

International Publication Pathways for Australian Comic Books and Graphic Novels

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Abstract

This article answers the question, ‘What are the pathways that Australian creators of comic books and graphic novels commonly follow in order to be published by international publishing houses?’ This research question is significant because it combines two historically distinct fields of research—comics studies and publishing studies—and because it identifies the business practices that determine the comic books and graphic novels by Australian creators that are read by both Australian and international audiences. This article reveals that the interactions of creators and publishing professionals prior to a submission have a formative influence on the pathways to successful publication.

Keywords: comic books, graphic novels, publishing, Australia

Introduction

In this article, we will answer the question, ‘What are the pathways that Australian creators of comic books and graphic novels commonly follow in order to be published by international publishing houses?’ This research question is significant for two reasons.

The first of these reasons is that it combines two historically distinct fields of research. In her 2013 journal article ‘Behind the Panel: Examining Invisible Labour in the Comics Publishing Industry’, Padmini Ray Murray [8] observed that, ‘despite the growing sophistication of comics studies as a discipline, it has yet to fully embrace the cultural materialist approaches of book history and publishing studies’. Murray [8] goes on to explain, ‘In its nervous bids for legitimacy, comics studies fell prey to the critical approach that prioritised close (and closed) readings of literary texts’. Then, just last year, Dale Jacobs [5] called for ‘comics studies to

become a fully interdisciplinary endeavor ... by incorporating methodologies and ways of thinking from the fields of book history and media studies into comics studies'. Clearly, scholars of comics studies had yet to heed Murray's exhortation from seven years earlier. Therefore, in the first part of this article, we will provide an overview of the relationship of comics studies with book history and publishing studies, which is one of book history's related fields or subdisciplines. We will also discuss the role of intermediaries in the life cycle of comic books and graphic novels—including both common intermediaries (e.g., editors, booksellers) and intermediaries unique to these particular forms of the book (e.g., inkers, colourists, letterers).

The second reason why our research question is significant is because, due to limited local publishing opportunities, Australian comics creators often look to international publishing houses that specialise in comic books and graphic novels. Even mid-sized international publishing houses produce more new titles annually than the entire Australian publishing industry. Therefore, the research question helps us identify the business practices that determine the comic books and graphic novels by Australian creators that are actually published for consumption by both Australian and international audiences. We will conclude the second part of this article by discussing the primary role of personal relationships—more so than, for example, economic or institutional relationships—in the global flow of cultural production and reception.

Comics Studies and Publishing Studies

To begin, it is important to establish that this research does not belong to a singular discipline but is instead situated in an interdisciplinary space between the fields of comics studies and publishing studies. Although Millicent Weber and Aaron Mannion [12] refer to publishing studies alone in the following quote, both fields are suitably 'defined by [their] object of interest'

rather than defined by a consistent approach or methodology as a discipline like cultural studies is. For publishing studies, this ‘object of interest’ is ‘the publishing of books and the industry that surrounds this’ [Emmett Stinson, as quoted in 12]. We interpret both comic books and graphic novels to be included as ‘books’ within this definition; the use of that word is likely meant to differentiate the field’s focus from a broader definition of ‘publishing’ (i.e., to make something available to the public) rather than to exclude texts that differ from the average paperback. Regarding comics studies, scholars agree that the object of interest is ‘comics’—even though there is extensive debate about what the term ‘comics’ should actually encompass [2]. To bypass that argument in this article, we will interpret the object of interest to match the scope given by the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*: ‘all aspects of the graphic novel, comics and comic strips’ [4]. As the objective of this article is to explore the publication of comic books and graphic novels, the relevancy of both fields is apparent.

While some fields of study would discourage a project existing in multiple fields at once, both comics studies and publishing studies welcome interdisciplinary practices. A seminal paper on publishing studies, Simone Murray’s [9] ‘Publishing Studies: Critically Mapping Research in Search of a Discipline’ explains that the field was born from such practices, originating at the crossroads of book history, cultural studies, media studies and other areas, and more recent analysis of the field has continued to encourage this tradition [12]. Likewise, comics studies is intertwined with an interdisciplinary heritage, covering the fields of art history, cultural studies, literary studies and more [4]. Given that the two fields share somewhat similar disciplines of origin, it is interesting that neither has acknowledged the other in any significant fashion. This can likely be attributed to the youth of the fields: both only began gaining academic legitimacy in

the Anglosphere during the early 2000s. As these fields continue to grow, the relationship between them will perhaps receive more attention.

If more scholars started to work across the boundaries of comics studies and publishing studies, one aspect of comic books and graphic novels that would almost certainly receive more attention is the contributions of intermediaries—including both common intermediaries (e.g., editors, booksellers) and intermediaries unique to these particular forms of the book (e.g., inkers, colourists, letterers). It is important, then, that this article clarifies what is meant by ‘the pathways that Australian *creators* of comic books and graphic novels commonly follow’. More specifically, how do these ‘creators’ relate to the aforementioned intermediaries? ‘Creator’ can be a problematic term in comics studies, whereas in publishing studies (though not so much in book history) the term ‘author’ is typically used without any further thought.

