitimisation process. Pecoskie & Desrochers in their discussion of paratextual conventions state that "the book is also often understood as a powerful, active document that contributes to a greater dialogue as a player in the formation of social, informational and cultural dynamics" (2013, p. 232). Book club selections in their adherence to paratextual conventions "therefore, are not neutral, but instead serve a functional purpose […] an informational one" (Pecoskie & Desrochers, 2013, p. 233).

The Study

To understand the ways that book groups develop cultural capital, data was collected from three sources.

Firstly, a search of the websites of public libraries in NSW identified 21 public libraries with book club kits available for viewing on their website, either as a published online list or as a searchable collection through the library's catalogue. These kits were for the use

of book groups facilitated by library staff and/or for groups organised by groups external to the library. This analysis was conducted between November 2015 and January 2016 with a total of 1052 titles making up the book kits. A further level of analysis categorised the books in these kits by genre which were identified from the readers' advisory tool Novelist Plus as well as publisher guidelines for book group discussions; attributes including awards and prizes, and a final level of analysis focused on whether libraries sought any output from the users of these book club kits. Secondly, a similar level of analysis focused on the Goodreads website (2017) so as to identify the thematic structures of their book groups and any genres which aligned with the library book club kit analysis. Thirdly, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were held with eleven librarians, responsible for book groups and for the selection processes involved for book club kits. These librarians came from seven libraries which shared practices for the cataloguing of romance fiction (Veros, 2015) and which represented a range of metropolitan and rural libraries across New South Wales.

In analysing the information, percentages will be shown to only one decimal point. The reasoning for representing the outcomes of the results with only one decimal place on percentages (i.e, if 0.2% equals 2 books suggests that there are 1000 books rather than 1053 books which would be 2.106 books) is that, due to the low number of books in the selected analytical theme being discussed, rounding to the nearest whole percentage point would not necessarily show the minor variations in book numbers. However, going to two decimal places does not add any extra meaning, and was beyond the level of statistical analysis needed in being able to represent the outcomes of the data.

Results

Book club kit selections

Literary fiction, classics and award winners – including Pulitzer, Man Booker, Miles Franklin and Stella award or prize winners, are the predominant selections for library book club kits. Literary and mainstream fiction, that is fiction that is not instantly identifiable as fitting within a genre of writing, makes up 80.2% of the books in the kits.

There is a dominance of peer award-winning authors in the library book club kit collections with 81.1% of the authors whose works are included have received a peer award. A peer award is an award that is judged by peers – authors, critics and publishers as opposed to a popularity vote from readers. The larger thematic sub-sets occurring within the literary and mainstream titles comprise of narrative non-fiction 18.3%, historical fiction 20.6%, and the classics 13.6%.

Gender has a balanced representation of female 49.3% and male 49.8% authors with 0.9% being either joint female-male collaborations, various authors in anthologies and compilations, pseudonyms and/or unstated genders.

Bestsellers fare relatively well, but genre books are underrepresented with the exception of crime fiction, which represented 12.3% of all the titles available. The rest of genre fiction does not fare as well: speculative fiction sits at 3.1% with 33 titles, fantasy at 1.3%, science fiction at 1%, LGBTQ+ titles and titles by Indigenous Australian authors each make up 0.7% of titles respectively (that is, seven titles each). Romance fiction has the lowest representation with only two books (0.2%).

Of the genre selections, the titles tend to be what Dorothy Sayers calls the "boundary runners" (314-315). These are written by those writers that the literary field considers to have "transcended" their genre or have amongst their corpus a novel that fits the description of genre fiction. In the book club kits, these authors include Margaret Atwood, JRR Tolkien, William Gibson and Stephen King. The crime-fiction genre performs well with their benchmarking authors, those authors who are exemplars in their genre, including Lee Child, Robert Ludlum and Kerry Greenwood.

However, not even romance fiction's benchmark authors, writers such as Jennifer Crusie or Georgette Heyer, are represented in these book club kits, nor are authors such as Beverley Jenkins, Suzanne Brockmann and Nora Roberts, whose writing is examined in peer reviewed literary scholarly journals through close readings.

The two titles in the data collection's analysis tagged as romance are Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Graeme Simsion's *The Rosie Project*. The tagging of both of these titles as romance in the thematic analysis could be challenged. In the case of Austen, it is more likely that the book was selected as a classic, rather than as an example of popular romance fiction. In the second instance, Simsion's *The Rosie Project*, though enjoyed by romance readers as a romance, is also problematic as it could be argued that its selection is representative of the perception that when men write about relationships, the interpersonal and the domestic they are rewarded for their insight into the human psyche, whereas women writing in this area are dismissed by those in the literary field (Weiner, 2018).

In the final stage of analysis, evidence of the library book groups recording and documenting their discussions was sought. Of the 31 libraries examined, all but two provided discussion notes sourced from authors and publishers to help guide the conversation. None of the libraries provided a facility for their book groups to document

any of their discussions for subsequent groups to access. Of all the libraries, none facilitated an online book group on their library's Facebook page either.

Librarian interviews

Interviews with public librarians responsible for the selections for book club kits indicate that selections are made from books that have already attained cultural capital, which is reinforced through the institutional capital applied by the library. Libraries are not as much creating cultural capital as reflecting cultural capital as selecting by a number of other authorities from the field of literary review. Interview data supports this:

> *"We always do the Miles Franklin long- and shortlist. So there is always some interesting things in that. Umm … I do Man Book Prize … whatever it is called now, and a number of those Pulitzer maybe. Depending on what catches our eye."*

> *"We generally buy all the books that have won the Miles Franklin Award, the Stella Prize, the Prime Minister's Award. So any that win awards, we buy. […] For the book group we probably just buy the winners. For the collection, we definitely buy the shortlist, at least."*

This is indicative of book groups and book club kits selections being elevated above the rest of the library collection. Evidence from one of the book club kit library's promotional material states *"Book should have enough 'oomph' to sustain discussion for at least 20 minutes. 'Happy' books may not sustain discussion."* and *"Discussion points are important aspects of selecting a book club title, especially if it reflects an attainment of knowledge"*. A librarian echoed this message by saying:

> *"I force them to read some cerebral stuff!"*

On asking this librarian whether romance fiction would be chosen for book club kits, the response was:

> *"Because I think with that there is a perception that its ummmmm… a bit simple. Not academic enough but not an important thing to have to read and then come to a meeting and discuss it. Not enough meat in those titles."*

By positioning the book-group selections as being "cerebral", as needing to be academic, important and needing to have "meat", the librarian takes an educative, reading-ladder approach to selections for their readers, with materials not selected as being considered not "cerebral". There is a recognition that members of book groups are aware of the different statuses and expectations of the selections:

"….one of the terms that is bandied about for book club is that it is 'literary light' because people think that they want to read War and Peace *but they don't really want to [laughs]. So it's new bestsellers, new novels, things that have done quite well or up-and-coming authors. You know, authors who are very well established so it's kind of that mix between heavy literature and lighter because the heavy literature books never do as well …"*

"And we have got one book group that is run by the [redacted group name] *and they are a more literary bent. They will....they are thinkers and they will dissect a book on a literary level."*

"Well, [book clubs range] *from lighter fiction to actually trying a bit of literary fiction, or putting some literary fiction into the mix.*

Through the metatextual conversation, there is an increased awareness of the type of book preferred as reading material for a book group. This bestows cultural capital, which then leads to economic capital:

"We know that a certain author is [a suggestion] *from a book group when we get the second person coming up to the desk asking for the book. And whenever I run into these problems and I tell the staff 'you know try and get them to give you the list for the year'. I don't mind buying 5, I don't mind buying 6 because if they are going to read it they are going to make the recommendation to someone else. So we will buy more if they tell us they are doing it."*

Perceptions of how book group members are reading can shift and represent different social groups. A reader who wants to engage in book discussion by not following a structured analysis of the text is labelled a non-thinker but discussion, demonstration and inclusiveness allows for acceptance:

"These young women, all they wanted to do is talk about the books. So everyone just brought the books that they were reading or just finished reading and they said they liked it 'because…', or they didn't like it 'because'… One of the people came from the [redacted] *book group and she said that she was going to be very firm about the whole literary thing and she softened around the edges. So these women managed to soften her around the edges. Which is good"*

The literary reader here is moved to understand that reading can have many manifestations, and where she approached the readers group with insistence on their reading of literature, she was swayed away from her initial stance. At the same time, this

book discussion group seemed to take its own direction, with the staff member observing the exchanges rather than directing or facilitating the group.

Social media book clubs and groups

Social media spaces provide an information ground for all readers to contribute towards a reading dialogue. Sites such as Goodreads are online spaces that provide readers the opportunity to join book club groups and contribute towards discussions with other participants. Goodreads is a commercial site which captures of the intellectual capital of their contributors, both their participant authors as well as their active readers. Three-quarters of Goodreads users are female (Kousha et al., 2017, p. 978) and there are close to ten thousand book clubs on the Goodreads site as accessed in November 2017. Tags from Goodreads' own thematically ordered sub-groups were used as the basis of analysis for this article and were aligned to the library book club kits' themes. Similar to the thematic analysis conducted upon the library book club titles, a single online book club can have several tags/categorisations. In Goodreads, tags are created and attributed by the creator/s of the group. These tags constitute folksonomies in that they are keyword descriptors created by the users of the site rather than dictated by a structured thesaurus developed by the website.

There are 9574 book clubs in total as accessed in November 2017. The most applied tags for the book clubs are Fantasy: 56%; Romance: 41%; Role play (which does not appear at all in the public libraries book club kits): 28%; and, Science fiction 24%.

Literary, award-winning and bestseller titles also have a high level of representation. There are no book clubs tagged as being related to the theme of Australian Indigenous fiction; however this may be due to there being only 46 groups tagged with the location of "Australia". Of these groups, their membership size and engagement varies with some of the top groups being "Aussie Readers" with 5730 members, "The World War Two Group" with 1962 members, the "Fantasy and Vampire Book Club" with 2707 members, "Australian Women's Writers Challenge" with 917 members, and the "Historical Romance Book Club" with 638 members. Of these cited groups, all had regular activity – that is current postings, from their members. Given that social media sites such as Goodreads are not geo-restricted, the location-specific groups in this study are only being used here as an indicator of Australian readers being engaged in Goodreads' online book groups though they would not be confined to these groups.

Discussion:

Book groups are social discussion places/spaces that facilitate reading engagement and act as information grounds for sharing ideas. Bourdieu discusses connections

between "agents and institutions which actualize it and bring into existence" cultural order (1996, p 198). Public institutions actualise the book and give certain titles cultural legitimacy through a variety of practices, amongst which is the supporting of book clubs. Book groups are culturally legitimated spaces, and by default the books chosen for them are further legitimised. Though libraries collect genre fiction for their general lending collections, these novels are rarely made available for critical engagement, as evidenced through the lack of genre selections for library book club kits. This, in turn, minimises the possibilities for genre fiction to be recognised as having cultural legitimacy. In the book club kits' selections that are made by librarians, there is little resistance to the literary authorities in their approaches and selections for a community of readers, with few titles beyond the conventional canon of classics and award winners. Their selections with a significant number of titles reflecting the Oprah phenomenon of serious literature focused on women's reading and inspirational stories.

However, this attribution of status by librarians is due to other cultural intermediaries, such as publishing trade journal reviewers, having already attributed status to the titles, whereby libraries continue to reward this idea of cultural nobility (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2) and consolidate such status. The selections not only prioritise the literary authorities and hierarchies of taste ahead of the public-library mandate of social inclusion with its pluralist approach to reading but there is also the assumption that genre fiction does not lend itself to close reading and that it is not "cerebral" enough to be included in book club selections. Libraries conform to the conventional expectations of book-group engagement and any selections reflecting diversity beyond the gender parity of the authors are token and isolated. However, librarians as cultural arbiters are in a position to resist the conventional selections for, unlike booksellers and publishers, they do not have the pressure of the customer-retailer-publisher profit imperative at the point of the transaction.

The book groups facilitated through the library provision of book club kits overwhelmingly do not create records of their discussions, nor do they post their discussions on any online forums. So even though libraries continue to elevate literary fiction up the cultural reading ladder, the discussions that ensue from the use of these kits remain ephemeral, uncaptured, undocumented. Though the library selections are still "discussable and criticizable", these oral exchanges are conversational ephemera that are retained only by those who are present in the physical book group's social space. They do not add to the exosomatic store of knowledge that Popper (1994) considers as fundamental to the development of knowledge.

The Goodreads online book groups' results show that readers are invested in discussing genre fiction critically. The online book group, too, is a social space, one where groups are formed not at the behest of a literary gatekeeper but are predominantly created and facilitated by the readers themselves who create knowledge through their documented commentary. These readers are taking part in a participatory culture, one where they are prosumers (Bruns, 2009) because they are both consuming a published product and producing literary criticism that is digitally available to be read and responded to by other online readers, and not only in that moment of exchange but in perpetuity. Goodreads is archived by the Internet Archive resulting in genre-fiction discussions building a visible, accessible critical dialogue for readers to consult and engage in at any time. The online book group is a document reflecting readers' informed engagement with previously excluded fiction genres such as science fiction, fantasy fiction and romance fiction, as well as roleplay. These online book groups go beyond the narrower scope of the library book group.

In this online-book group information ground, the exchanges of ideas through documented discussion may still be considered to be in the social sphere (though this too would intersect with building of both economic and cultural capital) but it is the archiving of the conversation for perpetuity that shifts the social book discussion into a Popperian third world of knowledge creation. This knowledge creation is due to the agency that digital technology and social media gives their users. With this technological shift, we can see that cultural gains are being made through metatextual conversations. Cultural agency is increasingly in the hands of the readers and not only with traditional cultural arbiters; this is evident especially in recognising genre writing as critically engaging.

