When I originally conceived the title for this book, my reference to a “world of fiction” had three meanings, and these have continued to underpin and shape my thinking throughout. The most straightforward concerns the global origins of fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers. While British, Australian, and American works dominate, and have been my focus, these newspapers include fiction from many other places: Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, and more. An even wider range of geographical locations are evoked in the inscription of stories, which are presented as coming from the above countries and far beyond: Belgium, Burma, Chile, China, Cuba, Egypt, the list goes on. This sheer multitude of origins, real and inscribed—and the frequency of global voyages in these stories—indicates a pronounced geographical focus in the creation, publication, and reception of colonial newspaper fiction. Given that many of the original readers for these stories would have recently arrived in the colonies from elsewhere, this global consciousness suggests the role that newspaper fiction played in connecting new, Australian spaces and lives to preexisting conceptions of the world and readers’ place in it.

This multitude of fictional origins offers a framework for intervening in, uniting, and advancing key features of the so-called transnational turn in literary scholarship. As noted in the introduction, like
many other national literary fields in the last decade or so, Australian literary studies has reassessed the effectiveness of the nation as the foundational framework for analysis. Scholars have sought, in Dixon’s words, to “explore and elaborate the many ways in which the national literature has always been connected to the world” (“Australian” 20). Such research has pursued three broad paths: first, considering the ways in which Australian authors and works relate to local and international cultures, intellectual formations, languages, and systems of cultural value and acclaim; second, exploring relationships between Australian writing and international publishing and media systems, including their implications for Australian literature as a cultural formation in the past, present, and future; and third, examining how readers in Australia, now and in the past, experience literature that arises from and establishes connections to other local, national, and international contexts.

The “world of fiction” in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers enables me to unite these dominant trajectories of the “transnational turn.” It permits me to investigate how literary culture in the colonies emerged in dialogue with a range of cultural and intellectual traditions and was connected to a publishing industry that was both global and thoroughly local. By analyzing fiction that was experienced at particular times and places, by specific communities, I integrate discussion of the transnational conditions of authorship and publishing with a focus on reception to explore the frameworks of meaning and value through which early Australians engaged with stories that came from around the world as well as from within the colonies. Underlying these arguments is an intention to extend a transnational consciousness to data-rich literary history. With notable exceptions, there is a tendency in that field to treat large corpuses of American and British literature as a universal literary record. In exploring—and offering for exploration by others—a digitized body of works from around the world, published in the Australian colonies, I hope to disrupt the implicit national biases and globalizing impulses present in data-rich literary history.

Analyzing this fiction exposed new transnational formations and influences on colonial literary culture. Treating literary anonymity as a distinctive presence rather than an absence, and exploring the phenomenon at scale, chapter 4 highlights its operation along a spectrum. I use the extensive information about authorship contained in
the paratext of stories to investigate the cultural meanings attributed to fiction, and thus to contrast the value conferred on British fiction in the colonial context with the cultural marginality of American writing. Chapter 5 presents a new account of the operations in Australia of the major British fiction syndicator, Tillotson’s Fiction Bureau, while uncovering previously unrecognized connections between international syndication networks of the period and second-tier metropolitan as well as major provincial newspapers. Chapter 6 demonstrates distinct tendencies in writing by men and women that traversed the American, Australian, and British fiction in colonial newspapers, as well as contrasting attitudes toward history and time in this American and British writing. Where the British fiction published in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers tends to focus on the complex interrelationship of past, present, and future, and to be pessimistic about the capacity of individual actions to alter history, American stories tend to be oriented to the present and to emphasize individual agency.

Although nineteenth-century Australian newspapers were strongly connected to global cultures and markets, what became increasingly apparent were the previously unrecognized and distinctive features, as well as the incredible dynamism and richness, of colonial writing, publishing, and reading. Most remarkably, this book shows an entirely new structure and organization for nineteenth-century Australian literary culture, one in which the metropolitan periodicals that have received almost all the critical attention emerge as less prolific, and less interconnected, in their publication of fiction than their neglected provincial counterparts. I establish that provincial newspapers published the majority of fiction in the Australian colonies, sourced from an extensive, active, and hitherto unrecognized group of syndication agencies, local and international. Among these companies were the major publishers of Australian fiction, certainly in the nineteenth century and probably up until the 1970s. To put the case bluntly, this book shows that Australian literary, book, and periodical scholars have been investigating colonial writing, publishing, and reading through a framework that obscures the major parts of it.