By the term ‘creator’, we are more precisely referring to the *auteur* of a given text, using the concept of *auteur* theory. Within film studies, *auteur* theory acknowledges directors as the *auteurs* of films above screenwriters because directors are the primary creative contributor to a film’s production [7, 10]. Drawing from this theory, Arlen Schumer [11] proposed that an *auteur* theory of comics should designate illustrators (or pencillers) as the ‘true *auteur*’ of a comic, as opposed to the scriptwriter, paralleling a director’s role in guiding a text’s visual presentation. Schumer [11] does, however, note exceptions that result in dual *auteur*ship, such as when a scriptwriter offers significant panel direction. But the film-based origin of *auteur* theory makes Schumer’s comparison inapt: directors are often responsible for substantial altering of dialogue and content order, whereas illustrators are not. There is also more back and forth between scriptwriters and illustrators for adding text or rewriting [11], whereas filmed clips rarely, if ever, return to their screenwriter [1]. Furthermore, Schumer’s [11] central argument is framed around

the practices of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in a clear defence of Kirby's contributions to Marvel and was written during a notably contentious period of ownership debate between the two creators. It thus seems to downplay the role of scriptwriters. Within this article, in order to equally credit both scriptwriter and illustrator, the role of a comic's auteur is ascribed to both roles.

The significance of this distinction is to bypass for consideration the work of colourists, typesetters and letterers, as well as writers who merely generated ideas rather than produced an actual script. This is not to dismiss the importance of those roles, but by definition they are not the auteurs—the major creative contributors—of a given text. We will also be considering cases where the creator has pencilled a comic book's cover but not its interior, as this creator is the cover's auteur, as well as those where the creator is both scriptwriter and illustrator, although the latter case is no cause for debating auteurship.

We have now established the first reason why our research question—'What are the pathways that Australian creators of comic books and graphic novels commonly follow in order to be published by international publishing houses?'—is significant. As a reminder, it is because it combines two historically distinct fields of research in the form of comics studies and publishing studies. We have also discussed the role of intermediaries in the life cycle of comic books and graphic novels. Therefore, it is now time to discuss the second reason why our research question is significant.

Who Publishes Australian Comic Books and Graphic Novels?

Attempting to publish a comic book or graphic novel in Australia has been a difficult undertaking for both comics creators and publishing houses since the comics medium's earliest

days. Despite the combined written and artistic skill required to craft these texts, the form has rarely received the levels of support that prose and visual art have from the Australian community, government and publishing industry. Regardless, creators and other intermediaries associated with the comics scene have always fought against the odds, seeking out new opportunities and readers wherever possible.

The difficulty of publishing comic books and graphic novels in Australia can be linked to several attributes of either the country or the comics medium. The first attribute is Australia's relatively small population. A lower potential customer base leads to conservative decisions by the publishing industry. Australian publishing houses that publish comic books and graphic novels are few in number. These publishing houses can be sorted into the following types: small publishing houses that specialise in comic books and graphic novels but publish only one or two books per year; trade publishing houses that semi-regularly publish graphic novels (though never comic books) but only those aimed at children; and trade publishing houses that have published only a few graphic novels ever.

The second attribute that contributes to the difficulty of publishing comic books and graphic novels in Australia is the troubled history of comics in Australia. Due to events reaching back to the 1950s, the medium has struggled to find cultural legitimacy in the country [6]. Australian comics, as opposed to comics imported from abroad, were also likely historically impacted by cultural cringe. Although the direct impact of these past burdens on the state of modern Australian comic books and graphic novels is difficult to establish, the absence of the medium from government grants and cultural institutions that champion other art forms is likely related.

The third attribute is that the spaces that belong to comic books and graphic novels in Australian bookstores and libraries are often filled with more international books than Australian, whether classic European bande dessinées, Japanese manga or American superhero stories. The impact of this particular attribute can be better assessed by looking back to the 1940s, when Australian-published comics thrived due to a restriction on the import of their foreign counterparts [6]. Unfortunately for local creators seeking another market boom, an import lockdown on that level is unlikely to occur again. But rather than lament the interconnected state of the modern world, Australian creators use global connections and the existence of international publishing houses to their advantage.

Publication through international publishing houses is a path that many Australian comics creators have already taken. For those working in the 1990s, it was even the most viable option, because no publishing houses dedicated to comic books and graphic novels existed in Australia at that time. Of course, there are now other choices—alongside a few Australian houses that publish comic books and graphic novels, individual creators are able to sell and distribute their work through print and digital self-publishing, thanks to technological advancements over the last three decades. However, although it is possible to be successful in self-publishing, there are numerous advantages to working with a house including distribution networks, financial support, editorial assistance, printing connections and marketing knowledge, all of which can increase the potential reach of creators. While there are Australian publishing houses that can provide many of these benefits, they are limited in number and thus provide far fewer publication opportunities than their international counterparts. Indeed, as previously mentioned, even a single mid-sized international comics publishing house produces more new titles annually than the entire Australian publishing industry.

That brings us to the second reason why our research question—‘What are the pathways that Australian creators of comic books and graphic novels commonly follow in order to be published by international publishing houses?’—is significant: because these pathways (more so than, for example, self-publishing or domestic publishing pathways) determine the comic books and graphic novels by Australian creators that are actually published for consumption by both Australian and international audiences.

Pathways to Publication

In order to identify the various pathways to publication, we interviewed Australian creators of comic books and graphic novels that were published by international publishing houses. The choice of interviews as our primary research methodology was based on Per Henningsgaard’s [3] argument for the importance of interviews in the publishing studies field. We spoke to 21 creators over the course of 19 interviews. The 69 texts discussed during these interviews can be found in Appendix A. All texts listed in this appendix belong to the interviewed creators, and all were published by international publishing houses. Alongside the 21 creators we spoke to, we researched 8 other creators (see Appendix B) using published interviews and secondary sources to check for any major discrepancies in their experiences of being published by international publishing houses. We will mention these extra creators and their texts only to discuss discrepancies or less common experiences. We also interviewed industry professionals involved with the texts listed in Appendix A to provide alternative perspectives. More specifically, we interviewed Fantagraphics’s (Seattle, USA) current publicity agent, a past executive publisher from Allen & Unwin (Sydney, Australia), and a literary agent who works in Europe. We also

exchanged emails with an acquisitions agent who had worked with Lion Forge Comics (St Louis, USA).

