



# Research Directions

Office of Research Services

## ***History of Australian Literary Publishing***

Professor Ivor Indyk from the Writing and Society Research Group together with distinguished publishing industry consultants and researchers from Monash, Melbourne and Queensland Universities are collaborating to explore the recent history of literary publishing in Australia. This ARC Discovery project will consider how historical perspectives can assist in understanding contemporary problems in the publication of Australian literature.



As Professor Indyk argues, 'Australian literature leads a precarious existence because it depends upon a small local readership. The trade publishers are reducing their literary output, abandoning their backlists, their mid-list authors, poetry, and even "literary fiction". This project explores the distinctive economy of Australian literary publishing during the period 1965 to 1995 when, by contrast, it enjoyed wide support and national cultural significance. The distinguishing features of this economy were not obviously commercial, but they were commercial in import and by focussing on them, we seek to restore confidence in the logic of literary publishing, and the commercial viability of Australian literature.'

Through documentary research and discussions with key players involved in publishing in the period, the project team will undertake an in-depth analysis of the literary programs of the most significant Australian literary publishers from 1965 to 1995, including Sun, Penguin, UQP, McPhee Gribble, Angus & Robertson and Allen & Unwin. The study will also provide a cross-sectional view comparing the publication of different genres, books and authors, and the impact of factors such as cross-subsidisation, patronage, government funding, packaging of backlists, and the sense of cultural or national "mission".

With the viability of the Australian literary publishing industry currently under threat, this project will contribute to a better understanding of how our literary culture works, and to a renewed confidence in its ability to sustain itself by commercial and non-commercial means.

**Project Title:** *Australian literary publishing and its economies, 1965 - 1995*

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