

MEDIA RELEASE

Success Story: new research on rights sales shows increased demand for Australian books overseas

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The popularity of Australian children’s books overseas, the strength of the Chinese language market, and increasing interest in Australian adult fiction have been driving the success of Australian books overseas.

The research, *Success Story: International rights sales of Australian-authored books 2008–2018*, was conducted in partnership between the Australia Council for the Arts, Macquarie University and the Copyright Agency and highlights the growth of Australian books in international markets.

With Frankfurt Book Fair, the world’s largest trade fair for books, starting on Wednesday 20 October, this report makes a timely case for the huge potential of international sales to the Australian publishing industry.

In the decade from 2008-2018, rights to Australian literature were sold into 92 different territories, with Australian-authored books translated into 70 languages. The number of absolute deals also increased.

The strength and quality of the Australian children’s book market was demonstrated by the findings with children’s titles, including picture books and those aimed at younger readers, making up more than half of all rights deals.

Chinese translations accounted for the highest number of translations (14%) highlighting the importance of the Chinese language market.

International rights sales provide vital revenue to Australian writers and the wider book publishing industry.

Success Story represents the first time that international rights sales for Australian literature have been mapped and quantified in this way, revealing an important market that can be leveraged for further success.

Australia Council Head of Literature Wenona Byrne said:

“This is an important industry that hasn’t been properly understood or featured before, earning up to \$10million/year. The research provides timely insights about how we can build on these achievements and support Australian authors, literary agents and publishers to promote their work overseas. This will be more important than ever as we re-establish connections following the disruption of COVID-19.”

Adam Suckling, Chief Executive Officer, Copyright Agency said:

“Australian publishers and literary agents have made great inroads and progress in selling Australian authors’ rights overseas and introducing great books to international readers. Rights’ sales are an important source of income for writers and publishers. For the first time we have actual data to support our industry and writers. This research will be extremely valuable to policy makers and Government, and also to the Copyright Agency, as we consider further ways to support Australian writers.”

Macquarie University's Dr Jan Zwar, who coordinated the research with Dr Paul Crosby said:

"A range of books is succeeding internationally including children's, genre fiction such as crime, romance, action, contemporary women's fiction, self-help and literary fiction. Australian publishers and literary agents have learned who in the global industry is able to take an author's book and launch it successfully in another market, even another language. This has enabled a new level of success for Australian books overseas and the industry is well-placed to build on it for future opportunities."

Two times Gold Dagger winning and twice Edgar short-listed author, Michael Robotham, said:

“International rights are so vital because they offer Australian writers and illustrators the opportunities to have books published into bigger English language markets and in translation, boosting earnings and bringing Australian stories to the world. Without international rights, most of us will finish up being hobbyists and part-timers, doing a myriad of other jobs to pay the bills.”

Key insights:

- **Demand for Australian children's books is booming** – more than half (54%) of all recorded deals were books targeted at younger readers including: picture books (21%), middle grade (27%), teen and young adult (YA) (6%).
- **Adult fiction is also on the rise** – The percentage contribution of deals for adult fiction almost doubled between 2011 (17%) and 2012 (33%). Since this time, adult fiction titles have largely maintained their share of all Australian deals
- **China is a key market for Australian books** – After English (19.6%), Chinese (both simplified and complex) was the most frequently specified language (13.7%), then Korean (7%), German (5.5%) and Portuguese (4.4%).
- **There is increasing recognition and appreciation of Australian authors among overseas publishers and agents.** Overall, 63% of respondents to a survey of rights-sellers indicated that they sensed an increase in international interest in Australian authored books over the ten-year sample period.

- **The number of film, TV and stage adaptations of Australian authored books has been increasing.** Examples include Trent Dalton's *Boy Swallows Universe* (published 2018; theatre production premiered 2021), *A Long Way Home* (published 2013; film released as *Lion* in 2016), and Liane Moriarty's novels *Big Little Lies* (published 2014; television series released 2017) and *Nine Perfect Strangers* (published in 2018; television series released 2021).
- **There is clear opportunity to unlock further growth in international rights sales of Australian literature through investment, and to rebuild connections disrupted by COVID-19.** After decades of capacity building and relationship building by Australia's rights selling community, interest and awareness in Australian literature is increasing in overseas publishing houses and their markets. It is possible now to build on these gains, and to leverage existing interest in Australian literature for increased export opportunities in future.

The full report, titled *Success Story: International rights sales of Australian-authored books 2008-2018* can be found on the Australia Council [website](#).

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