We asked every interviewed creator for the story of how each of their texts was acquired by an international publishing house. We then broke down those stories into the ‘themes’ that contributed to the acquisition, endeavouring to avoid subjective attributes like ‘quality of work’ among these. In doing so, we found that the most common themes behind these acquisitions could be sorted into two overarching categories: ‘interactions with industry and scene’ (Category A, with four subcategories) and ‘blind submissions’ (Category B) (see Figure 1). We will discuss the frequency of each theme and thus its likelihood in leading to a successful acquisition.

Notably, it is possible for an individual text to have themes from both categories and multiple subcategories. We did question whether applying multiple themes to each text could inflate particular findings. To investigate this potential issue, we tried assigning a single theme to each text—the one we considered most influential. This organisation of data revealed different theme frequencies, but instead of providing alternate trend results, it only served to make the initial trends more prominent. It therefore did not alter our conclusions and, as we find this single-theme approach reductive and too open to interpretation, the rest of this analysis considers every theme attached to every text.

In another attempt to prevent theme inflation, a ‘text’ has been defined with the following caveats:

- All issues of a comic book series are counted as one ‘text’
- All works completed in an unbroken period of time for the same publishing house are counted as one ‘text’ (unless the publication circumstances of a particular work are notably different to the other texts)

- Graphic novels in a series are counted as one ‘text’ (unless, again, the publication circumstances of a particular entry are different)
- All versions of a text re-published under the same circumstances only have the relevant themes counted once. For example, Queenie Chan’s *The Dreaming* has been published in six different countries through the selling of translation rights, but the relevant theme (‘rights sold’) was only counted once.

Without these caveats, the themes associated with a single publication pathway would essentially be counted several times over.

Category A: Interactions with Industry and Scene

Category A themes are ascribed to cases where interactions between specific individuals or groups influenced a text’s successful acquisition. Technically speaking, all attempts to get a book published involve ‘interactions’. Submitting a text through a website, for example, is a creator’s interaction with a company. However, it is not an interaction with a specific, known figure as far as either side is concerned. Interactions under Category A require a pre-established understanding of the person that will be interacted with from at least one side. For example, an editor discovering a creator through online comics and then contacting that creator counts as a Category A interaction.

Out of the 69 texts we discussed with creators, the acquisition of 62 involved at least one Category A theme (see Figure 1). Among the remaining 7 texts, 4 of them had reprints, translations or Australian editions that included these themes.

Category A can be further broken down into 4 subcategories: creator-initiated interactions; house-initiated interactions with creators; past creator–house or creator–industry interactions; and house-initiated interactions with others.

Creator-Initiated Interactions

This theme is applied to cases where creators interacted with known contacts to get their book published. A ‘contact’ can be a fellow creator, an editor, a publisher, a literary agent or another individual with ties to the publishing industry. For example, Chris Gooch initiated a friendly relationship with fellow Australian comics creator (and Top Shelf Productions author) Pat Grant, who then facilitated an introduction to Top Shelf Productions (Marietta, USA), and Jason Franks relied on the established relationship of his book’s artist, J. Marc Schmidt, with Slave Labor Graphics (San Jose, USA) to schedule a pitch meeting for their project. The theme of creator-initiated interactions occurred 32 times, including 12 graphic novels and 20 comic books.

Of the 32 titles the theme was attached to, the involved contacts included:

- 10 fellow creators
- 19 publishing professionals
- 4 literary agents
- 3 other individuals (see Figure 2)

The reason these interactions could occur was primarily due to encounters at conventions or relationships built through other spaces in the comics scene. A notable variant involved creators forming permanent relationships with publishing houses, as occurs at Top Shelf Productions and Fantagraphics. In these cases, a creator is encouraged to approach the publishing house when they have a new work to pitch or publish.

House-Initiated Interactions with Creators

This theme is applied when a creator is contacted by a publishing house to pitch an idea, publish a completed work, publish an ongoing work or receive a reprint. For example, Del Rey (New York, USA) approached Queenie Chan to create a series of graphic novels (*Odd Thomas*) based on the best-selling series of novels by Dean Koontz because they recognised her work on *The Dreaming* series, and Seven Seas Entertainment (Los Angeles, USA) contacted Madeleine Rosca after a webcomic she published was shown to one of the publishing house's editors by a creator who worked on the same website as Rosca. This theme occurred 25 times, including 9 graphic novels and 16 comic books.

For a house-initiated interaction to occur, a house must have some pre-established knowledge of a creator. Of the 25 titles this theme is attached to, the reasons a house interacted with a creator were:

- 18 times because of previous industry work
- 8 times because of previous work with the house
- 1 time for a webcomic
- 1 time for a self-published book
- 1 time to publish a reprint (see Figure 3)

Webcomics are an interesting case: while often acquired through house-initiated interactions, they require no prior interactions between creator and industry. Although we interviewed only one creator who had been published this way, four of the seven creators we researched without an interview had webcomics that were later traditionally published as print books (Ariel Slamet Ries's *Witchy*; Pat Grant's *Blue*; Simon Hanselmann's *Megg, Mogg and*

Owl series; and Trudy Cooper and Doug Baine's *Platinum Grit*). The publishing industry professionals who eventually acquired *Witchy* and *Megg, Mogg and Owl*—Christina Stewart and Jacq Cohen, respectively—contacted the creators without a prior relationship. This may not be the case for *Blue* and *Platinum Grit*.

Creator-initiated interactions and house-initiated interactions with creators are mutually exclusive themes. Altogether, these two themes are attached to 57 out of the 69 titles. The remaining 12 titles belong to the themes 'house-initiated interactions with others' and 'blind submissions', although the combined number of books in both categories is higher than 12 due to the application of multiple themes to individual titles.