But we also need to question the social implications of this technological shift. The ability to engage online with like-minded readers does not eliminate the need for the physical connection, the need for the ephemeral discussion, one where your words and ideas are not open to (mis)interpretation by masses, one that provides the safety of an intimate metatextual exchange, one based on an orality that does not leave a digital footprint.

Further research needs to be undertaken to explore how the metatextual exchanges in the online information ground become (re)produced offline – with friends, peers and colleagues – as people articulate their experience of the text. In doing so, the physical connection is different rather than non-existent. Further research is also needed into differentiating between the metatextual conversation and the shifts into an epitextual conversation – that is, the impact of marketing collateral and its associated communications, and how the knowledge exchange differs if the author, publisher or any

member of the creative team is present in the knowledge exchange. This direct author-led, publisher-endorsed book club model shifts the dialogue out of the metatextual space of critiquing into a liminal space that requires further scholarly interrogation. Another area to be investigated is the marked difference between the title selections for book groups by libraries and by Goodreads groups including the significance of mediation.

Conclusion

Genette says that metatextuality is "the transtextual relationship that links a commentary to 'the text it comments upon (without necessarily citing it)'" (1997, p. xix). These metatextual conversations take place in book groups as information grounds that can be accessed by social readers (Fisher et al: 2004). Evidence from the research shows that the physical book-group conversations are currently restricted to oral exchanges that are ephemeral and remain within the physical group. This stands in contrast to the online book-group conversation, which leaves a perpetual digital document. This brings about a situation in which the physical library book clubs' literary selections may be discussed, but the ideas remain undocumented, whereas online book clubs' documented dialogues contribute in the long term to a critical understanding of literary and genre fiction that can be referred to by the internet-connected reading public and clearly offer a broad selection of texts with which to engage. This digital footprint is an indication of the shifting role of the book club. We also need to consider whether Popper's 1994 discussable knowledge is an essential part of a collaborative reading process or if it only applies to the personal/individual process.

As is evident with online reading groups, discussion and critical engagement of genre fiction is being led by readers, not the cultural authorities, nor publishers, reviewers or librarians. In the first instance, the online book group may begin as a social space where books are discussed, but it is in its perpetuity that it shifts into a documentation of cultural engagement and critiquing. Fisher's information grounds and the understanding of everyday information behaviour in the social setting asserts that these spaces foster an atmosphere that allows for the sharing of experiences with physical, social, affective and cognitive dimensions (2004).

And what of the ephemeral, uncaptured, undocumented metatextual conversations? These intangible expressions also have a deep value. Not every utterance needs to be recorded for posterity. There is a need for spaces that allow for critical explorations without the pressure of a digital record. The concern here is to have these smaller, physical, social spaces be inclusive of genre fiction.

As evidenced through the selection of book club kits by librarians, genre-fiction novels are not recognised as books that can be read critically; they are not seen as books that can be critiqued, explored or are worthy of analysis. Genre fiction needs to be recognised by public cultural institutions such as libraries as part of our everyday reading culture. Online book groups form an important part of metatextual conversations, the critiquing and literary dialogues already afforded to literary and mainstream fiction in third places and information grounds. Genre fiction needs to be embedded into the whole of book club kit practices enabling public libraries to become more relevant to their broader communities by being inclusive of genre-fiction readers.

Government-funded cultural institutions such as libraries have a social-inclusion mandate for delivering services to all their communities. As book groups' main purpose is to make commentary upon a selected book, both physical and digital discussions constitute metatextual conversations yet only the digital will have a continued impact upon the reading discourse. In not selecting genre fiction for book club kits, librarians are not agitating for a shifted understanding of the social reading discussion, and it could be argued that as cultural evangelists they should be agitating for this shifted understanding. They remain second-tier literary authority arbiters, depending on award and review selections rather than on the reading engagements of the community. Libraries should be the places that are able to experiment with the materials that they elevate through their selections, with both the intention of bringing into public third place the readers that lack representation, as well as positioning reading choices differently towards their book clubs. Metatextual conversations leave an important imprint on our cultural understanding of reading and of all narratives, including genre fiction.

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Conclusion

These five articles have presented the findings of this research study to practitioners and scholars at conferences and through peer reviewed journals. They have provoked discussion and have been revised following feedback from anonymous reviewers. Taken individually, they present snapshots of the ways in which the practices of librarians in public libraries treat romance fiction differently from general fiction, thus marginalising it. Each piece, following the conventions of scholarship and writings for professional practice, indicates briefly implications for practice and for theory. Taken together, these snapshots come together to present an ethnographic case study of the practices of public librarians working with romance fiction books. The next chapter of this thesis is to consider the relationship of this body of work to the existing literature in the field and in particular to the underpinning conceptual literature. A Discussion chapter is an accepted element in the genre of the thesis. This next chapter is a Discussion chapter within that genre, but in this presentation of a thesis by compilation it continues Genette's notion of the metatextual conversation (1997b) that brings together parts of a text and various commentaries on a text. Its focus is to go beyond the answer to the research question, to explore how this study has shed new light on the concepts of the selective tradition and cultural capital. It also shows how analytical frameworks and conceptual approaches from popular culture, romance fiction studies and from reading studies bring a complexity to the study of the practices of librarians which is innovative, positioning this important work in a broader societal context.

Discussion

This chapter considers the findings from the individual papers presented in the Key Findings chapter in the broader context of the study as a whole. At one level, my key findings confirm the findings of previous studies, that in public libraries, romance fiction books are not treated in the same way other fiction, and thus, they are marginalised. However, to stop here would be to ignore the contribution of this study to broadening an understanding of Williams's concept of the selective tradition within the context of public librarianship, and the application of Bourdieu's capital as a way of understanding the outputs of librarians. It would also neglect the methodological contributions made in this study, with its ethnographic approach, and its use of analytical tools drawn from its interdisciplinary background.

The question this study sought to answer was positioned across several fields of study and thus required concepts relevant to each and at the same time relevant to all. The interdisciplinary approach to this study showed that this was "where integration of the contributions of several disciplines to a problem or issue is required. Interdisciplinary integration brings interdependent parts of knowledge into harmonious relationships through strategies such as relating part and whole or the particular and the general" (Stember 1991, p. 4). The fields of study used in this interdisciplinary work are popular culture, romance studies, and library and information studies. The major concepts that underpin this study, drawn from the work of Raymond Williams on popular culture and Pierre Bourdieu on cultural practices, are acknowledged in the scholarship on the practices of librarianship and in socially-focused studies of romance fiction.

Introduction

The practices of librarians were the focus of this study, and it would be logical to start with a consideration of the broad picture that arises from this study. However, context is important in ethnography, so before I begin this consideration, I want to reiterate some aspects of the development of library practices, demonstrating the lengthy period over which the marginalisation of romance fiction has been part of professional discourse. In 1980, Rudolph Bold (1980) beseeched librarians to start collecting romance fiction, not because it was what was being read in popular culture but because he viewed collecting romance as a stepping stone toward the romance reader bettering themselves through the materials that the library held, "perhaps by osmosis" as though being surrounded by cultural artefacts can effect a change in people's interests. Bold here represented a fundamental adherence to reader improvement principles, the "reading as ladder" perspective. However, in a parallel development, by 1983,

Betty Rosenberg started the shift towards reader engagement with her statement of "never apologise for your reading taste". Rosenberg, along with Diana Tixier Herald, went on to establish *Genreflecting* series which comprised professional development publications providing librarians with tools to understand specific fiction genres, building knowledge that was intended to help librarians connect their borrowers to reading materials; these publications were also used as guides for developing collections of genre fiction. Joyce Saricks continued this building of knowledge on meeting readers' needs rather than trying to improve the reader, and acknowledged the *Genreflecting* series as a starting point in understanding genre fiction (Saricks, 2006, p. 15). Kristin Ramsdell's has created a body of work recommending romance fiction in the context of collection building and reader engagement from her initial guide to reading romance fiction, *Happily ever after: a guide to reading interests in romance fiction* (1987), consequent romance reading guides such as the *Genreflecting* series publications on Romance Fiction (1999, 2012) to editing the *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction* (2018). Rosenberg, Herald, Saricks and Ramsdell are all librarians writing from within their field of practice. These principles of practice are grounded in a pluralistic approach to library services that is evidenced in the principles found in the IFLA statements (International Federation of Library Associations 2012). The *Genreflecting* guides underpin training provided for librarians in providing fiction to their community. These principles are evident in the Australian approach to readers' advisory with the State Library of New South Wales providing continued training in readers' advisory since 2004 (of which I was the beneficiary). In this study, all the librarians I interviewed indicated that they had attended this training in the area of fiction provision to their community and the language they used reflects these principles of "unbiased" and "non-judgemental" provision of information. However, nearly forty years after Bold's impassioned piece in a key professional journal, the practices did not always reflect these principles, as previous studies had found.

It is in this context that this study and others have been conducted. In what is regarded by some as the classic work exploring the ways romance fiction is treated in libraries, first in Missouri and then across the USA, Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill, in a series of mixed method studies using both statistical and qualitative analysis (Esser, Adkins & Velasquez 2008, p. 196), found that romance fiction is not treated equally with other types of fiction. At one level, my present study builds upon the broad study conducted by Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill (2008) by exploring the state of practice in New South Wales, Australia, although its methodology is different, being an ethnographic case study, and therefore qualitative. Despite the different methodologies applied, my study confirms their findings. However, the purpose of this study is different. It does not aim solely to describe what librarians do, a study that is positioned entirely

within professional practice. Instead, it is positioned both inside and outside of professional practice, and it takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on library and information studies, popular culture and studies of romance fiction.

Extending upon the literature on practices of public librarians

My approach to understanding the practices of collection development, selection and acquisition go beyond other studies. The ethnographic approach meant that I was concerned with the wider context of policy, with broader questions of institutional practices as well as with the practices and attitudes of librarians. My research probes elements of collection development policies in relationship to the practices of librarians in the field. This allows for understanding how core professional values are enacted as well as establishing a way to identify the structures that inform practices.

My study showed that the use of donations to build romance fiction collections in public libraries is common practice. This is not to deny that some librarians have placed romance fiction on their library's purchase plan. Flesch (2004), Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill (2008), and Ramsdell (2012) all discuss donations with Ramsdell going on to explain the negative consequences of this practice. Flesch makes the unsupported assertion that donations are important in building collections of romance fiction in public libraries. My study confirmed and extended the empirical knowledge on donations from the community by testing this assertion and situating this practice within a cultural studies understanding of this practice. By focusing upon how librarians inform the "selective tradition" (Williams 1964) and through the actions of accepting books into the library collection thus "consecrating" (Bourdieu 1996) them. Through their use of institutional policies which shaped the practice of donations, and the interviews that provided insight into their attitudes towards donations, my study revealed biases held by librarians varied depending on the type and genre of materials donated. This biased treatment was not limited to only the donated materials but was also evident in the acquisitions of materials as there were several librarians who had romance fiction on their library's purchase plan yet made explicit decisions to not catalogue these items. The finding that the attitudes of librarians ranged from dismissive about the bias that they were applying, to stating that romance fiction was not something they would consider reading, and some who considered romance acceptable pleasure reading, also confirmed Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill's finding that "there is no accepted foundation for collecting romance fiction other than librarians' personally held opinions" (2008, p. 59).

My findings that many romance fiction collections are not catalogued, similarly, is a practice identified by Saricks (1998, pp. 22–23) and Ramsdell (2012, p. 39). However, my findings

emerge from a complex analysis of catalogue records, which not only confirms the practice of creating absences in the library records but which identifies a range of types of record, each of which serves to marginalise the book, as well as confirmation of this practice from interviews with librarians working in the libraries which had been identified as having uncatalogued romance fiction collections.

Book group kits have barely been the focus of research studies in librarianship. They were included in this study as one way in which librarians reach out to connect with community members so as to engender a social reading mandate and cultural participation (Jenkins 2014; Summers & Buchanan 2018). Unsurprisingly, this study found that here, too, librarians do not include romance fiction titles. Although book groups are championed by celebrities in popular culture, from this study, the kits are only reaching readers who seek out texts that are deemed as legitimate (Long, 1987, p. 311) or as holding literary authority (Devlin-Glass 2001, p. 571); they do not venture beyond the scope of what might be seen as the accepted literary canon, that is award-winning books or those that are well-reviewed. The library may be seen as a reading site where individuals exchange "social capital" (Wiegard 2006, p.10) and to a certain degree a place where cultural capital is accessed, rather than a place where cultural capital is exchanged and created.

Finally, my findings on shelving and placement of romance fiction, whether part of a library's acquisition plan or acquired through donation, also confirm Adkins et al. finding the placement of romance fiction in a public library is based on the values of librarians and serves to separate out romance fiction. The process of grouping genre materials together, either by marking them with stickers or shelving them on paperback stands/spinners, such as the "Red Dot District" identified by (Adkins, Esser & Velasquez 2006, p. 61; Esser, Adkins & Velasquez 2008), may allow for the genre reader to not have to consider books that are not of interest to them (Saarinen & Vakkari 2013, p. 750), however the reverse applies in that readers can also avoid genres through this model. Le Guin notes that "commercial genrification has its reasons" (2004, p. 22) in the context of marketing and thus, perhaps, in making particular materials more readily visible, however according to its UNESCO/IFLA charter, a public library should be resisting "commercial pressures" (International Federation of Library Associations 1994). Ross (2014) argues that only in the serendipitous arrangement of a fiction collection ordered alphabetically by the author surname (2014, p. 1), can bias against genre type be avoided. The interviewees defence for a loosely identified collection, as noted in this study, both in respect of cataloguing practices and of shelving practices is that genre collections are "browsing collections" and that this is the preferred access for readers of genre fiction, such as romance fiction. However, Ooi and Liew

(2011) found that genre readers are selective and particular rather than indiscriminate in their reading choices, so that cataloguing records and shelving become important for readers who want to read a particular title.

