

Volume 16, 2016
Peter Putnis & Jee Young Lee

The changing
geography of
overseas news in
the Australian
press, 1905–1950



Australian Journalism Monographs
Volume 16, 2016
ISSN 1440 7922

Published by the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research
Griffith University, QLD, Australia

In association with Bond University and the Journalism Education and Research Association
of Australia

Printed by Griffith University Uni Print

Editorial Coordinator: Dr Kerrie Foxwell-Norton (Griffith University).
Editorial Committee: Dr Heather Anderson (University of South Australia), A/Professor Jacqui
Ewart (Griffith University), A/Professor Susan Forde (Griffith University), Caroline Graham
(Bond University), A/Professor Jane Johnston (University of Queensland), Professor Michael
Meadows (Griffith University), A/Professor Cathy Jenkins (Australian Catholic University),
Professor Mark Pearson (Griffith University). Cover art, layout and design by Caroline Graham.



From the Editor

Welcome to *Australian Journalism Monographs* Volume 16, 2016.

In 1905 — as this year's *AJM* authors Professor Peter Putnis and Dr Jee Young Lee (University of Canberra) report — international news agency the Australian Press Association (APA) telegraphed about 1000 words of cable news from London to Australia per day at a cost of one shilling per word. By 1950, AAP — the result of the 1935 merger of APA and United Services Ltd, the other early Australian international news agency of the time — was cabling around 10,000 words per day to the Australian press from London. This certainly signalled more international content arriving on Australian shores, but what was it about and from where? The multifaceted and rapid change that was characteristic of this forty-five year period of the Australian news media reporting the world is the heart of *AJM* 2016, *The changing geography of overseas news in the Australian press, 1905-1950*.

In this volume, Putnis and Lee investigate the historical role of the press in positioning Australia internationally. Their study is a rigorous and nuanced investigation of the history of Australia and its international news flow, detailing '...statistical maps of the 'news geography', which are the extent to which overseas countries and regions of the world are represented in the news'. The study's focus is national newspapers of ongoing note and regard in the Australian media landscape, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age* with a particular exploration of reporting in the years 1905, 1920, 1935 and 1950.

This *AJM* edition extends our understanding of Australian press and international news flow beyond the well-rehearsed observations of references to elite nations

and people (Galtung and Ruge, 1965), though these remain. The triumph of Putnis and Lee's work is its empirical specificity alongside an examination of the historical, political, economic and cultural context of reporting that affords a depth of explanation. It thus illustrates ways in which Australian news media and journalists have communicated our position in the world during times of great change and flux, not the least of which are two world wars, changing relations with the British empire and a emergent consciousness of our position in Asia and the Pacific.

I hope you enjoy this year's *AJM*.

In other news for *Australian Journalism Monographs*, we are pleased to work with *Australian Journalism Review* to present a new section each year, 'Emerging Scholars' which is the result of numerous submissions to *AJM* over the years from high-quality emerging researchers. Along with this new initiative in *AJR*, *Australian Journalism Monographs* will continue to publish long-form, high-quality scholarship from journalism, media and communications scholars annually.

Thanks to all our readers for your support of *AJM*, we look forward to bringing you our 2017 edition.

Kerrie Foxwell-Norton
Organising Editor
October, 2016.

The changing geography of overseas news in the Australian press, 1905–1950

Peter Putnis and Jee Young Lee, University of Canberra

Abstract

This monograph analyses the changing pattern of overseas news coverage in the Australian press in the first half of the twentieth century. Specifically, it examines the extent to which overseas countries and regions of the world were represented in the news of the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age (Melbourne) for the years 1905, 1920, 1935 and 1950. It compares coverage across these years with a view to discerning historical trends in the ‘view of the world’ presented by these newspapers. Discussion focuses on the question of how overseas news coverage reflects particular historical circumstances in relation to world events, patterns of global interconnectedness, Australia’s position in the world, and the state of its press communications.

Introduction

Since the early nineteenth century, Australian newspapers have disseminated news about the world, particularly Britain, to their settler societies. Whatever the difficulties posed by distance, news scarcity, or the expense of transmission,

a major role of the press was to maintain the connection with Britain, providing a continuing knowledgeable engagement with the affairs of Britain, the British Empire and Europe. Australia's external communication developed within the framework of the British Empire. The London press and the London-based international news agency, Reuters, were the major sources of British and international news published in Australia well into the twentieth century. At the same time, major Australian papers like the *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)* and the *Age*, secured their own overseas news-gathering capacity either individually or through part ownership of national agencies such as the Australian Associated Press (AAP) and its predecessor, the Australian Press Association (APA). The APA initially operated exclusively from London but, by 1920, it also had representation in New York. Links with US agencies such as Associated Press and United Press were later strengthened, particularly following the outbreak of World War Two. After 1945, Australia's overseas news coverage reflected the increased importance of the US to Australia's interests, as well as increased attention given by the press to Asian affairs.