Past Creator–House or Creator–Industry Interactions

This theme is applied when a creator's text is published because of their previous work, either in the industry or with a house. This theme often overlaps with house-initiated interactions with creators, so it is partially represented by the blue and teal bars in Figure 3. However, this is not always the case. Additional examples include interactions initiated by the creator. For example, Bruce Mutard's *The Silence* was originally published in Australia and then in a French translation by Ça et Là, so when no English-language publisher could be found for his follow-up graphic novel (*Bully Me*), Mutard approached Ça et Là to see if they would be interested in publishing it in translation. Other cases include ongoing relationships between the creator and the house, such as Gooch who offered to publish another book with Top Shelf Productions (*Deep Breaths*) while working on a book he was contracted to complete for the company (*Under-Earth*). The theme can be divided into the following two types, with the 'industry' here referring to the publishing industry:

- Known work with the industry occurred 21 times (5 times without relation to house-initiated interactions), 18 of which were comic books
- Known work with the house occurred 18 times (11 times without relation to house-initiated interactions), 12 of which were comic books

One takeaway from this data is that, of the 4 subcategories in Category A: Interactions with Industry and Scene, the subcategory of Past Creator–House or Creator–Industry Interactions is the most common. It is clearly the publication pathway that is most likely to lead to the successful acquisition of a new title. However, another takeaway is that, even after a creator is known in the industry and to a particular publishing house, it is often still incumbent on the creator to initiate the interaction that results in the publication of their next work. A third and final takeaway is that this theme is a more common publication pathway for comic books than graphic novels.

House-Initiated Interactions with Others

This theme is applied when a publishing house interacts with individuals and groups other than creators to get a text published. It occurs in two forms: ‘rights sold’ and ‘forwarding on’.

‘Rights sold’ refers to cases where a publishing house sells the rights of a text to another house. This accounts for both international to international and Australian to international sales. It also includes cases where publishing houses, not creators, hire literary agents. It occurred 5 times, all with graphic novels: 4 times from an international house to another international house, and once from an Australian house to an international house. There were additional examples of texts published in multiple editions by different publishing houses, but those occurrences involved creator-initiated interactions.

Erica Wagner, a former Allen & Unwin executive publisher, suggested that the lack of Australian trade publishing houses selling graphic novel rights is because the connections required to sell those rights are different to the ones that support the rest of the house's book range. Alessandra Sternfeld, a literary agent who specialises in selling translation rights in Europe, added that most European acquisitions of international graphic novels occur through publishing houses or literary agents. The absence of prominent Australian publishing houses forging the relationships that are specific to graphic novels is a probable reason why so few texts have been sold from Australia to Europe, and perhaps to the US as well.

'Forwarding on' refers to cases where a publishing house employee realises that a given text is not suited for their house and passes it on to another person or house, resulting in the text's publication. This occurred with 3 graphic novels.

Before moving to Category B: Blind Submissions, we will discuss interactions that occurred through creators moving or travelling overseas. There were 10 titles published because a creator travelled internationally: 4 graphic novels and 6 comic books. Three interviewed comic book creators specifically broke into the comics industry through travel, leading to a consistent period of work. Comic book artist Nicola Scott, who we did not interview, also began her international career this way [13].

That being said, all cases of comic book creators breaking in through travel are old. Indeed, Scott's story in the mid-2000s is the most recent successful example of this method. Dean Rankine illustrated a 2016 title because of travel, but it did not directly result in further work. This finding may be due to a small sample size (there are very few recent cases of Australians breaking into the comic book industry in general), but we offer an alternative theory: that the size of modern conventions makes the necessary interactions for breaking in less likely to occur.

Furthermore, overseas travel does not always lead to publication. Gooch, for example, travelled abroad to pitch *Bottled* but eventually published it through an Australian contact. Neither is it necessary: even in the early 2000s, Chris Sequeira connected with a DC Comics editor through submissions and phone calls.

As for living overseas, only 3 graphic novels were published because their creators moved to North America. No comic book creators broke into the industry this way. Put simply, Australians do not have to move overseas to work in the comic book industry or to have a graphic novel published.

Category B: Blind Submissions

The blind submissions theme belongs to cases where a text is published as a result of a creator submitting their work to a house without any prior interaction with said house. This is accomplished through a house's submissions process. This theme is attached to 9 texts: 3 graphic novels and 6 comic books. Of the comic books, 3 are by Dean Rankine, who submits new work to various companies roughly every 6 months.

A blind submission, however, is rarely the sole reason a text is acquired. The other 6 successful blind submissions and the circumstances behind their publication are as follows:

- Queenie Chan's portfolio submission that would lead to *The Dreaming*. Chan came across an advertisement by Tokyopop (Los Angeles, USA) asking for international creators and was among the first to apply. This occurred when the manga style she uses was gaining popularity in the west.
- Jason Franks's rerelease of the first *Six Smiths* volume alongside the new second volume. Franks took his proposal for the sequel to Caliber Comics (Wayne County,

USA) at a time when they were resuming publication after a 15-year break and looking for titles.

- Matt Coyle's first edition of *Worry Doll*. He spent a long time researching the right house for his style and eventually found Mam Tor (Derby, UK) to be a perfect fit.
- Chris Sequeira's international edition of *The Dark Detective*. Like Franks, he offered his work to Caliber Comics soon after they resumed operations and, like Coyle, he researched a house to fit his title.
- Julie Ditrich's *ElfQuest: Wavedancers*, a spin-off series for the *ElfQuest* comic books by Wendy Pini and Richard Pini. Ditrich and her co-creators sent in their idea for *Wavedancers* when Warp Graphics (Poughkeepsie, USA), *ElfQuest*'s publishing house, asked fans to provide a 'what-if' spin-off pitch. *Wavedancers* was the chosen submission.
- Pierre-Jacques Ober and Jules Ober's *The Good Son*. The pair had submitted their book to Walker Books Australia. While the representative they met with liked the book, the company wouldn't publish it because it wasn't an Australian story. The representative passed the pair onto a literary agent, who sold the book to France and America.