Here, it is worth noting that Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill's body of research on romance fiction in Missouri (2006) and then across America (2008) is the research most closely aligned with my own, since they also were interested in gaining a picture across the various aspects of professional practice in a public library. Conducted ten years before my study, theirs was an important research study, effectively setting a benchmark description of professional practice. Most of the literature on the professional practice of librarians is descriptive of what librarians do and what users of library services are observed to do, that is, their information behaviours. Other literature, such as the influential work by Saricks, is exhortative, setting out what are assumed to be shortcomings in professional practice and asserting clearly what librarians *ought* to be doing; this rhetorical strategy identifies practices of marginalisation that should be avoided in a library service and aiming to be inclusive of the reading interests of its community.

The context set out above, from Bold, to Rosenberg, Herald and Saricks, and then to Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill, and Ramsdell is a timeline demonstrating the societal move over forty years into deeper engagement with everyday popular culture. My findings have shown that there is an evolution in the literature, as there are changes in the rhetoric used by librarians. However, the change in the practices of librarians is not commensurate as legacy practices continue to permeate the everyday.

This ethnographic study permits some observation and interpretation on the practices of librarians towards romance fiction, enabling the findings of this study to go beyond those of the descriptive and exhortatory literature mentioned above. Thus, the discrepancy between statements about action and the actions themselves becomes clear. The librarians interviewed in this study seemed aware that the services of a public library should be inclusive, and that librarians should not pass judgement on the readers of genre collections, yet by the same token, some clearly expressed conflicting values. However, they seemed largely unaware of how practices in creating absences in the libraries where they worked served to marginalise romance fiction and how these practices undermined the value of the creative output of the authors of romance fiction.

Positioning this study as an interdisciplinary study, drawing from cultural studies, also allowed this study to go beyond descriptions of professional practice. Raymond Williams wrote of the importance of supporting expressions of popular culture, arguing collection seems to emerge from an unawareness of the impacts of the practices upon the books and their creators rather than

an intentional judgement being applied, and that a wise society "will encourage the [collecting] institutions … to resist the criticism, which any particular period may make with great confidence, that much of this activity [of collecting examples of popular culture] is irrelevant and useless" (1964, p. 69). These findings might be taken to indicate that public librarians have not fully resisted criticism, and in their own ways have upheld values and practices that privilege some fiction books, as they have only incrementally broken from the conventions and rules of the past.

Selective Tradition

The findings of this study have facilitated a re-thinking of Raymond Williams's concept of selective tradition. For Williams, this was an abstract concept, linked to ideas of how culture is validated in a society. This study has explored the relationship between this concept and the practices of public librarians related to romance fiction, thus bringing an empirical, operational focus to the concept.

Raymond Williams says that the most difficult part of a past lived culture to "accept and assess" is that of which at the time incurred a "rejection of considerable areas of what was once a living culture" (1965, p. 68). That is, the areas that were considered "unimportant, irrelevant, inconsequential and valueless" for the purposes of selection (1965, p. 69). As has been seen in both the literature review and in the key findings of this thesis, romance fiction was, and continues to be, considered "unimportant, irrelevant, inconsequential and valueless" in not being selected for inclusion in the collections of public libraries. This has implications not only for the parts of living culture – the recorded materials - that were and are given entry into the cultural space of the library but also those items like romance fiction which were and continue to remain undocumented, unregistered yet existent within the library alongside the documented, registered materials. Those undocumented and unregistered materials that have been given by the community and are an indication of community interests are only accepted at the boundaries of the collection because the community has, in one way or another, asked their librarians to accept their books.

Taste, a form of social distinction, according to Williams (1965, p. 364), should not influence the selective tradition. Librarian 6's statement that she is "elitist" and that is why she rejects romance fiction can be seen to imply a judgement of taste, that the community members who donate and borrow the uncatalogued romance fiction collection in her library are "vulgar". Williams cautions against such values, noting that popularity and commercial success by themselves are no

indicator that a book should not be considered part of popular culture, as the "need for …
entertainment is as real as the need for art" (1965, p. 364).

Australia's Public Lending Rights (PLR) scheme can be seen to be related to the role of public
libraries as supporters of contemporary culture, and to the concept of the selective tradition.
Through the identification of a need for a Public Lending Rights scheme, it was acknowledged
that public libraries bought books that were read by members of a local community and that this
process deprived authors of the payments due to them. The view of the selective tradition here is
not one related to the historical record, but one related to contemporary practices. Public library
collections are acknowledged as a reflection of popular culture, with the catalogue record and
associated borrowing record being the surrogates for the book and its use, the basis for the
compensatory payment to an author. This study has shown that the lack of cataloguing records
and thus the lack of actual library holdings data available for borrowing undermines the
assumptions on which this scheme is based. Williams refers to "rejection of considerable areas of
what was once a living culture" (1965, p. 68), but in the case of much romance fiction there was
no outright rejection of the materials but a rejection of the documenting of the materials.
Williams acknowledges that it is impossible for lived experiences to be captured in their entirety
and that there would inevitably be "losses" and "limitations" on what is collected and recorded.
For him, these losses and limitations were likely to be individual items and the circumstances
surrounding their non-inclusion need to be noted and examined. The situation with romance
fiction is systematic; while this can be demonstrated in many ways, its impact on payments to
authors (evidenced in publicly available data from PLR) provides a surrogate measure of the
relationship between the selective tradition, popular culture and the inclusion of romance fiction.

The boundaries of popular culture and the selective tradition change as new media of
communication emerge. Raymond Williams was writing at the time when television was a new
medium that had disrupted the arts and the way that communication was conveyed. I am writing
several decades after the changes that occurred due to the immersion of the internet in the
everyday information behaviour of Australians and especially in the area of popular culture. An
emerging idea that comes from this study, through the key findings is that the selective tradition
no longer sits only in the space of the cultural institution. The institution mimics and duplicates
the areas of culture that they consider important however, librarians are no longer the primary
shapers of the cultural repository.

As was indicated in my article 'Metatextual Conversations', the examination of genre including
romance fiction reading as promoted by library programs was positioned against the book group

genres as represented in the commercial website Goodreads. Here, unlike the era that Williams was writing in, it is not the library or the cultural institution that has shaped the selective tradition but the community spaces that drive the internet; whether it is on a commercial/customer engagement and recommendation site such as Goodreads, or in social media driven communities such as "Romancelandia" and its "participatory culture of romance" (Roach, 2016, p. 33). The continued engagement of the community, especially in areas of creating reviews, blogs, podcasts and a variety of other production on various cross media platforms has resulted in cementing the genre's importance in popular culture. The importance of the romance fiction reading community in reinforcing the notion of popular culture has been acknowledged in scholarly research, for example by Catherine Roach in her book *Happily ever after: the romance story in popular culture* (2016), an exploration of "how the romance narrative functions in popular culture", who took a "dive into the romance community itself for answers" (p. 31).

However, librarians are not yet recognising the importance of romance fiction in popular culture, nor the importance of understanding how the community's engagement in popular culture should be part of the institutional representation of this culture. [10] According to Williams, "the condition of cultural growth must be that varying elements are at least equally available, and that new and unfamiliar things must be offered steadily over a long period, if they are to have a reasonable chance of acceptance" (1965, p. 365). Despite the long period of romance fiction publishing with the more well-known publishers Mills & Boon having been established in 1908 and Harlequin in 1948, with their popular culture appeal continuing to impact and influence communities, the practices of librarians have remained such that they have not yet completely demonstrated this acceptance, although there is strong evidence of engagement in the broader society.

'New things' are constantly emerging. Driscoll, Fletcher and Wilkins point to the deep community links that are evident in romance fiction especially in the area of self-publishing (2018, p. 215). This mirrors Pecoskie and Hill's research; their explorations into the intersections between library and information studies and publishing, indicate that librarians need to be aware of the publishing industry and any changes that the publishing field undergoes (2015, p. 1). In their research on "reading-focused user communities and [the ways] self-publishing infrastructures are effecting change" (Pecoskie & Hill 2015, p. 3) they too point to the way online communities are shaping the selective tradition. Pecoskie and Hill (2015) delve into the publishing trajectory of the immensely popular novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, focusing on its start

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[10] Catherine Roach's academic publication was launched at the State Library of New South Wales. Unlike other book launch events which are tagged with "literature", the promotional tag that the State Library chose for the launch of *Happily Ever After* was "hobbies".

in fan fiction communities, moving from there to self-publishing and then on to being published by a traditional publishing house. This kind of move could not have been contemplated by Williams. Here, popular culture was driven by the readers, users and the online communities that they used, which then moved to traditional publishing and finally reached the library. Although this title is included in the collections of some libraries, at least one interviewee rejected *Fifty Shades of Grey* into her catalogued library collection on the basis of it emerging from fanfiction and online publishing, only making it available on the uncatalogued romance shelves and saying that "when you open the book and it says in the publishing information 'first published on the internet' I go Oh yeah! [dismissive laugh]". Hill and Pecoskie write that the fanfiction community is shifting out of an ephemeral existence and into one of a more permanent digital heritage" (2017, p. 852) providing the library and information studies an area to consider.

Further indication of how the selective tradition is being shaped by communities outside of the cultural institution of the public library is also evident in literary scholarship that engages with and analyses blogs, reader reviews and social media interactions, with Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo (2019) writing that "book reviews written by readers and published on digital sites such as Goodreads are a new force in contemporary book culture" (2019, p. 247). Williams's "masses" no longer lack agency in cultural production but create, influence and shape how they engage with popular culture. Yet for the acceptance of romance fiction in the public library, this agency is marginalised, with public librarians continuing to see themselves as leaders of selective tradition rather than facilitators in the development of the selective tradition.

Cultural capital as shaped by librarianship

The use of concepts developed by Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu may seem unusual, as in some ways, their approaches are at odds with each other. Where Williams's approach considers culture as "ordinary" and part of the everyday, Bourdieu comes to an understanding of culture as a hierarchy and an application of taste, prestige and position so as to gain legitimacy. Despite these differences in their approaches, their key concepts are based on developing ways of understanding culture in society. This section of the discussion is concerned with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and its expressions as they are created by a community (not a single person) which adheres to a hierarchy. Bourdieu relates cultural capital to cultural competence.

The practices of librarians as systems for the application of cultural capital show librarians as having cultural competencies. Cultural competence refers to credentials, qualifications and specialised knowledge (Bourdieu 1984, p. 400; Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002, p. 22). The ways librarians frame reading, literacy and literary practices is a way of showing their cultural

competence and as being authorities in the field of literature and other published fiction. The treatment of romance fiction in ways that differ from other fiction acts as a way for librarians to demonstrate that they have specialist knowledge, that they have authority and thus are qualified to make decisions. Seemingly positive language to describe romance fiction, such as "it's escapism", "[it's a book to put in] a beach bag", "pure entertainment, pure relaxation" frames the reading in a particular way. In this study, interviewees couple this seemingly positive language with a less positive subtext, such as Librarian 2 saying "the books they had selected were romance books, where you just didn't have to think", describing romance fiction in terms of disappearing, lacking substance, lacking ideas, both filling spaces but also reading as a loss of thought. These expressions indicate the authority of librarians positions the readers of romance fiction as having less cultural competence and the books themselves as having lesser cultural capital. In part, this is because romance fiction is not seen as "discussable, criticizable knowledge" (Popper 1994, p. 34) by librarians despite the community engaging in cultural and critical discussion of romance fiction in non-librarian facilitated spaces (Veros 2019). Further, Bourdieu wrote that "the most successful ideological effects are those which have no need for words, and ask no more than complicitous silence" (1977, p. 188). This complicitous silence can be seen in most of the practices of librarians in this study, from the lack of words in cataloguing metadata, the lack of inclusion in book groups, the lack of recognition for the creators of romance fiction all become indications that romance fiction lacks merit or legitimacy, leading to the lack of cultural capital. The cultural competence underpinning the practices of librarians can be seen from this perspective to result not in the creation of Williams's popular culture, acknowledged in the community, but in the development of a hierarchy, where some types of reading are deemed unacceptable or unimportant, not worthy of a budget line. This denigration of some types of creative output is in contrast to the stated values that underpin the profession, for these values encourage the meeting of the demands of a community for reading selections matching its interests.

The practices of selection and acquisition, collecting, categorising and cataloguing, as well as placing, organising and promoting romance fiction are ways of reflecting cultural competence. In addition, these practices position librarians as cultural gatekeepers, as intellectual filters that relate to, and reflect, community interests. These practices mirror the library as a field of cultural production and librarians as authorities in cultural legitimacy. From this perspective, book club kits hold a special place. With each successive practice, the books that are given cultural legitimacy narrows until the pinnacle is met with the book club kit collection. These are books purchased in multiple copies and catalogued and advertised as a set, and then promoted through

the outreach programs are designed by librarians to interface with the community and to encourage critical discussion. This gatekeeping role within the library clearly positions the librarian as the arbiter of taste.

Library use "is accepted as a sign of cultural participation and an indicator of cultural capital, suggesting that libraries can be regarded as sites for the production, dissemination and appropriation of cultural capital" (Goulding 2008, p. 236). However, this cultural participation is framed in relation to the systems that are in place that reward and legitimise fiction through awards and reviews and librarians in this study do not seek to create a different version of cultural understanding. Williams would say that a public librarian's role would require an engagement with the popular reading of the community, however what is reflected in the findings is more in line with librarians continuing to validate the systems of cultural capitals that are applied outside of the library field. Librarians use their cultural competence when they make the decisions on the cultural capital that will be accepted into the library through practices that identify objects that are of material interest to the community that the librarians serve. These reflections of cultural competence positions librarians as figures of authority in the community "like parents" as parents are significant figures in passing on cultural competence, according to Bourdieu (1984, pp. 14–15). Librarians use their own competence to engender a different competence for the romance fiction borrower and reader. Cultural capital is objectified as seen through the production of books, art and other manifestations of creative outputs. The selection of books into a library is an expression of a form of symbolic capital, one resulting from librarians applying their power, that is, their cultural capital, through their knowledge, skills, taste, education. Thus, the selection of books into a library's collection, and decisions on levels of cataloguing and shelving are all exercises of symbolic power, leading to distinct differences in the attitudes held in relation to particular books.