This monograph reports on research into the changing pattern of overseas news coverage in the Australian press in the first half of the twentieth century. It focuses on coverage in Australia's two leading newspapers of record published across the period of the study, the *SMH* (Sydney) and the *Age* (Melbourne). It presents statistical maps of the news geography – the extent to which overseas countries and regions of the world are represented in the news – of the *SMH* and the *Age* for the years 1905, 1920, 1935 and 1950, revealing historical trends in the view of the world presented through these newspapers. It also examines the technological, geo-political and organisational conditions that shaped news flow to Australia across the period of the study.

The maps of Australia's news geography were derived from sample-based content analyses of each newspaper for each of these years. The relative prominence of overseas countries and regions in the Australian news was determined by calculating the number of significant country references scored by each country that featured as the subject or location of the almost 4,000 news stories included in the sample. For stories which were sent to Australian newsrooms from overseas locations by telegraph or post – for example, cables, correspondence, and stories taken from overseas newspapers – the country of origin of the story (for cables, the country of the published dateline) was also recorded.

Research using content analysis to document patterns of international news

coverage in selected countries has been a mainstay of international news flow studies since the 1950s (Mowlana 1985). The aim of most of these studies, usually based on a snapshot of coverage at a particular point in time, has been to identify and test generalizable determinants of international news flow. Such studies address the question of what factors determine the news prominence of a foreign country in the media of a particular home country. Commonly identified predictors have included, not surprisingly, the size (measured by population or, more often, GDP) and power of the foreign country, the country's "conflict intensity" (Segev 2015, p.412) and the degree of relatedness of the two countries involved.

The vast literature on international news flow forms a conceptual backdrop to this study. The formulations of Galtung and Ruge (1965) about what determines the newsworthiness of events – reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to something negative, amongst others – still loom large in discourse about the flow of news. The idea of cultural proximity as a factor is also pervasive. As Galtung and Ruge put it, "the event scanner [imagined here as the determiner of what is worthy of becoming news] will pay particular attention to the familiar, to the culturally similar and the culturally distant will be passed by more easily and not noticed" (1965, p.67). It is also important, in any new study, to acknowledge the critical tradition of research that, since the 1950s, has been taking Western media to task for providing the public with an incomplete and inadequate picture of international affairs. This reached its zenith in the 1970s and 1980s in calls, through UNESCO, for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which would address the "structural imperialism" of the prevailing information order, which was characterised by an imbalanced pattern of global news flow dominated by Western interests (Thussu 2000, pp.43–49). Hence, we include in this monograph a brief review of previous international news flow studies, focussing on those which included Australian data.

However, the aims of this study are different to those of most international news flow research. It is not our aim to try to identify a limited set of general factors that might appear to operate as determinants of international news flow to Australia. Nor do we evaluate Australian press coverage in terms of general criteria such as completeness, diversity or global balance. Rather, our purpose is historical and therefore rooted in the specificities – geo-political structures and world events, as well as conditions of news production and distribution – relevant to each year chosen for this study.

The news maps generated by content analysis are contextualised and, as far as it has been practical within the limits of this monograph, accounted for in historical terms. Discussion focuses on the question of how these maps relate to particular historical circumstances in relation to world events, patterns of global interconnectedness, Australia's position in the world, and the state of its press communications technology. How do the maps, taken together, portray the evolution of Australia's engagement with the rest of the world in the first half of the twentieth century? The undertaking, therefore, relates a body of knowledge derived from quantitative analysis (the reality depicted in maps of news geography) to historical understanding of the development of Australia's international relations and international communication.