The first four cases show the importance of research. Chan and Franks were actively seeking opportunities, and other creators have used contacts to do the same. Coyle and Sequeira used research to match their titles with the correct house, which has also been done in tandem with other approaches. Rankine works similarly, as he researches and tailors his submissions to series and characters that match his art style.

Chan's and Ditrich's cases show creators being in the right place at the right time; a house happened to be looking for work like theirs when they were able to create it. This also occurred

for the Australian editions of Bruce Mutard's books *The Silence* and *The Sacrifice*, as he contacted Allen & Unwin when (unbeknownst to him) they were looking to start a graphic novel line.

The Obers's story shows the importance of contacts and 'forwarding on', as discussed in Category A. In short, a blind submission alone is rarely enough to result in a book getting published.

Conclusion

The overall findings from this research are as follows:

- Direct interactions between creators, publishing professionals and other individuals have an overwhelming influence on successful publication pathways, with 62 out of the 69 pathways involving such interactions.
- Blind submissions can also result in successful publications, although cases of this are relatively rare (9 out of 69 texts). Furthermore, these publication pathways were almost always successful due to additional factors, such as the timing of the submission or an advertised opportunity.

The sheer volume of texts published through Category A themes reveals an undeniable fact: interacting with and being known by others in the industry is the main contributing factor in allowing Australian comic books and graphic novels to be acquired by international publishing houses.

Clearly, the ability to make and uphold these connections is significant for creators seeking publication opportunities. It is not impossible for creators to forge such connections online, or even for a house to find creators through the internet alone, as Madeleine Rosca's

Hollow Fields and Ariel Slamet Ries's *Witchy* illustrate. Fantagraphics's director of publicity, Jacq Cohen, also explained how she always keeps watch for new talent online and, indeed, online is where she discovered Simon Hanselmann (whose relationship with Tommi Parrish later led to Parrish publishing with Fantagraphics).

Unfortunately, although the internet does afford creators new opportunities and has undeniably led to the publication of several Australian comic books and graphic novels, it cannot replace the importance of face-to-face interactions or spaces such as conventions. The physical distance of Australia is believed to limit publication opportunities, primarily because of its negative impact on interactions with the international comics scene. Of the 17 creators asked about this, 14 believed it to be the case and the remaining 3 thought it was a possibility. This is despite advances in technology that have made long-distance communication far easier over the last two decades. Australia is still as far away from the rest of the world as ever.

While the phrase 'it's who you know' is sometimes spoken with contempt, it is not something we apply with negativity to the international publication of Australian comic books and graphic novels. After all, the Australian scene was born from such connections: from fans gathering in the spaces that would become comic shops and creator meets, sharing texts that they would one day replicate. It is only inevitable that these same passions and relationships are the thing that bridges the gap between Australia and the rest of the world.

When this project was just beginning to take shape, we read Amy Louise Maynard's [6] doctoral thesis, *A Scene in Sequence: Australian Comics Production as a Creative Industry 1975–2017*, for the first time. Then, and in the many times we have read it since, one phrase stood out: 'In the Australian comics industry if an opportunity isn't given, then an opportunity is made' [6]. It struck us at the time for being unusually inspirational and heart-warming in a thesis

that so often points out the odds stacked against Australian creators. It concocted a vivid image in our minds: a sole creator fighting for their work against every disadvantage they needed to overcome. But now, reflecting on this quote with all our research in tow, we realise that we were envisioning it wrong. An opportunity isn't made by a single, lone creator, but groups of people working together to create chances for themselves and each other. That, to us, is the spirit of the Australian comics scene.