Within this profoundly revised framework, many other features of colonial literary culture come into view. Local fiction had a greater presence in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers than has been appreciated and was almost certainly significantly more prevalent
than this project has determined. Contrasting the female-dominated authorship of British and American periodical fiction, the dominance of male authors in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers, and the preference of editors and readers for writing by men shows that colonial literary culture did not develop along British lines but forged its own distinctive forms. There is also a major shift in the publication of local fiction from the late 1870s. What had been interpreted as a withdrawal of newspapers from such publishing, and a feminization of what Australian literature did appear, emerges as a transition from metropolitan to provincial newspapers as the locus for colonial men’s fiction. In terms of fiction reprinting and syndication, the view that British agencies and syndicated British fiction overwhelmed local publishing and writing from the mid-1880s is unfounded. I also determine the role of individual metropolitan newspapers in sourcing and distributing fiction in the colonies and the presence of numerous author- and editor-led forms of syndication in the provincial press.

Such distinctiveness in publishing and reception likewise characterizes the contents of the local fiction in Australian newspapers. Resonating with mid-twentieth-century accounts—and subsequent, feminist critiques—of an Australian bush tradition is the focus in many of these stories on nonmetropolitan colonial settings, as well as their male-dominated authorship and concern with male characters and traditionally masculine activities. But these features of colonial writing are present throughout the century rather than emerging in the 1890s, and such stories concentrate more on rural families and communities than on the individual bushman and intense male friendships seen as definitive of the bush tradition. Most challenging to existing understandings of the Australian literary tradition is the prominence of Aboriginal characters in these stories. Rather than attempting to justify colonization through silence about the Aboriginal presence in Australia, these works did so by foregrounding the coexistence of Aboriginal and European people in the bush and by describing both harmonious and violent interactions. Alongside this bush tradition, Australian fiction demonstrates the contrasting attitudes toward history and time that tend to characterize British and American fiction in this context. Correlations between these contrasting attitudes and publishing trends raise the possibility that the common perception of colonial writing as an extension of a predominantly British tradition is
an artifact of the metropolitan newspapers and authors that have been the focus of scholarship.

The second, original meaning of my title was as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the view that mass digitization offers “a world of fiction”: unmediated access to every work from every time. This is the complacent attitude that chapter 1 criticizes in the two paradigms in data-rich literary history that dominate external perceptions of the field: Moretti’s distant reading and Jockers’s macroanalysis. These authors proclaim their opposition to close reading, even as they assume, in common with that midcentury critical mode, that literary works are stable and singular objects, reducible to “the text.” I attribute this equivalence between close and distant reading to a common disregard for the critical nature of the disciplinary infrastructure (analog and digital) that enables the study of literature, and for the historical insights such infrastructure presents. In distant reading and macroanalysis, the idea that mass-digitized collections and the literary data derived from them provide direct access to the facts of literary history yields models of literary systems, and arguments made on their basis, that are abstract, limited, and often ahistorical.

Chapter 2 offers an alternative framework for data-rich literary history: one that supports the modeling of literary systems while acknowledging and representing the constructed, contingent, and transactional nature of literary data and mass-digitized collections. I use the scholarly edition as a theoretical and technical framework for meeting this challenge. The scholarly edition has for centuries been used to model literary works: its curated text proposes an argument about the imagined whole (the ideal), while its critical apparatus explains and justifies that argument with reference to the available parts (the documentary manifestations that can be accessed). It performs this latter task by presenting the history through which those parts have been transmitted to and understood in the present and, hence, by which the whole can be known. The argument about the whole is thereby presented as an effect of inquiry at the same time as it stands as a scholarly object for analysis.

I adapt the scholarly edition to the modeling of literary systems, offering in chapter 3 a historical introduction to a curated dataset of over 9,200 works of extended fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers. That chapter elaborates the history of transmission con-
stitutive of that data, explaining as much as possible the remediations, transformations, and omissions involved in the transition from the nineteenth-century newspapers that were published, circulated, and read in the Australian colonies, to their collection and curation, ultimately as digital objects in *Trove*, to the discovery and representation of the fiction they published. Available alongside this book as a downloadable dataset from the University of Michigan Press, and as a searchable, browsable, and wholly or partially exportable database through the Australian National University’s Centre for Digital Humanities Research, this curated dataset embodies an argument about how literary works existed and interrelated in the past. With additional critical apparatus detailing specific data constructions, it offers a rigorous and reliable basis for the discoveries and arguments I present. It has this capacity not because it is comprehensive or true but because its incompleteness and conditionality have been acknowledged and investigated.