The embodied state of cultural capital is a form of capital that is held by librarians. Part of this is understanding and having the "appropriate" codes of practices especially in understanding what works in various contexts. In the key findings, we see that romance fiction gets coded as acceptable to enter into the library collection through either donations from community members or through library acquisitions so that the books can fulfil the reading expectations of certain members of the library community. However, the context of the elite library reader who engages with the collection through the use of the special book club kit collection will be insulated from access to romance fiction and is less likely to encounter these works due to the judgement that is placed upon them. These codes of practices in Bourdieusian terms are "doxa", the self-evident behaviours that go without saying. The items chosen for the library become indications of the

librarian's taste. Literary fiction continues to be collected by public librarians as a representation of the reading tastes they are trying to appeal to and encourage, despite their value claims that they are broad reaching in their remit towards their communities. There is the inverse of this collection too in that romance fiction is considered to be of a lower taste, held outside of, rather than fitting within, all fiction and being judged not by its writing but by its genre. Over a long period of time, the cultural competence of librarians and their involvement in the creation of cultural capital have led to libraries being able to claim institutional capital; and this closes the loop, in turn bestowing on librarians the authority from which the implications discussed below can be extrapolated.

Over time, romance fiction as a genre has gained some cultural capital. Crime fiction is already accepted as a popular genre in public libraries (Australian Library and Information Association & Civica 2018); though the genres of fantasy, science fiction and westerns also lack cultural capital. Where once it was completely shunned from the collection of the library, it is now accepted, albeit at different entry points to the collection of a public library. In this consideration of the accumulation of cultural capital, the listing of the books in various sources, including library and publishers' catalogues, as well as in social media sources has been a significant factor. In 'A Matter of Meta' (Veros 2015), I show how cultural capital is bestowed on fiction through the application of metadata and paratext; the results of not having metadata and paratext attached to romance fiction denies it the opportunity to gain cultural capital. The question of the role that metadata itself might play in the development of cultural capital beyond the scope of this study. However, the use of metadata can be seen as evidence of the cultural competence of public librarians and the next section will consider the practices of public librarians and the exercise of cultural competence.

Metadata and cultural competence

In this study, seen through the agency of librarians combined with the institutional structure of the profession and of the public library, Bourdieu's notions of an "established order" (1977, p. 164) and a "sense of reality" (1977, p. 124) emerge. Bourdieu's structuring structures, the "principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (1990, p. 53) are important in the creation of this established order, fundamental to shaping the attitudes and values of a group. In this study, the concept of structuring structures was used to understand the principles which are presented as being fundamental to the practices of public librarians. These were identified in the statements of

the International Federation of Library Associations, the Australian Library and Information Association, and the policies of the State Library of New South Wales, as well as the legislation which enables and governs the provision of public library services in NSW. These principles were then used to analyse the very local statements of policies and procedures in public library systems, as well as to analyse the data gathered from librarians who were interviewed. This analysis showed how principles expressed in these fundamental documents were interpreted, modified and even discarded as they were adopted and adapted through the various levels between the international professional body and the individual librarian and the legislative framework and the practices at the local level. These policy statements, Bourdieu's "structured structures", allowed me to recognise the systems of order and practice that are a field's "normal", accepted practices that are not questioned; that Bourdieu refers to as the "orthodoxy" of the practice.

Alongside these principles, are the doxa, the rules of the field, that allow for the individual within the field to be able to recognise their own legitimate position and behaviours in the field. The taken for granted nature of the doxa means that their arbitrariness is often overlooked, and their consequences not recognised (Bourdieu 1977). The practices associated with romance fiction are an example of doxa in action. The categorisation of different fiction sections in the library appear to be a common-sense division and the continuation of these structures validate and help perpetuate this sense of reality that romance fiction should somehow be collected differently, ordered differently, read differently. The doxa are also evident in cataloguing practices, and in other aspects of the work of public librarians, including program planning and events.

Thus, there are three forces at play in consequences of the practices of public librarians: their cultural competence, which, in the creation of cultural capital establishes legitimacy, the structuring structures which establish the principles of professional practice, and the doxa, the taken for granted beliefs and actions. Librarians position their profession as one that is devoid of bias, claiming an approach to the development of library collections and services that is objective and broad reaching. However, this study has shown that collection, metadata, placement and programs within libraries reflect a different reality when examining the treatment of popular culture that is deemed "unimportant, irrelevant, inconsequential and valueless" (Williams 1965, p. 69). Symbolic legitimacy in a public library is a system where books that are on the shelves can be seen as the books that are given the symbolic power to be heard and to be seen from within the cultural institution. The practices of librarians reveal the existence of their own hierarchical taste, but they do so arbitrarily – this is not something that has been deliberately structured.

To reiterate, a library's fiction collection holds cultural significance, not only because the books were added to the collection due to their presence in the field of publishing but also because being part of a library's collection bestows cultural capital. Assigning cataloguing records with rich metadata also leads to the development of cultural capital, because the cataloguing record stands as a surrogate for the book and the catalogue itself stands as a surrogate for the library's collection and, enriched with metadata, can act as the key to finding a book to read (Tarulli 2016). Metadata has already been presented in 'A Matter of Meta' as assisting a book to gain cultural capital. However, the metadata itself is rich with symbolic and cultural capital. The act of adding metadata and then enriched metadata creates cultural capital. Author and title fields should be fixed and rarely ambivalent, accepted as the basis for any cataloguing record (Coyle, 2015, p. 4), yet this study has shown that cataloguing practices for romance fiction books mean that even these basic elements may be missing, often deliberately, thus consigning a book catalogued in this way to obscurity; without these basic descriptors, a catalogue record cannot act as a surrogate for the book rendering it impossible to extend the catalogue record with the practice of adding meaningful subject headings reflecting aboutness (Ward & Saarti 2018, p. 318) and linking the book to others on the same topic. Tools such as Novelist Plus, created by the publishing trade, already use a wide range of subject headings, including ones to denote affect, an important element of romance fiction. An exploration of the ways in which cataloguing metadata creates cultural capital was beyond the scope of this study, but would be a useful topic of future research.

According to Bourdieu, "one can never entirely escape from the hierarchy of legitimacy" (1984, p. 81). In the practices of librarians, the application of cultural capital, and in showing one's cultural competencies, there is a rejection of romance fiction in line with broader cultural practices. This occurs, in spite of the values espoused in the professions structuring structures, and the rhetoric of readers' advisory approaches to reading values. There is a prevailing view that romance fiction is something that satiates voraciousness (Bourdieu 1984, p. 47; Ross 1987, pp. 155–157) rather than being aesthetic reading (Bourdieu 1984, p. 40). The doxa of these practices need to be challenged for librarians to have a broader outreach to the communities they serve. Legacy practices seem to suggest that for librarians there is no aesthetic intention associated with romance fiction, even though the interests of the reading community suggests otherwise. Bourdieu notes (1984, pp. 34–35) that people unfamiliar with a genre of artistic expression (he refers to avant-garde theatre) may not be able to appreciate its aesthetic qualities and thus discuss it. In this study, the librarians interviewed acknowledged that they were not readers of romance

fiction, thus, they could be seen as Bourdieu's uninitiated, unable to appreciate romance fiction novels, as they are unfamiliar with the aesthetics of the genre.

This study has established the existence of a hierarchy of legitimacy in the practices of librarians, which positions romance fiction at, or close to, the bottom of the "reading ladder". This gives rise to an ideological tension between elitism and populism in the library profession (Lawrence 2017, p. 493). Those who engage in romance fiction, from the creator to the reader, continue to be considered to be lesser and in need of improvement. This sense of being lesser is carried over into the values guiding other practices; the justifications for not having cataloguing records for romance fiction, for example, is often based on a false perception of how romance fiction readers choose the books they read within the library. The emphasis on the importance of browsing suggests that any book will suffice, that is, that the books themselves are interchangeable, with nothing to mark one out as being different from all the others; in the interviews there was also a suggestion that readers of romance fiction may not have the level of information literacy necessary to use the library's catalogue effectively.

This section of the discussion has considered the ways in which the findings of this study have shed light on the concepts that underpinned this study. For Williams's concept of the selective tradition, this study has shown that, while on the one hand it provides a useful way to understand the means through which popular culture becomes institutionalised and legitimised, on the other hand, changes to the ways in which artefacts of popular culture are created and disseminated suggest that the processes of institutionalisation and legitimation must be reconsidered.

In this following section, the discussion will reconceptualise the separate practices from the published journal articles to place them in context with each other and the broader study.

The practice of accepting donations

The impact of the practice of accepting donations in public libraries emerged strongly from the data, including the analysis of the collection development policies, interviews with librarians, and observations in library buildings. Donation was the main way that romance fiction is accepted into most library collections. This has implications for collection development. Kristen Ramsdell (2012) points out that building your collection out of donations can only mean that the collection itself is second rate because book buyers tend to only donate the books that they did not enjoy or do not want to keep. Building collections with the "non-keepers" implies that the keepers – first rate romance fiction from the reader's perspective – never makes it to the library's collection.

The relationship between donations and the development of a library's collection has implications for the selective tradition. The understanding and accepting of donations into a library collection has a community led impact upon the selective tradition; the donated book becomes a symbol of contribution and valuing of the cultural engagements of the public. At one level, this conceptualisation is at odds with the practical perspective of Kristin Ramsdell, one of the leading proponents of romance fiction collections developed by librarians. On the one hand, allowing the selective tradition to be shaped by the public is a practice which lessens the gatekeeper role that required for a cultural product to enter the public institution; on the other hand, is the question of whether the community contribution is treated with the values and importance that a book selected according to the practices carried out be librarians is given. There was strong evidence that donations do not form part of the libraries' collections, with significant encouragement on the part of some librarians for these books to be taken from the library and not returned. A less negative consideration of donations could suggest that the community would like to see books of this kind included in the collection, so that engaging at a deeper level with the community about donated books could allow for a re-evaluation of community expectations and requirements of the library collection, and perhaps of the need for re-evaluation of the knowledge of librarians in some aspects of popular reading.

Donations take many forms in public libraries. One of the libraries where interviews were conducted had a very large romance fiction collection, created from donations. Donations are mostly books that have already been read by the donor. Thus, it is important to flag the potential impact of the trend to digital publishing and reading. The evidence for romance fiction shows that readers have been at the forefront of the shift to ebooks and increasingly are reading in this form. The impact of this shift had already been noticed by one of the librarians interviewed. However, her explanation was that this drop in donations was due to women having rejected reading romance fiction as they were now "career women". Further evidence later in the interview indicated that she was unaware of the trends of reading that may have been impacting on the practice of donation to that library. This example demonstrates the importance of the need for expansion in the cultural competence of librarians, to include changes in the context of reading in the community; so that this method of acquisition, relied on for so long, can be supplemented to maintain the inclusion of romance fiction in the collection. The justification offered by the librarian demonstrates the strength of doxa and shows that the legacy of judgement against romance fiction is difficult to overcome. There is a need for further study into the role of donations, the type of donations that are accepted into libraries and the values ascribed to the donations.

There is scope too for further research into the role of donations in a library both from the people who are donating materials, as well as, librarians in their role of deciding upon which materials are accepted. Often, local studies materials are highlighted as of the most significant donations, but when librarians use donations from the public to supplement their circulating collection, these donations must also be regarded as important. The accepted donations from a library's public constitute a community endorsed collection. The reading selections that a community proffers to their library is an indication that it is important in their everyday lives, and thus should be important to public librarians. It is one that is built through the sentiment of the public towards the library and in turn allows for goodwill between the institution (the library) and the donor, a kind of symbolic capital. The need for understanding the role that the library presents to the public when they are negotiating this exchange is important in identifying how and why the library is chosen as the site for donation.

Vendors and their responsibility in collection building

The practices of librarians are frequently discussed as though they belong only to the field of librarianship. However, the processes of acquisition of items for a library's collection are strongly influenced by the practices and requirements of local government.

Public librarians are confronted by certain compliance requirements when it comes to selection and acquisition of materials for their libraries. They are required to comply with the governance rules of their local council which will stipulate the terms and conditions for the supply of materials, often including the specific vendor to be used. Most councils must put out to tender the contract for the supply of goods and services, including books for the library. This contract frequently specifies type of items to be purchased and the amount of money to be spent, leaving the specifics of meeting a purchase plan to the vendor.

Thus, at one level, the specifics of a proportion of collection building become the responsibility of a commercial organisation outside of the library. Implications in handing over the responsibility of collection building to vendors emerges through the interviewees' discussion of their collection and acquisition process. Despite valuing their own selection more than they valued their community's contributions, the librarians were reliant on the majority of their collections being selected and supplied by external vendors. These vendors are commercial and for profit organisations. During the duration of the study, one of the major vendors was recruiting staff to fulfil their contracts to provide books to public libraries, with their only listed criterion

being that applicants needed to "like walking into bookshops"[11]. The librarian, then, is no longer the main gatekeeper to the creation of cultural capital through the library collection, nor the only actor in the development of the selective tradition. The vendor chooses for the community based on a trust relationship established with the library. This contractual arrangement impinges on the rules of the field of librarianship; the organisational mission of these vendors necessarily differs from the core professional values of librarians, with power over a key practice in the field of librarianship no longer being entirely under the control of those with cultural competence. This shift in the balance was noted by one interviewee who volunteered the information that the collections team at her library felt that they had given too much power to the vendor and that they were in the process of trying to "claw back" some control over their selections. Another interviewee spoke about the relief that their library service had managed to avoid handing over selection to a commercial provider, though they used the vendor for acquisitions, cataloguing and shelf readying materials.