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Figures

Figure 1

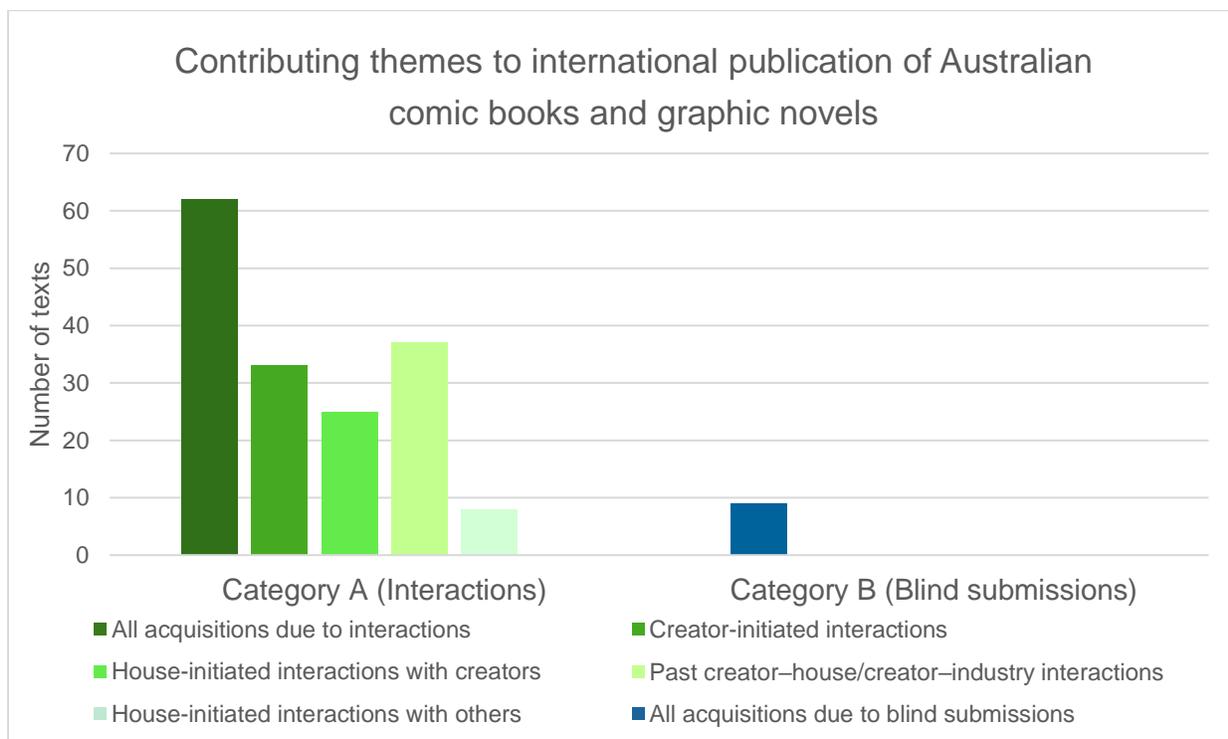


Figure 2

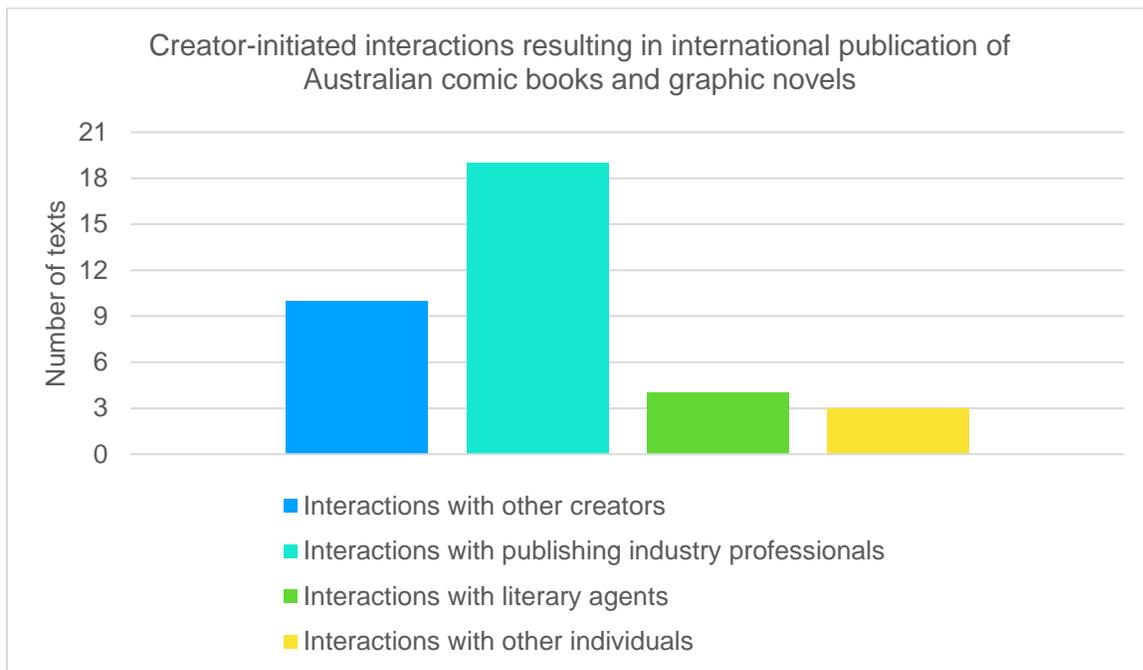
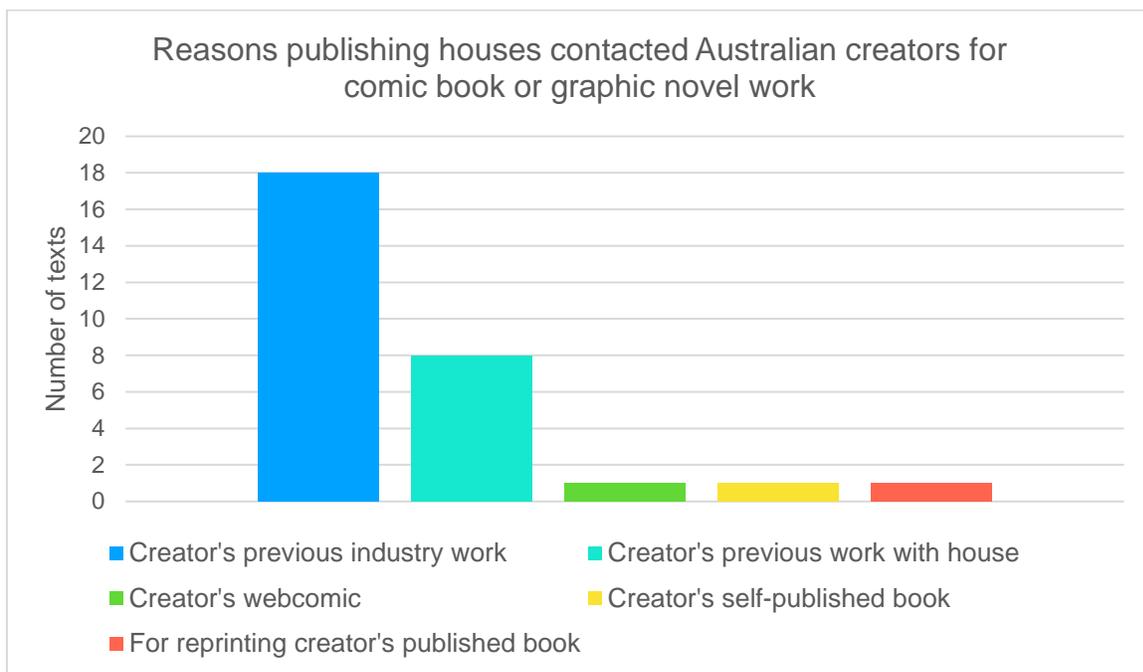