This scholarly edition of a literary system is also, vitally, a rigorous and reliable foundation for future investigation and research. And this brings me to the third intended meaning of my title: as a reference to the “world” of possibilities for the study of fiction that this scholarly edition makes possible. It extends the insights gained from analyzing the relevant disciplinary infrastructure—in this case, the major mass-digitized historical newspaper collection in *Trove*—to all literary historians. And in writing this book, I have become increasingly conscious that the arguments I offer barely scratch the surface of what it is possible to do with the extensive, historicized, and curated collection of textual and bibliographical data that this scholarly edition presents.

A recent discovery I made using the curated dataset—without the aid of computational methods but in conversation with a colleague—is illustrative of these possibilities. Considering the curated dataset, my colleague in French literature, Glenn Roe, remarked on the inclusion of Eugène Sue’s “The Mysteries of Paris,” noting that it was one of the first and most famous serialized French novels. I mentioned that the curated dataset also included two Australian city mysteries. Publication of the earliest of these, “The Mysteries of Sydney,” began in *Bell’s Life in Sydney* in 1850, eight years after Sue’s original work. “Mysteries of Melbourne,” attributed to “Kelp,” was published twenty years later in the *Emerald Hill Record*, a South Melbourne newspaper.
Research showed us that multiple international adaptations of this popular, nineteenth-century genre had been identified. *Wikipedia* lists titles for Amsterdam, Berlin, Boston, Hamburg, Lisbon, Lyon, Marseille, and more. And alongside city mysteries for London, Philadelphia, and New York, Stephen Knight considers *The Mysteries of Melbourne Life*, published in 1873 by Donald Cameron (whom we know from this book as one of the colonial male authors widely published in the provincial press and as owner of the major local syndicate, Cameron, Laing and Co.). But Glenn and I found no record of either of these earlier Sydney or Melbourne city mysteries. These two stories offer a research project, in and of themselves. Their appearance and the defiant attribution of the earlier, Sydney, one—as “Not by the Author of ‘The Mysteries of Paris’ or ‘The Mysteries of London’ but by One of Ourselves”—signals yet another way in which local fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers connected to and emerged out of a transnational fiction market, while emphasizing local authorship and distinctively colonial forms of expression.

The scale of the fiction encompassed by this scholarly edition and its international breadth make me confident that almost any historian of nineteenth-century literature will find something to extend their knowledge and enrich their research in this representation of a literary system. To take as an example just one of the thousands of authors in this scholarly edition, a researcher interested in Ivan Turgenev might ask which of his works appeared in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers, how they were presented, and on that basis, how his form of Russian Realism was represented and received on the other side of the globe. That scholar might choose to investigate the other Russian authors whose work was published in colonial newspapers, whether such publications were widespread or limited to certain newspapers, and, in that respect, what social or political motivations attended the publication of such fiction. Alternatively, she might consider what translations were used and the insights this provides into the source(s) of Russian fiction for the colonies. As noted in chapter 2, as well as supporting users to search and browse fiction by title, author, and newspaper, the database enables full-text searching. While *Trove* makes that same text searchable, it returns results for all articles; the curated dataset focuses on fiction. What new collections of literary works—colonial,
national, or transnational—and possibilities for future research might arise from returns of searches of the curated dataset for *murder* or *ghost* or *native*?

This scholarly edition of a literary system could be used to extend lines of investigation initiated in this book, whether through in-depth reading or computational analysis. Chapter 6 identifies multiple new features of colonial fiction for exploration. What new understandings of nineteenth-century depictions of Aboriginal people might arise from reading more widely in the literary works that feature such characters prominently? What are the implications—for understanding colonization, or historical forms of Australian masculinity, or environmental history—of the multiple mining stories chapter 6 also indicates? More broadly, the chapters in the book’s second part variously argue that provincial newspaper fiction was different from that published in metropolitan newspapers: in how it was presented and sourced and in its contents. What new perspectives on colonial literary culture would result from analyzing works of the major local provincial authors identified?

For those interested in applying computational methods to the curated dataset the scope for future research is just as broad. One could investigate what I have proposed as a geographical consciousness in this literary system by adapting the text-mining and geospatial methods that Matthew Wilkens uses to investigate the “geographic imagination” of nineteenth-century American literature. Alternatively, one could explore the male orientation of nineteenth-century Australian newspaper fiction using methods developed by David Baman, Ted Underwood, and Noah Smith to investigate the relationship between characterization, gender, and dialogue in a large collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English novels. Or one could gain new perspectives on modes of influence within this literary system—of canonical works on others, or of different national literary traditions on each other—by applying Andrew Piper and Mark Algee-Hewitt’s topological models of lexical relationality.