In this context, interviewees stated that they felt that their work needed them to be making the selections for the library collection themselves, but instead they found themselves writing detailed community profiles, which the vendor then, interpreted to deliver materials for the collection. These statements could be seen as expressions of dissatisfaction, a sign of the misfit of the commercial organisations mission, the library professional's core values and the reflection of their community through the selective tradition. At the macro level, it could be argued that selection was controlled internally through the librarian's development of community profiles and publisher wishlists. However, at the micro level, the level of individual items, the steps leading to the implementation of the selective tradition are controlled by the vendor who makes decisions as to what is actually purchased. The cultural competence of the public librarian is in conflict with the cultural competence of the staff employed by the vendor and may be diminished in the interactions.

The purpose of this study was not to explore the profiles created by librarians and their interpretation by vendors. The reality is that many public libraries have long-term relationships with a vendor which provides materials for the collection that are a close match for materials that the librarians would have selected. The issue here is an abstract one about involvement with the selective tradition. When the vendor takes responsibility for the practice of selection, the selective tradition is no longer directly influenced by the practices of public librarians. Instead, the

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[11] This position was advertised by a library supplier in the jobseeking website Seek.com.au.

selective tradition is influenced by an external, private company that cannot share in the professional values and knowledge of the librarians.

Providing book kits to book groups

Through their book club kits, public librarians can be seen to bolster the selective tradition; this is the maintenance of popular culture into the future. The practice of providing book group kits adds a further dimension to this study, as this practice is concerned with the physical item of the book, in the setting of the library collection, as well as with the cataloguing record, but it is also concerned with the users of the library services and in particular with the practice of social reading.

The practices of selection and the acceptance of donations means that, to varying degrees, romance fiction may be included in library collections; the justification for this, from a professional perspective, may be that librarians are enacting the public library's mandate for social inclusion that promotes reading and literacies through their collections and programs. The practice of selection of titles for book club kits reflects a different set of values. Here, there is evidence of the educational reading ladder encouraging and maintaining higher literacy levels but also of the hierarchy of taste and legitimacy or reading selections. Catherine Sheldrick Ross asserts that librarians still worry about readers of romance fiction: that they buy the romance fiction for their libraries with the thought of "at least they are reading" and then using the rest of the collection to convert them into "proper" readers. As noted earlier, for romance fiction sits at the bottom of the reading ladder and the reader can then aspire to bettering themselves and eventually progressing to the higher rungs of the literary canon.

That romance fiction has its own place for intellectual discourse is not evident through the practices of public librarians. The librarians interviewed were mostly enthusiastic recognising the positive aspects of romance fiction as reading for pleasure, but there was no recognition that romance fiction can be morally complicated, steeped with human complexity and dealing with issues of society, life and intimate relationships that are also grappled with in other genres, including the literary genre. Laura Vivanco draws on the work of two influential scholars, quoting from their work she "affirms that it 'is also possible […] to give some weight to the claim that romance is one of the oldest and most enduring of literary modes which survives today" (Radford, 1986). If the claim is accepted, then popular mass-market romances, including Harlequin Mills & Boon (HM&B) romances, have extremely 'deep taproots that lead all the way back through literary history to medieval romances, and to a pre-literary oral culture (Holmes 2010)'" (2011, p. 12) yet none of these elements of romance reading emerged from the

interviews. Online spaces demonstrate that romance readers critically engage with romance fiction, beyond the casual "leisure reading" or "escapism", but with deep critical exploration of themes, intent, literary value, feminism, gender issues, societal impacts. Online spaces show the value and connections readers bring to their critical discussions of romance novels. However, these conversations do not occur in traditional media nor in physical spaces to the same degree and they certainly are not recognised by librarians as elements that can be found in their practices for members of book groups. This has implications as to the role of the library and its librarians as being part of shaping the selective tradition and in reflecting the cultural engagements of a period of time.

Members of book groups are often seen as members of a cultural elite. The selections made by librarians for inclusion in book club kits also create an elite collection. This second, elite, level of selection into an anointed collection shows librarians remaining resistant to being broad-reaching and inclusive in the types of fiction that they consider important for their community to discuss. The selections identified in this study adhered to the conventional canon of classics and award winners with some selections reflecting the Oprah phenomenon of serious literature focused on women's reading and inspirational stories. These selections eschewed popular fiction and genre fiction, especially romance fiction. In terms of the hierarchy of taste, the books in these kits become the elite as librarians elevate books from the broader collection into a special collection. Where a book becoming part of a library collection is a symbol of cultural legitimacy, a book being elevated into the social discussion space of the book groups supported by the public library results in "gilt-edged symbolic capital" (Roberts & Cohen 2014, p. 248).

At a practical level, reading and books are considered to be synonymous with libraries, but at a conceptual level, libraries are not necessarily about reading as much as about the institutional endorsement of cultural artefacts, practices and ideas that are deemed important from the broader society. Even as "evangelists of culture" (Griswold & Wohl 2015) reaching out to bring their local communities into the library, librarians remain resistant to the inclusion of popular culture. Elizabeth Long argues that reading is profoundly social, observing that social isolation depresses reading and social involvement encourages it (2003, p. 10).

Tensions exist between what my interviewees recognise as an inclusive and broad-reaching approach to reading values in that everyone should be able to read what they want without judgement, and the type of book that should be endorsed for reading programs aimed at creating social discussion. The selection and collection of materials throw light on these tensions and the interviews further show these micro tensions between librarian's literary selections, and their

selections in genre fiction. The types of selection were such that there was very little diversity evident in the selections identified in this study. Not only was romance fiction missing, but so too were other genres such as science fiction and fantasy; further, analysis showed Indigenous voices were barely perceptible. Gaining entry into the elite discussable reading collection of the library is not easy.

Considering the conceptual implications of these practices, it is apparent that through the development of their social reading programs librarians demonstrate their cultural competence and position themselves as having symbolic power. They are constructing and guiding expectations of a form of public discourse. By excluding romance novels from book club kits, librarians are constructing a reading culture where the reading of romance fiction is accepted as an individual interest, but it is not appropriate for inclusion for social discussions. This creation of an elite collection of books which are "discussable and criticizable" demonstrates Bourdieu's description of a field as an exclusionary space. It also elucidates the core of Williams's notion of popular culture, which is based on inclusiveness to represent the cultural engagements of the public. Using his notion of "ordinariness", it is apparent from the analysis of the online book groups on Goodreads that people are already discussing romance fiction critically, this is an expression of the way their everyday life activities. There is no evidence that the collections that underpin community engagement such as online romance book groups are influencing the practices of public librarians, nor that the members of these book groups see the public library as relevant to their reading; instead they are using online and retail spaces to find the expressions of popular culture with which they want to engage. With discussion and critical engagement with romance fiction being led by readers, not cultural authorities, including public librarians, this again suggests that the public library is ceding its place in the selective tradition.

Cataloguing practices and the implications on metadata misapplication

Introduction

This final section reflecting on the practices of the public librarians in this study explores the implications that derive from the question of what does it mean for the selective tradition when romance fiction does not have metadata and how does this absence impact the practices underpinning the relationships between the librarian, the author and the reader. The library catalogue is a reflection of contemporary culture. Before embarking on this aspect of the discussion, it is necessary to restate some of the key aspects of what a bibliographic record is and what a library catalogue is and does, as this professional knowledge, accepted as part of the

cultural competence of the librarian, forms the foundation for the points of discussion. The catalogue is the tool through which the community gains access to the materials that are available in the library with each item being attached to a descriptive bibliographic record that contains informational and accountable data, that is, it is both a catalogue entry and inventory control. The bibliographic record is shaped by international standards governed by library associations such as the Library of Congress, the OCLC (Online Computer Library Centre) and IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) as well as library catalogue record modelling such as FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) which are all examples of the "structuring structures" that govern the way the records are created and the information that they need to contain. These records become searchable through the catalogue once it has been populated with quality metadata. There are accepted criteria for quality metadata such as the requirement for accuracy, consistency and completeness. If an item is not in the catalogue, then it is not represented as being part of the library's collection and therefore is excluded from the selective tradition. And if an item is in the catalogue, but the record is not one that adheres to the criteria required to ensure a quality record, then there are other implications that arise in that the selective tradition is not fully realised. As identified in the findings reported in 'A Matter of Meta', romance fiction catalogue records were found to rarely meet these three criteria of accuracy, consistency and completeness, thus the fiction's ability to gain cultural, economic and symbolic capital is diminished as is the ability for romance fiction to be part of the selective tradition. The implications of the weaknesses in the metadata will be explored from the perspective of responsibility and cultural competence, the impact on the author; the impact upon the data; and the impact upon service delivery and the relationship with readers.

Impact upon the metadata

Librarians have a responsibility to the data that is not being met when romance fiction is not given its full metadata. The responsibility has a complex reach from the requirement to identify the intellectual property of creators, for librarians to meet their obligations towards their library stakeholders both internal to their organisation and the external organisation.

Internal obligations include understanding the role of bibliographic records as part of the inventory and asset holdings of public libraries and their parent council. From this perspective, missing metadata impacts the economic value of the library holdings as an organisational asset. Another internal obligation is that of not placing an unnecessary financial burden on the borrower. An example of where the inventory list, that is the catalogue, was incomplete, and a community member paid for an interlibrary loan for a book that was actually held in the library, but not fully catalogued is detailed in Veros (2012). This financial outlay created an

unsatisfactory experience for the borrower but it also is at odds with the *Library Act* of NSW which stipulates that borrowers are "entitled to borrow free of charge" materials that are part of the library's lending collection.

The implications for not adhering to cataloguing standards does not only impact at the local level of library service provision but also in the information sharing across the international library holdings' collaborative projects. The conventions of professional practice mean that librarians also have responsibilities and obligations for metadata to stakeholders external to their organisation. Librarians increasingly rely upon copy cataloguing – that is downloading a pre-existing record from the National Library – for the majority of their collections, and in return indicate that their particular library owns this title. This creates links across several databases such as the Australian National Library's database *Trove* which links to the World Catalogue. These data links both facilitate collaborative interlibrary lending schemes and reflect the cultural capital as assigned by librarians.

The bibliographic record is regarded to be a "text" in its own right, with the author of the record being considered the authority to the text (Andersen 2009, p.52) then the empty romance fiction bibliographic record depicts an attitude, a sign that this cultural product has no significance, meaning or importance to the knowledge organiser, the author is denied their authority to the text, and there is little attention to the potential user. Recognising a text that does not exist is not possible. Its materiality may exist, it may be circulated by library patrons, but its lack of a suitably enriched catalogue record diminishes its narrative. This is the "unspoken bias" being communicated to the user when there is a lack of information – is it "less important, less popular, or less desirable?" (Pecoskie, Spiteri & Tarulli 2014, p. 450).

Library management systems now have algorithms that inform their borrowers about a variety of patterns of borrowing and patterns of similarities through the catalogue's search interface, such as "people who borrowed [X] book, also borrowed [Y] book, or "titles that are similar to [Z] book". At a micro level, borrowers can see links between similar books or similar borrowing behaviour, however romance fiction with a metadata deficit sits outside of these algorithms and is not given a chance to reflect its activity within the library community's borrowing record. At the level of the catalogues and its purpose, the metadata which could show the relationship of romance fiction to other materials held in the library does not exist and so the books are isolated from the conceptual relationships that link other books.

If the catalogue is not a neutral space, neither is the library. Librarians may say that all reading counts but the evidence in this study demonstrates that their practices do not support this. The

practices of librarians marginalise the highest selling and highest published fiction genre, and in so doing, they are marginalising both the of the fiction and the readers of the fiction. The ARRA survey results over time show the declining use of the library from their respondents, as these readers are turning to alternative access points for their reading selections. By not reflecting the popular culture and the "rejection of considerable areas of what was once a living culture" (Williams, 1965, p. 68), librarians reduce the legitimacy of the library in their community.

When there is no detail in the bibliographic record of romance fiction then there is no possibility for the Readers' Advisory staff to "connect the reader to their book or the book to their reader" (Ranganathan 1932), to echo a mantra of the practice of public librarians. According to Andersen, "the catalogue record as text has a rhetoric" (2002, p. 56) through its expressions of its elements. It can also be argued that a bibliographic record that lacks critical elements such as author and titles, and other creator information that allow for complex, relational linking across other records and library systems, is still a rhetoric – one which conveys an attitude of unimportance and dismissiveness onto the material book in hand. Unfortunately, it is not the one item that receives this treatment, but a whole genre of publishing.

The foregoing discussion has focused on the lack of bibliographic records relevant to a specific item. Those libraries that do assign the base level metadata may also be marginalising romance fiction, separating it from the subject headings that could identify the themes of the content. There is symbolic power behind the selection of metadata. The choice of a mass assigned subject such as "romance fiction" or the improbable "man-woman relationships" not only obfuscates texts but also makes assumptions that romance fiction is concerned only with relationships between a man and a woman, rather than all forms of romantic relationships. The choice to either delete or flood metadata with meaningless information further weakens the reception of a text. Librarians cannot retrieve materials that lack meaningful metadata connections. The social activity of a book cannot be understood without its enriched and meaningful metadata.

Metadata, the surrogate for the book, brought together with circulation data communicates to librarians the borrowing behaviour of their community and informs future acquisitions. By not providing quality metadata for romance fiction, librarians remain ill-informed about the data that they require so they can reliably and consistently deliver to their core collection and acquisition practices.