Figure 3



Appendices

Appendix A: Creators Interviewed and Texts Discussed

	Creator Interviewed (Role)	Text Discussed	Year	Publisher	Type
1.	Fil Barlow (Writer/Artist)	Zooniverse #1–6	1986–1987	Eclipse Comics (USA)	CB
2.		Dark Horse Down Under #1 (Aquarine)	1994	Dark Horse Comics (USA)	CB Anth.
3.		Island #10 (Gatcheralis), #12 (Zooniverse), #13 (Yippo The Magic Zoon)	2016	Image Comics (USA)	CB Anth.
4.	Fil Barlow (Cover artist)	Prophet #37	2013	Image Comics (USA)	CB
5.	Fil Barlow and Helen Baier (Writer/Artist)	8house #4–5 (Yorris)	2015	Image Comics (USA)	CB
6.	Queenie Chan (Writer/Artist)	The Dreaming 1–3	2005–2007	Tokyopop (USA)	GN
			2005–2007	Desen Yayınları (Turkey)	
			2007	Tokyopop (Germany)	
			2007–2008	Akileos (France)	
			2007–2008	Egmont (Finland)	
			2008	Domino (Russia)	
		The Dreaming 1	2006	Arashi (Netherlands)	

7.		The Fabled Kingdom	2018	Zanir (Czechoslovakia)	GN
8.	Queenie Chan (Artist)	Odd Thomas 1–3	2008–2012	Del Rey (USA)	GN
		Odd Thomas 1	2010	Music And Entertainment Books (France)	
			2013	Sine Qua Non (Poland)	
9.	Gary Chaloner (Writer/Artist)	Jackaroo #1–3	1990	Eternity Comics (USA)	CB
10.		Planet of the Apes: Urchak’s Folly #1–4	1991	Malibu Graphics (USA)	CB
11.		Dark Horse Down Under #1–3 (Jackaroo, The Undertaker)	1994	Dark Horse Comics (USA)	CB Anth.
12.		Will Eisner’s John Law: Dead Man Walking	2004	IDW Publishing (USA)	CB
13.	Gary Chaloner (Artist)	Badger #58	1990	First Comics (USA)	CB
14.		The Olympians #1–2	1991	Epic Comics (USA)	CB
15.		Astro City #28	2015	DC Comics (USA)	CB
16.	Matt Coyle (Writer/Artist)	Worry Doll	2007	Mam Tor Publishing (UK)	GN
			2016 (reprint)	Dover Publications (USA)	
17.	Matt Coyle (Artist)	Registry of Death	1996	Kitchen Sink Press (USA)	GN

18.	Dave de Vries (Writer/Artist)	Southern Squadron #1–4	1990	Aircel Comics (USA)	CB
19.		Full Throttle #1–2; Bodyguard #1–3	1990–1991	Aircel Comics (USA)	CB
20.		Puppet Master #1–4; Puppet Master: Children of the Puppet Master #1–2	1990–1991	Eternity Comics (USA)	CB
21.	Dave de Vries	Suicide Squad #44	1990	DC Comics (USA)	CB
22.	(Writer)	Fathom #1–3; Strikeforce: America #1	1992	Comico (USA)	CB
23.		Star Trek #34; Green Lantern Annual #3; Green Lantern Corps Quarterly #8; Black Lightning #9–13	1992–1996	DC Comics (USA)	CB
24.		The Thing From Another World: Eternal Vows 1–4	1993–1994	Dark Horse Comics (USA)	CB
25.		Eternal Warrior Yearbook 1; Magnus, Robot Fighter #34, #47, #48	1993–1995	Valiant (USA)	CB
26.		The Phantom: Ghost Who Walks #1–3; Marvel Comics Presents #148, #162– 165	1994–1995	Marvel (USA)	CB
27.	Julie Ditrich (Writer)	ElfQuest: Wavedancers #1–6	1994	Warp Graphics (USA)	CB

28.		Dart #1–3	1996	Image Comics (USA)	CB	
29.	Jason Franks (Writer)	Six Smiths 1	2010	Slave Labour Graphics (USA)	CB	
30.		Six Smiths 1–2	2015	Caliber Comics (USA)	CB	
31.	Chris Gooch (Writer/Artist)	Bottled	2017	Top Shelf Productions	GN	
			2021	Huber Éditions		
32.		Deep Breaths	2019	Top Shelf Productions	GN	
33.		Under-Earth	2020	Top Shelf Productions	GN	
			2022	Huber Éditions		
34.	Mat Groom (Writer)	Mighty Morphin Power Rangers Anniversary Special #1	2018	BOOM! Studios (USA)	CB	
35.			Self/Made #1–6	2019	Image Comics	CB
36.			Tales From the DC Dark Multiverse: Teen Titans The Judas Contract #1	2020	DC Comics	CB
37.			The Rise of Ultraman #1–2	2020	Marvel Comics	CB
38.		DC’s Crimes of Passion #1	2020	DC Comics	CB Anth.	
39.	Nathan Jurevicius (Writer/Artist)	Scarygirl	2009	Allen & Unwin (Australia)	GN	
			2010	Last Gasp (USA)		