These are simply some of the questions and approaches that I can think of. Equally important, if not far more so, to the future use of this scholarly edition are those questions and approaches I have not conceived. Such future research is possible because the meanings that this scholarly edition makes possible are not inherent in the curated
dataset but emerge from interactions with it. Like a mass-digitized collection—or a scholarly edition of a literary work—the meanings of a scholarly edition of a literary system are produced transactionally. Those transactions are supported by the historical details Carol and I have accumulated regarding literary works and their documentary manifestations and are shaped by the organization of that information into uniform fields and hierarchical structures in accordance with both database form and my arguments about the nature and meaning of the literary system. But the outcomes of those inquiries are not predetermined: they exceed the detail and the form; they are unpredictable because they arise from a documentary record that is formed and reformed in the investigation of it. The above example of “The Mysteries of Sydney” is emblematic in this respect. I had seen that story in the database and registered the signature’s reference to other city mysteries. But the implications of those details coalesced into historical meaning only when my colleague brought his knowledge and understanding to the transaction. Like any scholarly edition, this one is created to enable future outcomes that I—as its editor—did not perceive in its construction.

All three original meanings of a “world of fiction” were foundational to the title’s invocation of the “future of literary history.” Thus, this future refers to the new directions in nineteenth-century Australian and transnational literary history the book inaugurates; to the potential applications of this particular scholarly edition of a literary system for other researchers; and to the scholarly edition’s capacity more broadly as a framework for realizing the potential of mass-digitized knowledge infrastructure for literary history. Yet in writing this book, the “world” and “future” of my title gained another, less positive, though equally important, meaning: one that has become fundamental to my focus on a structure for literary history in the digital age. That meaning relates to the impact of the so-called real world—of funding, government, institutional politics, and the perpetual crisis in humanities—on the study of fiction and the future of literary history.

I complete this book in the context of uncertainty in future government funding for Trove’s newspaper digitization program (Wynne). This situation carries distinct déjà vu. My last book, Reading by Numbers, offered a new history of the Australian novel by analyzing AustLit, the most extensive, online bibliography of a national literature then
available. That book was finalized in the shadow of looming—later enacted—cuts to AustLit, and now I find myself in a similar position with Trove. This is despite the fact that Trove, as well as offering the largest collection of mass-digitized historical newspapers internationally, is vitally important to researchers and the Australian community and is recognized as world leading in how it presents and supports engagement with its holdings. It would seem that Australia has an unfortunate habit of creating world-leading digital humanities resources and then defunding them. Of course, this is not a uniquely Australian problem. As I write we face the possibility, for instance, that America’s National Endowment for the Humanities, and the multiple digital-knowledge infrastructure projects it supports, will be defunded. While I have sought to make the point that all collections—analog or digital—are selections, such funding cuts are depressingly pointed examples of why mass digitization is no magic solution to previous constraints on access to the documentary record.

I raise the issue of funding not simply to protest present circumstances but to note their continuity with the past and to highlight the actions they require of literary historians for the future. While the prevailing discourse of crisis encourages a perception of the present as different from and worse than past times, the humanities have always been subject to the “real” world. Financial and other constraints have inevitably limited, and will always limit, which of an essentially infinite array of cultural objects can be collected, preserved, and transmitted. Rather than a reason to despair, this situation emphasizes the continuing importance of long-standing editorial and curatorial practices for the present and future of the humanities.

Far from an esoteric preoccupation, textual scholarship has always been a response to real-world conditions and constraints: to the need to identify, understand, and manage gaps in the documentary record so as to provide an effective and explicit foundation for current and future interpretations and insights. Notwithstanding the influence of researchers such as Moretti and Jockers on academic and public perceptions of digital humanities, this space of mediation, collection, translation, and curation—of understanding and managing the constraints presented by the real world—is where much of the field actually sits. I offer the scholarly edition of a literary system as a contribution to this ongoing work: as a framework for enacting curatorial practices
in the context of data-rich literary history and emerging digital, particularly mass-digitized, knowledge infrastructure and for extending insights gained through such practices to the broader discipline. In providing a rigorous and publicly accessible representation of how past literary works existed and interacted with one another—and with publishers, readers, and the world—and in offering arguments on that basis, I have sought to build on historical practices to enable and demonstrate the future of literary history. I have sought, in other words, to encounter the constraints of the real world, and to pursue knowledge not only despite, but with them.