Impact on the creator

The lack of full bibliographic records for romance fiction has implications for the relationship between the librarian and the author. Not including an author's name in a bibliographic record denies the recognition of the author, although it constitutes an exception to professional practice. The moral rights of authors include the right for attribution and the right to be recognised as the author of the work under the Berne Convention from the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (World Intellectual Property Organisation. [n. d.]). Library data management systems all have structures in place that prioritise the identification of creators in the description of an object. In some of the records that were found in the evidence, the publisher, for example, "Mills & Boon" is identified as the author/creative team, although the individual author is not listed despite each novel being published as a book with a unique ISBN. Both the book and the author are treated, in the words of my interviewees, as "ephemera", a technical word in the professional vocabulary, referring to informational items, such as pamphlets or menus, not intended for long term use. It is worth considering the everyday meaning of the word ephemera, too, as something short-lived or transitory. Structuring structures are in place for romance fiction authors to be recorded, recognised and have their right for attribution recognised. At the highest level of structuring library governance, IFLA does engage in ensuring that libraries recognise the rights of authors stating in their IFLA Code of Ethics that "librarians and other information workers are partners of authors, publishers and other creators of copyright protected works. Librarians and other information workers recognise the intellectual property right of authors and other creators and will seek to ensure that their rights are respected" (International Federation of Library Associations 2012).

However, this core mandate seems to not be as strongly expressed and passed down to other library organisations to be enacted into librarian work practices as much as the rights of the library user is communicated as a core competency. Coyle (2015) makes the assumption that the creator information is well under control and a given in bibliographic records. This assumption that all library and information professionals are at least working on this base level of record provision is blemished by the librarians who continue to operate library services with uncatalogued collections.

Acknowledging the author is not only important in the recognition of their authority as the creator of the text but is also necessary for their compensatory claim to Public Lending Rights (PLR) and copyright payments for they intellectual property. There are 31 countries in the world with a PLR scheme in place. Australia's scheme does not list the library services that were surveyed for the PLR system however, in the period 2015–2019, one of the library authorities participating in the

UK PLR sample had 897 unique accession numbers attached to a Mills & Boon generic record, that is, one with no author's name attached. This practice was found in this study, and it has implications for the earning capacity of authors who may have been eligible for the compensatory payment. Though this study focuses upon the practices in NSW, Australia, the underpinning issues of romance fiction lacking metadata is evident across the world. Crime fiction author Peter Corris described his PLR earnings as "the bedrock of my financial survival" (Crime and the Corris factor 2003). It is impossible to calculate the amount of lost earnings that romance fiction authors have incurred due to these cataloguing practices. It is also impossible to estimate the impact of this practice on the historical record evident through the list of PLR payments to authors as an accurate snapshot of popular culture reading practices of the time and thus also on the reflection of this on public libraries' contributions to the selective tradition.

Implications on browsing and serendipitous searching

The assertion that readers of romance fiction prefer "browsing" collections and enjoy finding books purely through serendipity positions the romance reading individual in a different relationship to their books than that of any other reader to their preferred materials. Yu and O'Brien define browsing as "a method of books selection, [which] involves looking around, with the reader hoping to encounter desired books by serendipity" (1996, p. 160). Serendipity however "does not exist within a vacuum, it is the product of context" (Foster & Ellis 2014). Romance fiction becomes an encounter, not a search or a needed fiction. To find something serendipitously requires an item to exist or at least to be a collection item, chosen for the selective tradition. To chance upon an item only through a serendipitous browsing of the physical library constrains the library service. For the reader who prefaces their physical library visits with pre-planning "what they would borrow before visiting their public libraries, drawing ideas from sources such as the internet, book reviews and friends" (Ooi & Liew 2011, p. 758), the reader will not encounter the books they are searching for unless the records exist. Pre-planning is not possible with items not present on the catalogue; and this factor also becomes a hindrance to librarians in their outreach as they also will be unable to find an item without the catalogue record. Concepts of serendipity and browsing emerged through the analysis of my interviews, though were not pursued as they were user behaviours rather than librarian practices. This may be an area of further research especially in understanding of how users engage in library use as compared to how librarians perceived them to use the library especially in the area of how do librarians shape the user experience through the practice of uncatalogued collections.

Implications of shelving and placement

Taking into consideration C. Wright Mill's encouragement to study even the most trivial of subjects (1959) in the day to day environment allowed for a focus on the shelving and placement of romance fiction. This led to an understanding of how shelving decisions support and influence the conceptualisation of library collections through the ways they are housed. Organising principles for the access to collections become important. The literature has shown that librarians conceptualise ordering systems to display materials sometimes in public libraries with the unspoken aim of increasing circulation. These conceptualisations manifest themselves in the placement of the shelves within the library; the presentation of the shelves expressing "meaning in relation to the whole library space."

Thus, bookshelves can be seen to frame library collections. Shelving is thought to be neutral, nothing more than necessary fixtures and fittings. However, investigating shelving and the placement of romance fiction reveals the way the shelves influence the selective tradition and its expressions. When looking at only the fiction aspect of the underpinning organising principles for this study, the simple concept of the alphabet as an "ordering principle" (2014, Ross, p.1) was found in all of the libraries visited. Commenting on the alphabetical ordering of fiction, one librarian (L5), noted that in some libraries "*they have consciously integrated things because of that [exposing readers to other genres]. That's one of the reasons, so people are exposed to lots of different authors…*".

One of the consequences of the use of this simple ordering principle is that any fiction that is not interfiled is excluded and becomes a metaphorical 27th letter of the alphabet as it sits outside of the standard expectation of the alphabet. If the orderly and organisational practices of librarians gravitate towards a system that privileges materials organised by the author surname, and a whole genre of literature is shelved beyond the boundaries of this parameter, then at one level, it can be seen that this genre is not part of the collection. Alphabetical sequencing brings equality to an item, as Ross (2014) argued. Items not shelved in this sequence are, therefore, not equal.

Ordering principles are intended to show the completeness of a collection, and to enable readers to find known items. One of the arguments for not maintaining an alphabetical order is that genre collections such as romance fiction are "browsing" collections, that is, collections ordered (or not ordered) by the practice of readers who are not searching for a specific book, but who want to find a book in a given genre that they would enjoy reading. The activity of browsing involves engagement with specific items, rather than engagement with the book's surrogate in the library catalogue. However, even within their definition of "browsing" collections, romance fiction

collections tended to still be treated differently in that the other browsing collections were fully catalogued and searchable on the library catalogue whereas romance fiction books were not. The implication here is that librarians' adherence to ordering principles are also reflections of the value upon which they put on collections. Another ordering principle identified during the visits to library branches related to traffic flows, within the library, with three areas being identified – high traffic areas, low traffic areas and transition zones, this latter being parts of the library not primarily devoted to shelving the collection. Transition zones might be the space surrounding the circulation desk or the inquiry desk, or immediately inside the library building, where pamphlets relating to local services might be displayed; they can be high traffic. Being placed in transition zones (Veros [under review]) applies a lower value to the books. Placing collections into transition zones, not valuing collections enough to apply key practices of ordering to them is evidence of the marginalisation of those books. The study found that donations were rarely integrated into the ordered collection. Thus, materials from the community are kept separate from the materials that have been selected by librarians for the community.

The observations in the physical space of the library emphasised this separation. It tends to be an accepted practice within libraries that romance fiction sits outside of the ordering of the general fiction collection, identified, in this way as a separate collection. Of the library branches that I visited there was not a single library that did not have this separation. Either romance fiction was shelved at the end of the alphabetised fiction collection, at the end of bays or on unfixed paperback stands in both high traffic and low traffic areas of the library[12]. The separated romance fiction collection seems to be considered a collection that does not need to adhere by the librarian's organisational ordering schemas. Even within the libraries whose fiction was ordered by genre, the romance section was the only genre that also had a sub-subset of publications that were not shelved within this chosen ordering system as all the Mills & Boon novels were placed on spinners separately from the other romance books.

Another factor to take into account in the shelving of items in the library is the container. The ability for the object to fit into or onto the shelving or storage systems that are part of the infrastructure of the library can also influence practices. Thus, when librarians come across a format that does not fit into the "system" of orderliness, they signal the otherness of the item and others like it through separating out items which are non-compliant. In discussing these separated romance fiction collections, librarians shift the onus away from their decisions on the library

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[12] It should be noted that 3 library branches visited seemed to have an integrated collection, though on further investigation, they did not actually have any mass-market paperback romance fiction as no presence of the genre was found either from browsing the shelves nor searching the catalogue.

ordering system and potential elements of non-compliance and point to the reading community requiring or expecting the romance fiction collection to be separated.

These separated collections may then be further identified as separate as the librarians apply a system of symbols to the books, through stickers Adkins, Esser and Velasquez discuss "the red dot district" of the public library (2006) and the practice of colour coding genre fiction with stickers. This is a practice often based on an in-house system that is decided upon by collection teams. This sticker system is not a professional standard that needs to be adhered to, however, library suppliers do sell a range of genre stickers that shape the expectations of order and classification that a library can choose for themselves. The interviews showed that there were libraries that outsourced the genre sticker process to their vendors and others who saw it as their opportunity to place their own assessment of the item. This system of visually tagging books to identify their contents become a symbolic gesture communicating to the potential reader the theme and genre of a book. This communication of meaning through genre stickers is at odds with the alphabetical arbitrariness of general fiction collections. The neutrality of the alphabet as an ordering system is negated through the use of the stickers.

The interviews showed that the application of the sticker becomes a symbolic action, in some instances a process where the decisions lack clarity. The interviewees were asked to clarify how decisions were made as to which genre is communicated. Librarian 1.3 explained that there was a hierarchy in the stickers used in that library. For the general collection, Australian flags were seen as important signifiers to alert readers to Australian published content, with the Aboriginal flag sticker surpassing the Australian flag in importance. Other themes and genres are secondary to being an Indigenous or Australian author. However, an anomaly arose when the discussion turned to 'chick lit' – a genre that is closely associated with romance fiction: at this particular library, the sub-genre of rural romance was given an Australian flag, yet the four 'chick lit' novels by Anita Heiss, a Wiradjuri woman, were given the heart sticker rather than the Aboriginal flag sticker. When questioned on the lack of an Aboriginal sticker on these four titles, Librarian 1.3 responded that "[Anita Heiss] kind of writes from an Indigenous perspective but that's not the main driver behind her writing [those four books]". This justification would seem to be at odds with Anita Heiss's stated intent to insert urban Aboriginal women into the popular fiction narrative with Heiss stating "all of my books are essentially about love and relationships, but they're also about the complexities of interracial relationships and how Aboriginal women in the 21st century juggle individual goal-setting with community responsibility" (Heiss, 2011)[13]. This example shows the

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[13] Anita Heiss's non-fiction book *Am I Black enough*? was one of the few titles written by a First Nations author that was included in the book club kits.

complexity surrounding popular culture and the creation of the selective tradition, through the recognition and valuing of particular notions of taste and legitimacy. Heiss's popular novels have covers that clearly signify the contents fall within the 'chick lit' genre and this is further confirmed by her publicity including her personal website, yet her work clearly evidences other aspects of cultural capital. The decisions on whether to apply the Aboriginal flag sticker, the Australian flag sticker or only the romance fiction sticker show how a book can be reduced to the lowest common denominator and, symbolically, separated from its place in a cultural tradition.

Because romance fiction has not traditionally been intellectualised or considered important in the literary tradition, librarians mirrored the values of it being what was perceived to be a lesser fiction through their various practices, pushing romance fiction to the exclusion areas of the library, as such, the bottom rung of Ross's reading ladder (1987, p. 149). Part of the assumption is, that since Rudolph Bold's beseeching to take romance readers into the library fold, since Francine Fialkoff announced that *Library Journal* will be publishing romance fiction reviews, and since the publication of library guides such as Kristin Ramsdell's *Romance fiction: A Guide to the* Genre (1999, 2012) as part of the Genreflecting Advisory Service, that romance fiction is now collected and promoted as a legitimized reading option in libraries. However, through an ethnographic examination of library practices, it is evident that romance fiction continues to be excluded from broader library programs. Though there has been a significant amount of improvement in the past quarter of a century, practices still need to be examined and understood. The structuring structures of the profession demonstrate the principles of valuing all information, so treatment of romance fiction is an indication that public librarians have worked outside the values of their profession. Preconceptions of romance fiction influenced the way that it was collected and classified and promoted in the library, often disappearing the fiction due to the judgement that it carried. Romance fiction carries a deep significance for its readers, yet this significance is lessened and diminished through the treatment it receives. These all amount to micro practices which cumulatively build up to having large impacts not only upon the collection and reception of romance fiction, but also upon the perception of librarians by the community who may feel that the library meets some of their needs but does not completely value the interests and engagements of their public. The practices of public librarians which marginalise romance fiction is not a "trivial" matter (Mills, 1959, p. 188). The practice of creating absences to the cultural outputs of author does not align with the stated values of the profession. Librarians should be acting with generosity in building their relationships with their communities and this can only be possible through recognising and valuing popular culture using the values that underpin the profession. There is a need to acknowledge that librarians will continue to be

influenced by the perceptions and commentary created by other fields such as the field of literary review, however they should not be deterred from fulfilling the requirements needed to accept an aspect of popular culture into the fullness of the selective tradition. For the creators and consumers of popular culture that sit outside of the parameters used by institutions, there needs to be a way that they can be brought into the cultural conversation, be given recognition and visibility from within the alphabet and not outside it. Librarian practices need to be able to recognise *how* bias is inherent so there is a need to be familiar with the organisational and ordering tools that can apply some semblance of neutrality. The roles of librarians continue to change but the core of the work that they do must act as a guide forward. This will support a comprehensive understanding of the selective tradition for librarians to give institutional acceptance through their approaches valuing of all aspects of popular culture, and having the raised awareness of the societal and cultural impacts that librarians create.