			2012	ARX (Brazil)	
40.		Junction	2015	Koyama Press (Canada)	GN
41.		Birthmark	2016	Koyama Press (Canada)	GN
42.	Lee Lai (Writer/Artist)	Stone Fruit	2021	Fantagraphics (USA)	GN
			2021	Brow Books (Australia)	
			TBC	Éditions Sarbacane (France)	
43.	Shane McCarthy (Writer)	Detective Comics #797–799, #815–816; Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #185– 189	2004–2006	DC Comics (USA)	CB
44.		Zombies! Feast #1–5; All Hail Megatron #1– 12; Transformers Spotlight: Blurr; Transformers Spotlight: Cliffjumper; Transformers Spotlight: Drift	2006–2009	IDW Publishing (USA)	CB
45.		Dark X-Men The Beginning #1; Deadpool Team Up #886	2009–2010	Marvel (USA)	CB

46.		Transformers: Drift TPB; Mars Attacks: The Transformers; Transformers: Drift – Empire of Stone	2011–2015	IDW Publishing (USA)	CB
47.	Bruce Mutard (Writer/Artist)	The Bunker	2003	Image Comics (USA)	GN
48.		The Sacrifice	2008	Allen & Unwin (Australia)	GN
			2021	Avant-Verlag (Germany)	
49.		The Silence	2009	Allen & Unwin (Australia)	GN
			2013	Çà et Là (France)	
50.		Bully Me	2019	Çà et Là (France)	GN
51.	Pierre-Jacques Ober (Writer/Artist) and Jules Ober (Artist)	The Good Son: A Story from the First World War, Told in Miniature	2018	Seul Jeunesse (France)	GN
			2019	Candlewick (USA)	
			2019	Walker Books (Australia)	
52.		[Untitled]	TBC	Seul Jeunesse (France)	GN
53.	Tommi Parrish	Perfect Hair	2016	2d Cloud (USA)	GN
54.	(Writer/Artist)	The Lie and How We Told It	2018	Fantagraphics (USA)	GN
			2018	Cambourakis (France)	
			2019	Timof i cisi wspólnicy (Poland)	

			2019	Astiberri Ediciones (Spain)	
55.	Dean Rankine (Writer/Artist)	Simpsons Comics #180, #182, #183, #184, #186, #200, #211, #225, #228; Bongo's Two One- Shot Wonders in One; Bart Simpson's Pal, Milhouse #1; Simpsons Winter Wingding #7, #10; Futurama Comics #62; Bongo Comics Free- For-All 2013 & 2014; The Malevolent Mr. Burns #1; Bart Simpson Comics #78, #80, #82, #83, #87, #89, #91, #94, #95, #98, #99; The Greatest Bartman Stories Ever Told #1; Jimbo Jones #1; The Simpsons' Treehouse of Horror #23; The Mighty Moe Szyslak #1; Chief Wiggum's Felonious Funnies #1	2011–2018	Bongo Comics (USA)	CB

56.		Rocky & Bullwinkle: As Seen On TV #1–2; Oggy and the Cockroaches #1–4; Underdog and Pals #2	2019–2020	American Mythology (USA)	CB
57.	Dean Rankine (Artist)	Hellboy Winter Special 2016 #1	2016	Dark Horse Comics (USA)	CB
58.		I Hate Fairyland #13	2017	Image Comics (USA)	CB
59.		Invader ZIM #40	2019	Oni Press (USA)	CB
60.	Dean Rankine (Cover artist)	Rick and Morty #1	2018	Oni Press (USA)	CB
61.	Madeleine Rosca (Writer/Artist)	Hollow Fields 1–3	2007–2009	Seven Seas Entertainment (USA)	GN
62.		The Clockwork Sky	2012–2014	Tor (USA)	GN
63.		Hollow Fields 4	2016	Seven Seas Entertainment (USA)	GN
64.	Christopher Sequeira	Justice League Adventures #12; #23; 9-11: Artists Respond	2002	DC Comics (USA) (9-11 published by Dark Horse Comics as a collaboration between houses)	CB
65.		Astonishing Tales #1 (Making An Appearance)	2009	Marvel (USA)	CB Anth.

66.		X-Men: Curse of the Mutants: X-Men vs Vampires #1 (I'm Gonna Stake You, Sucka)	2010	Marvel (USA)	CB Anth.
67.		The Dark Detective: Sherlock Holmes – Chimera	2016	Black House Comics (Australia)	CB
			2016	Caliber Comics (USA)	
68.		Justice, Inc.: The Avenger	2016	Dynamite Entertainment (USA)	
69.	Campbell Whyte (Writer/Artist)	Home Time 1–2	2017–2020	Top Shelf Productions (USA)	GN

Appendix B: Other Creators and Texts

Creator (Role)	Text	Year	Publisher	Type
Mirranda Burton (Writer/Artist)	Hidden	2011	Black Pepper (Australia)	GN
		2013	La Boîte à Bulles (France)	GN
Trudy Cooper and Doug Baine (Writer/Artist)	Platinum Grit	2009	Image Comics (USA)	GN
Pat Grant (Writer/Artist)	Blue	2012	Top Shelf Productions (USA)	GN
Simon Hanselmann (Writer/Artist)	Megg, Mogg and Owl series	2014–2020	Fantagraphics (USA)	GN
Ariel Slamet Ries (Writer/Artist)	Witchy	2019	Lion Forge Comics (USA)	GN
Nicola Scott (Artist)	Various comic books	2004–2018	Dark Horse Comics, DC Comics, IDW Publishing, Image Comics, Marvel (USA)	CB
Tom Taylor (Writer)	Various comic books	2008–2020	Boom! Studios, Dark Horse Comics, DC Comics, IDW Publishing, Marvel (USA)	CB