Contributions to Research Practices

This study has made a number of contributions to the fields of study, and to the practices of public librarianship. The study has also introduced a number of innovations, including the use of ethnography as the research method and the use of innovative analytical tools.

The use of ethnography is relatively recent in the field of library and information studies. One of the main reasons for this is since 1970s, the predominant conceptual focus has been on individuals, their information needs and information behaviours; thus, the work of librarians, if it was of concern at all, was seen through the lens of the users of the service. The beginnings of the shift to the centrality of the information practices still tended to focus on the people who used or created information rather than on those providing the information services (Hill & Pecoskie 2017; Lloyd 2005; Mckenzie 2003). The landmark study of romance fiction conducted in the US by Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill (2006; 2008) is one of the few that can be seen to have taken an ethnographic approach. This is somewhat more obvious in the first part of the study, based on the libraries of Missouri, than in the second part of the study where the shift to encompassing a US-wide study has led to a report which at one level is closer to that of a survey.

The methodological innovation here is through the use of Bourdieu's concepts of structuring structures as a systematic way of approaching the ethnographic case study. The "case study" requires an examination of institutional documents and rules which are used to identify the structuring structures. In the ethnographic part of the study, it is the "structured structures" that shapes and is shaped by the personal perspective – as such, the "habitus". The "structuring

structures" become an analytical tool which for librarian practices became a useful way for identifying core professional values, documents and legal obligations. The concept of the "structuring structures" allows for the identification of not only the values, but critically, allowed for the identification of the unseen gaps and absences that needed to be addressed. To add to this, the "structuring structures" allows for the understanding of what the institutional social order is to work out who the stakeholders are; how is the library socially created; and how do these structures expose the past practices so to allow for the understanding of current practices.

The use of Bourdieu's structuring structures as an analytical tool is a methodological innovation. In particular, it allowed the identification of the "orthodoxy of the practice", that is the statements of generalised professional values and attitudes espoused by public librarians, as well as an orthodoxy of practice for including romance fiction in a public library collection. It identified that the creators of works held in libraries are acknowledged as important by the IFLA statements, although this principle is absent from the statements seen as key documents in New South Wales. Further, it identified the legislation that structures certain practices, including the Public Lending Right, legislation through which authors are recompensed for the copies of their works held in libraries based on the number of loans. The consideration of this legislation as a structuring structure for the practices of librarians highlighted the significance of practices which undermined the principles inherent in the legislation. Thus, this innovative tool not only showed that there was a discrepancy between what participants said and what they and other public librarians did (Bryman, 2016, p. 268), it was able to show how the discrepancy occurred, thus extending an understanding of how romance fiction is marginalised by the practice of public librarians.

A second methodological innovation has been the use of Genette's concept of transtextuality. Genette, a literary theorist was concerned about the relationships existing between a text and other texts. This is not the first time the concept has been used in information studies; it has been used to examine the bibliographic record (Anderson, 2002), as a point of access (Paling 2002) as well as an informational tool (Pecoskie & Desrochers 2013). My initial use was of the sub-concept of paratext to explore the relationship of cataloguing records to romance fiction books held in a library. This was extremely useful in revealing how the anticipated practice of a book (a text) being matched by a cataloguing record (paratext) was not followed and how this had the effect of making the book disappear. From this first use of the concept of transtextuality, it became an analytical tool which allowed me to identify the relationships between the librarians, their practices and the book itself and to understand these conceptually and positionally in terms of proximity. In other words, it became an important thinking tool at an abstract level. This was

particularly relevant in the context of my ethnographic case study which involves an examination of practices relating to the material object of the romance fiction book, as well as the abstraction of romance fiction as a genre in popular culture. Using Genette's concept of transtextuality, I was able to understand and label the differences in the practice of librarians as they worked with the abstract notion of the genre (architext), the books themselves (texts) and cataloguing records (paratext), and to understand the processes of the creation of cultural capital, the workings of the selective tradition and the marginalisation of romance fiction in a more nuanced way. Although little of this is evident from the text of the thesis, it was an important tool in understanding these processes.

Genette's work also provided the conceptual ability to think about the thesis by compilation as a genre of writing, requiring in particular relationships of intertextuality (quotation and allusion) and metatextuality (critical commentary) between my work in the journal articles and my work on presenting the thesis. In this way, as well as being a tool of analysis for the ethnographic case study it also became a tool for shaping this scholarly writing.

Interdisciplinary studies discussion

From the very beginning, my study was grounded in librarianship and popular culture with my first two conference presentations being a week apart, one at the Australian Library and Information Association's annual conference, and the following week at the Popular Culture Association of Australia and New Zealand's annual conference. This early exposure to these two areas of scholarship allowed for testing of the strength of the integration of the "interdependent parts of knowledge" and supported the development of scholarly articles published in (or submitted to) journals in the fields of library and information management, popular culture and romance fiction studies. While the practices of public librarians are considered in the context of library and information management, they are also positioned in popular culture and in romance fiction studies. Three papers, two published and one still under review, demonstrate how knowledges from these two fields are brought harmoniously into the study. Gérard Genette's theories of transtextualities were key to my articles, 'A Matter of Meta' and 'Metatextual Conversations', and Pamela Regis's eight essential elements for the narrative structure of a romance novel frame my article 'Nobody puts romance fiction in the corner' and act as structuring principles.

In particular, Gérard Genette's theories allowed me to conceptualise the materiality of the book with all its attachments, including its bibliographic record, impacting the thesis as a whole to reflect the conceptual and methodological similarities between the fields of study and elevate the

study to the transdisciplinary "higher level of integrated study" which is "concerned with the unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives" (Stember 1991, p. 4).

Conclusion

This chapter has set out how the practices of public librarians can create absences in collections and in the bibliographic record and how these absences impact on popular culture and its institutionalisation through the implementation of the selective tradition. In doing this, it has reflected on this concept, a potential need for its re-positioning in a context where the processes for the creating and valuing of popular culture are different from those of the 1960s. Through using Bourdieu's structuring structures, it has been able to shed light on the principles that underpin the part that public librarians play in the creation of cultural capital in a community and importantly has brought to the fore the concept of cultural competence and its relevance for understanding the knowledge base that public librarians require. These insights, which derive in part from the interdisciplinary nature of the study, make a significant contribution to an understanding of the relationship between popular culture and what librarians do. These practices that create absences have implications beyond a reconsideration of the concepts that framed the study. They also have a range of practical implications, not the least of which are the implications for metadata. At one level, the way a bibliographic record is presented relates only to the item it describes, but when it becomes a surrogate for the item and the catalogue is seen as a reflection of the collection of a library, absences in the bibliographic record take on a different character. They may hide books held in libraries and they weaken the idea of a distributed national collection by not reporting holdings. The catalogue record is fundamental to the workings of the Public Lending Right system, and the absences, therefore, affect the income of the authors. And the catalogue is an essential tool for the community as many readers in public libraries, who use it to plan and find the books they will read. Finally, the chapter emphasises how the approach to the methodology that underpins this study has been innovative. It has begun from a seemingly trivial observation, and adapted and used a range of tools of scholarship that have enabled an important question to be answered through a level of interpretation not achievable in more traditional approaches.

This chapter has shown the contributions that the study has made, conceptually and methodologically. It has also shown that this is a complex area and that many conceptual, methodological and practical issues remain to be investigated.

Conclusion

This study shows that the practices of some public librarians marginalise romance fiction and demonstrates how the cumulative effects of these practices impact upon popular culture. In this study, librarians may only have one of the practices that marginalise, or they may have all four of the researched practices within their library. At one level, these findings confirmed previous research on romance fiction in public libraries and then extended upon the work of Flesch (1999), Adkin, Esser, Velasquez and Hill (2006; 2008) and Ramsdell (2012, 2018). The ethnographic case study began with a comprehensive approach investigating the range of practices at all the library services in New South Wales, but after the early stages of data collection, the focus was narrowed to concentrate on the libraries where the analysis of bibliographic records revealed romance fiction collections containing incomplete catalogue records with no author or meaningful title information or where bibliographic records for romance fiction were non-existent. In other words, the study focused on librarians creating absences through their practices.

The ethnographic case study approach allowed for an investigation of the professional context within which the practices were enacted, the structures that were in place and the cultural impacts upon the different practices influencing the inclusion/exclusion of romance fiction into public library collections and services. Even if romance fiction books appear to be held in a library, this study has shown that they may not be fully integrated into the whole service whether it is at the point of acquisition, the point of cataloguing or the floor location. Even for those libraries where the practices of librarians have fully integrated romance fiction at these three points of practice, the practices demonstrated they were still omitting romance fiction from the book club kits, the library collection that privileges select titles to support and facilitate cultural discussions in their communities.

It is at this point in this consideration of the cultural context of romance fiction in libraries that this study begins to go beyond existing research. The library as a site for cultural production is also a place that needs to include all popular expressions as valuable and discussable in their community. Outputs of practice do not occur in a void – outputs are expressions of the values of the people who are responsible for these outputs. Any bias, whether deliberate or unconscious, is revealed through the examination of these outputs as part of an ethnographic methodology. Using Bourdieu's notions of structuring structures and cultural competence, these outputs demonstrate knowledge, skills and values, and symbolically position formalised behaviours and professional values in particular ways within professions. The study links these practices, in the context of popular culture, with Williams's concept of the selective tradition, in his view, the way in which

items of contemporary culture become institutionalised and therefore are recognised as representing the culture of the time.

The literature of librarianship is often normative, or aspirational, and this study provides some empirical evidence in support of some of these claims. Joyce Saricks (1986), for example, argues against the practice of leaving paperback collections uncatalogued, a practice which she asserted was popular in public libraries, because of its impact on readers; and although this practice may be recognised in the professional context, my review of the literature indicates that no other research had been conducted on this point. My study revealed various impacts that uncatalogued collections create, from the lack of informational and relational metadata collections, possible financial impacts within the thirty-one countries with public lending rights payments to authors and creators, the impact on the visibility of authors and the cultural capital that books gain through their inclusion in library collections. In taking Catherine Sheldrick Ross's notion of the unbiased serendipity that is afforded by the alphabet as an ordering system, I was able to conceptualise how treating a collection as existing beyond the alphabet, as belonging to Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill's "Red Dot District", creates a system of marginalisation.

Similarly, I have built upon Juliet Flesch's assertion that community donations form library romance fiction collections and Kristin Ramsdell's view that donations do not represent the best of the romance fiction genre. This study reveals the attitudes some librarians hold towards donated collections and how they differ in respect to which library collection the donation is assigned to, with the differences of treatment being symbols of distinction: bestsellers were likely to be afforded full bibliographic records which are linked to the national database and romance fiction was not afforded any unique bibliographic records. Romance fiction may be accepted into the library for leisure, as a beach read and pleasure reading, but these books do not reach the point of what Bourdieu would refer to as "cultural consecration" of the texts. Exclusion from the regular collection and from book club kits, which position selected titles as "discussable and criticizable", romance fiction is not considered worthy of social reading and discussion. This particular practice shows the selections of public librarians as not reflecting romance fiction, along with other genre fiction, as meaningful despite evidence of its importance to readers in online spaces.

Thus, this study has shown how romance fiction is marginalised, to some extent through practices that work against the knowledge, skills and values of professional practice. The empirical evidence, drawn from a range of sources, as befits an ethnographic study, provides support for a number of normative assertions made over time in the literature. Finally, it is important to

emphasise that this study was concerned with the practice of librarians creating absences related to romance fiction in public libraries and has not investigated the presence of romance fiction, nor its extent.

Innovations

The study is innovative both conceptually and methodologically. It has positioned the practices of public librarians in relation to romance fiction in the wider context of popular culture. The various innovative approaches are set out below.

The study has used Williams's concept of the selective tradition to re-think the ways in which public librarians are involved in the creation of the culture which will be remembered in the future through their collection development practices. In this process, it has not only shown how these practices are removing librarians from active engagement in the institutionalisation of popular culture, but importantly has shown that the concept itself is constrained by the contemporary context. These constraints arise because changes in technology have shifted the emphasis away from institutions as thought leaders and have enabled individuals and groups to make a place for themselves as thought leaders in contemporary popular culture.

Another conceptual innovation has come through the use of Bourdieu's cultural competence. Although he moved away from using this concept as he developed the concept of habitus, it was particularly useful in this study as way to identify and analyse the professional knowledge, skills and values of public librarians, and to link them into the context of the profession through documents that are fundamental to practice.

Bourdieu considered this concept and others, such as the structuring structures, used in this study as thinking tools. While other scholars may use models to bound their study and frame analysis and interpretation, in this study I adopted Bourdieu's notion of thinking tools, as documented in the Methodology chapter. The value of placing the thinking tool over the model is that it provides a structure for consideration of data but does not lead to a predefined outcome; instead the outcome is dependent on the interpretation of the scholar. Text books and studies on research methods tend to take a pragmatic, generalised approach to processes of analysis and interpretation and few studies set out the epistemological approach they have taken. Thus, the overt use of thinking tools in this study sets it apart from other studies.

One of these tools was particular helpful to me in my development as a scholar and that was Genette's notion of transtextualities. This guided me from early in my doctoral work in analysing

the various relationships that can be discerned from bibliographic records within a catalogue. However it has been my engagement with his category of architextuality of a text – that level of abstraction that allows for ordering, organising and conceptualising where a work fits within the broader cultural sphere – that has given me a way to engage with the writing of each chapter of this thesis, and a way of deciding what parts of my writing were to be used within the thesis, within the journal articles, or remain as "fringe thoughts" in my notes, suspended as the marginalia of the thesis, or perhaps will be used in journal articles that will develop beyond the doctoral writing. I believe that the documenting of my processes here will be a significant contribution to the practices of thesis writing.

In this vein, to some extent this thesis by compilation is itself an innovation. One can see that in Key Findings chapter, which presents the published and submitted papers, a methodological innovation is the use of the palimpsest, where previous writing is revisited and reconsidered within a different context with new insights emerging; this is evident in the linking (metatextual) commentaries developed for each paper. I use palimpsest here in the way Genette (1997a) uses it, as a document or piece of work that is created through a process of layering, both in style and in meaning, with each new layer adding greater depth and complexity to the original document's purpose. However, even if I were to take the dictionary definition of a palimpsest, whereby previous writing is deleted and over-written with new writing, this speaks metaphorically to the process of writing a thesis, and other academic writing such as journal articles. The metaphor of the palimpsest allows for the reframing and recontextualising of previous work, but also recognises that the documented writing in the thesis is underpinned by the unwritten text that has been deleted, edited and reworded.

A further innovation in this study has been the use of the ethnographic case study, with its emphasis on the practices of public librarians. The use of ethnography is somewhat recent in studies in librarianship and information management, and where it has been used it tends to focus on a relatively small group of people, for example employees in an organisation or members of a community group. The use of the ethnographic case study enabled boundaries to be set in a different way, as explained in the methodology chapter, moving away from the single group. Another innovation, within the ethnographic case study was the way that field observation was used. It was used in the conventional way of visits to physical spaces, that is, library buildings. However, it was acknowledged that the day to day practices of librarians may reveal little of significance and that it is the cumulation of these practices that is important. Thus, the site of observation had to encompass the outputs of practice; and so, the online catalogues of public libraries were key to the field observations for this study as they demonstrate the outputs of the

practices of selection and cataloguing, give some indication of shelving practices and also provide data on outreach practices such as book club kits.

The implications of the study

This study extends our understanding of the practices of librarians within public libraries. It has examined a recognised issue within the profession, that some types of material may not form part of the library's collection, but it has done so in such a way that it positions the practices of librarians both in the context of the espoused values and standards of the profession as well as in the context of the development of popular culture. While the guiding value statements of the practice may be acknowledged in the abstract, this study has shown misalignments in the practices of librarians leading to some types of material not being treated equally with others. This has implications for the wider reading interest of the community as well as for the authors of the books, who are creators of intellectual property.

Firstly, readers of romance fiction may not find in the public library the books they are interested in reading, even if the library holds them, whether through a selection process or through donations. The Australian Romance Readers Association surveys have shown that, over time, the public library as a source of romance fiction books for the readers responding to the survey has become much less important. Thus, librarians may be missing an opportunity to engage with a section of the community. Another implication, moves the focus upon a closer scholarly relationship between the field of popular romance studies and the field of librarianship, understanding how romance readers apply meaning to their reading selections and how this could be applied and reflected through the various library practices.

The lack of complete cataloguing records, a practice not unique to the practices of librarians in this study but also found in libraries in the UK and in North America, especially ones that break with the accepted standard of author and title conventions, has implications for readers, as already noted, but it also has implications for the listings, such as the Australian national bibliographic database Trove, whose aim is to create and reflect a virtual national collection. Without a full bibliographic record, librarians have nothing to contribute to this national record, which provides a window on those books and other materials worthy of inclusion in a distributed national collection.

Whereas once it was librarians who had the specialist knowledge to apply subject headings and descriptors to bibliographic records, this study has shown that the responsibilities for doing this are passing to publishers and library suppliers (vendors) and that sources from the publishing

field, such as Goodreads and Novelist Plus have developed descriptors far more relevant to fiction, and in particular, genre fiction. Librarians are already using these products for readers' advisory work but could further develop their expertise by using them to enhance and adapt the metadata in bibliographic records.

The study findings may also have implications for collection development policies. These are mostly modelled on the *Living learning libraries: standards and guidelines for NSW public libraries* (Quinn & McCallum, 2019) from the State Library of New South Wales, which is, of necessity, a generic statement. Most of the public policy statements are generic, offering the community little opportunity to understand the priorities which guide the selection of books into the public library. There is scope for collection development policies to have clearer statements as to what materials will be included in the collection, how they will be collected and the obligations to the authors and creators whose products are held in the library. In the interests of accessibility and transparency, these clarifications are important to communities.

Finally, the practices of not cataloguing romance fiction or of only providing a generic record has implications for authors. Although the partnership between authors and librarians is a stated value in IFLA's principles guiding librarianship, very few librarians have been aware that this practice works to the detriment of authors who are consequently unable to claim compensation through the Public Lending Right scheme, thus losing a portion of their income.

Public librarians may once have acted as cultural gatekeepers, in the way that Williams refers to in his elaboration on the selective tradition. This study has shown that they have not taken up the role in relation to romance fiction, and there is some evidence that the cultural competence that allowed them to play this role in the past may need to be extended to include knowledge of genre fiction, ways to identify books appropriate for the community, to describe items bibliographically and ways to include them in outreach programs, especially in kits for book groups.

The cross disciplinary focus of this study is significant. The research interests of aspects of librarianship, such as those considered in this study have clear links with the research interests of scholars in popular culture, but especially in the Australian context, there is little recognition of these common interests. My experience has been that scholars from library and information studies rarely present their work at popular culture conferences such as the Popular Culture Association of Australia and New Zealand conferences, the Genre Con conferences, and ARRA conventions, and popular culture scholars almost never present their work at conferences concerned with the practices of librarians or the institutionalisation of cultural practices through libraries. At the international level, the Popular Culture Association has a dedicated Libraries,

Archives and Museum area of study, and this is an area where a relationship to advance the relevancy between public libraries and Australian popular culture could be developed in Australia.

Limitations of the study

This thesis is multifaceted in its exploration of distinct practices of public librarians. By investigating each of the practices I revealed the breadth of marginalisation of romance fiction in public libraries - if librarians do select romance fiction , they may not fully catalogue the romance fiction they receive as donations; and if they do, they may or may not interfile their romance fiction with other fiction; and regardless of how the fiction is shelved, it still remains that romance fiction, indeed any genre fiction other than crime fiction, was not included in book club kits and therefore it can be concluded is not considered suitable, discussable fiction for the cultural engagement of their community. Each of the practices is complex, and could be the focus of a research question in its own right.

The use of ethnography brought limitations with it. A questionnaire distributed to all of the public libraries in Australia could have included many more library systems in the study, and such an approach would have provided answers to questions about practices of selection and cataloguing. However, this was a study of absences, real of created, or of not working with the standards of professional practice. Thus, collecting multi-faceted data from a smaller number of settings allowed these absences to emerge, so the scope of the practices could be explored to bring out the complexity of the cultural competence of librarians. A further limitation may be seen in that each published article focused on a different practice and therefore drew on different aspects of the rich data collected. Taking the articles as a set, however, demonstrates how the answers based on separate practices work together to show the variety of factors leading to romance fiction being marginalised, and how an exploration of the practices of public librarians shed light on the concept of the selective tradition through which expressions of culture become institutionalised.

A key limitation of ethnography is that the findings cannot be generalized. Nonetheless, the bounded nature of this ethnographic case study, including the use of the thinking tool of structuring structures, and the ways the findings are reported in the literature have ensured that the study is trustworthy and the findings have a measure of transferability.

A further limitation arises from the time frame over which this study has been undertaken. This study commenced in 2012. Since then, there have been technological innovations around e-books and especially in terms of the way that romance readers choose their formats; the data from the

Australian Romance Readers Association shows a substantial shift away from print reading to digital reading during the study period. The naturally occurring data that I would now also include is that of romance fiction in the e-library offerings in public libraries. When I conducted my initial research (Veros 2012), this was still at its inception with only a small number of public libraries in NSW at the time having substantial e-collections. The passage of time affected other aspects of the practices of librarians. Collections in public libraries are constantly changing, with new books entering the collection and old books being withdrawn. The ways of working within particular libraries was also being modified, meaning that the specifics of practices identified in libraries in 2012 may no longer be the same in 2020. A clear example of this is in the practice of shelving and floor placement with several libraries which I visited numerous time having refits and new libraries being built. Another key factor was the 2016 council mergers resulting in the 102 library services identified at the start of the study being reduced to 90.

That this study did not take a feminist approach and was not concerned with issues of gender and diversity may be considered a limitation of the study. Questions around feminism did arise in the interviews and they were raised during my conference presentations, as did questions about the inclusion of LGBTQI-oriented romance fiction, which is another popular area in the publishing industry. Also raised by the interviewees were issues on interstitial fiction with questions around "chick-lit", "rural romance" and "women's fiction" and whether they fit within or outside of the romance fiction genre. This was an area that did arise in my defining of the boundaries of my research of romance fiction and also arose in the interviews and was evident in the way some authors works were treated in libraries. While all of these are interesting and valid issues for scholarly research, with the exception of the discussion section on Anita Heiss's novels, they were mostly outside of the scope of this study, as were the now well established trends of fan-fiction and online self-publishing.

Areas for future research

A number of areas for further research emerge as a result of this study. They include ways of extending the current study, threads that were already foreshadowed by the research question but not followed and questions that arose during the completion of the study.

An obvious area for further research would be to extend the current study to include e-fiction. The e-formats and other technological changes that have occurred over the duration of this study, have made significant changes to the publishing of romance fiction and to the preference of its readers. The Australian Romance Readers' Associations (ARRA) survey participants have reported a significant shift away from print reading, having adopted the various formats of e-

books in inverse proportions to mass-market paperbacks in the space of a decade since the survey's inception and having embraced the self-publishing phenomenon.

Another area of research could be in studying the romance readers' perspective – to complement the work of ARRA, positioning romance reading in the broader context of a person's reading; perhaps to include a broader study of readers and their experiences with or perceptions of public libraries. ARRA's survey results are a rich source of naturally occurring data which has been gathered outside of a retail/corporate or institutional setting spanning over ten years. The existing survey results at this stage only provided quantitative information and an ethnographic study would provide insights into the decision-making behaviour of readers. Like the work of Adkins, Esser, Velasquez and Hill, the ARRA survey provides a benchmark and any further research would build on this.

The ethnographic approach used in this study could be extended to investigate the treatment of other genres such as science fiction and crime fiction, especially in light of crime fiction being considered more favourably in the practices of public librarians, as is evidenced in the analysis of data on book club kits in this study. The ARC project researching 21st century publishing emphasised romance fiction, science fiction and fantasy, and crime fiction in their investigation of the intellectual and creative outputs of Australian writers. Extending this current thesis to include the other two genres would allow for a more integrated understanding how the practices of librarians vary in their treatment of genre fiction.

An important aspect of the findings of this current study related to cataloguing practices. Another shift over the duration of the study has been the shift in responsibilities for the development of the bibliographic record used in library collections. As an extension of this current study, cataloguing practices such as the use of generic titles, and the outsourcing of the provision of bibliographic data to library suppliers and to publishers is an area that demands attention. This could include investigating the creation and use of metadata as an act of applying cultural capital to library materials and considering the implications of practices where obfuscation of metadata or of the witholding of the book's record has occurred.

In this study, the unexpected emergence of issues around expressions of community expectations of a collection placed a focus upon donations. Further research on the community's engagement with collection building could include librarians' perceptions and actions around donated collections, the type of people who donate materials and the esteem

that both the people and the collections are held in, as well as perceptions of purchase requests and their requesters. Further to this, the perceptions of librarians upon pleasure and leisure reading could also be revealing of collection building and donation treatments.

The feminist angle is completely missing from this study – a feminist investigation of the practices of librarians, especially within public libraries, with a view to understanding if collection building and service delivery act as a site of resistance, and whether the role of romance fiction provision has any possible role in such a resistance. Germaine Greer's labelling of romance readers as "supermenial" during the second wave of feminism is now part of the selective tradition that may have informed librarians. However, the 21st century and the third wave of feminism is intersectional and pluralistic in its representations of gender, class, sexuality, race and other measures of diversity. Thus, this is an aspect which merits research into how this impacts the practices of librarians.

Finally, the concept of the selective tradition and its application for contemporary culture needs reconsideration. There is a tension in the institutionalisation of culture and who is responsible for it. Technological changes have altered the way we understand popular culture and how its manifestations are acquired and made available; these affect not only in its contemporaneousness but also its possible historical representations when future people look back and try to understand the culture of this time. The role of librarians as cultural arbiters, as part of this selective tradition, is a significant topic for further research to understand their place in this society.

In conclusion

The seed of the idea for this study was planted in me, a public librarian by profession, by an author who was also in attendance at the Australian Romance Readers Association's 2009 convention. My response was to recognise the serious implications of this author's claim. The conversation caused me to look around me in my professional world, to listen more carefully to how people talked about what they did, to observe how librarians, romance fiction books and their readers interacted. What I observed and my reflections on what librarians did, eventually led to a question outside of professional practice, a question that could only be answered through research and scholarship. Any concerns I had about a study focusing on the everyday decisions of librarians were diminished by C. Wright Mills's writing on Intellectual Apprenticeship, where he emphasises the importance of questions emerging from close observation of the everyday and the processes of conceptualisation.

This conclusion to the study brings me back to that starting point, emphasising the importance of issues arising from observations in the real world and the value in being able to situate these issues in a conceptual context, in order to make sense of them. Starting from the observations of practices in the real world meant that I was not constrained by a particular theoretical approach. A key step was reading Raymond Williams's work on the emergence of popular culture and grasping its relevance to the practices of librarians. Reflecting on my development as a scholar takes me through stages of understanding the significance of observation and the development of thinking tools to make sense of these observations. It reminds me of feeling conflicted, the struggle between myself, the practitioner, and myself, the scholar, especially in the early stages of observing the ethnographic world of public librarians, where the experiential seemed to overwhelm the conceptual.

Without the practitioner, this study would not have begun and without the scholar, it could not have been completed. Its findings will contribute to conceptual development and will hopefully provoke discussion among public librarians.

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