International news studies and Australia

Since the 1950s, the study of patterns of international news flow has been one of the chief subjects in international communication research. In his 1985 bibliography of research on international news flow, Mowlana noted that the previous decade had seen an "unprecedented expansion of research in this field, much of it by scholars from developing countries". This reflected a "surge of interest in news flow" (p.3) stimulated by the NWICO debate. Mowlana identified two categories of research in the field. Firstly, studies "dealing with the actual flow and content of news" between countries, and between country groupings such as the developed and developing world. A primary objective of this tradition had been to assess balances and imbalances in the flow of news often informed by dominance-dependency theories, sometimes linked to an analysis of the "structure of imperialism" (p.11). Mowlana's second category was studies on factors determining this flow of news. Some in this category, such as Boyd-Barrett's study of international news agencies (1981), emphasised media factors that influence international news flow. Others emphasised extra-media factors such as particular country characteristics (e.g. size, power) and country relationships.

In the three decades since Mowlana's bibliography, international news flow has continued to be a dominant topic of international communication research (Hanusch and Obijiofor 2008, pp.9–21; Segev 2015, pp.412–415). The NWICO debate, as a motivator for such research, faded away in the late 1980s. It was a victim of Cold War politics, Western press agitation, and the economic realities of news markets (Gerbner, Mowlana & Nordenstreng 1993, pp.ix–xii). However, quantitative research into determinants of international news flow continued apace, sometimes focusing on particular media (e.g. Wilke, Heimprecht and

Cohen 2012 on television news and Himelboim, Chang and McCreery 2010 on the internet), others on specific countries of interest (e.g. Weber 2010), and still others testing one or more specific determining factors (e.g. Pietilainen 2006).

Australian researchers have participated in two worldwide studies of international news flow conducted under the auspices of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). The first, conducted in 1979, was carried out by thirteen national teams whose research covered twenty-nine countries. The Australian team was headed by Grant Noble and Elizabeth Noble of the University of New England. A major finding of this study was that “for all media systems geographical proximity is a dominant orientation for determining newsworthiness” (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. 1985, p.42). However, this was less the case for Australia than for most other countries. The final report of this study noted that:

In Asia ... [of which Australia was deemed to be part] ... “own region” drew a range from the comparative low in Australia to 65% in Malaysia, the highest rate anywhere. Like some of the Eastern European countries, Australia seemed to fit least in its geographic region; its strong concern with Western Europe and North America reflected both its Anglophone heritage and its tendency to identify primarily with Western industrial nations (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. 1985, p.39).

A full report on the 1979 Australian data can be found in Noble and Noble (1981).

The second IAMCR study, based on 1995 data, involved some forty national teams including an Australian team led by Peter Putnis of the University of Canberra. H W Wu’s analysis of the total global data set found that, “First, the US is dominant in almost every country’s foreign news hole, and powerful countries such as France and Russia are also prominent. Secondly, each country’s news output seems to demonstrate a regional preference” (Wu 2000, p.121). Wu found that the volume of trade between countries was the most influential determinant of transnational news flow while clout variables, such as population and GDP, were also highly related to international coverage (pp.124–125). The Australian data was analysed in Putnis, Penhallurick and Bourk (2000), who found that North America, Western Europe and the Asia-Pacific regions loomed large in Australia’s international news map, while Latin America and Africa were of peripheral interest (p.11). There was also evidence that regional proximity

played a more prominent role as a factor in determining the 1995 news map than had been the case in 1979. In the 1979 data, countries from the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, figured in 32% of international stories while in 1995 they figured in 48% of stories. This increase was to some extent accounted for by the prominence of the South Pacific in the news in 1995 because France was undertaking nuclear testing in the region in that year. However, the authors argued that it also reflected a strengthening of links between Australia and Asia between 1979 and 1995.

Most research on international news flow has been cross-sectional, focusing on mapping news geography at a particular point in time. There have been few longitudinal studies of changing patterns of international news flow over time. A major exception is J Wilke, who examined patterns of foreign news coverage in the press of four countries – Germany, England, France and the US – over three centuries. Of interest as background to the study reported here is Wilke’s finding that the English press (the source of much of the foreign news published in the Australian press) was more global in its outlook than that of the other three countries he investigated. In 1906, 52% of the foreign stories in English papers were from non-European regions of the world while the proportions for Germany and France were 22% and 25% respectively. Wilke attributes this difference to “Britain’s emergence as a world empire, a sea power pursuing worldwide political and economic interests” (Wilke 1987 p.162).

Australian press history and overseas news

As noted earlier, major Australian newspapers have traditionally disseminated news of the world, particularly news from Britain, across Australia. In the nineteenth century news from overseas was generally considered to be of greater moment than domestic news. This was especially the case for war news as Europe’s nineteenth century conflicts could threaten the security of the almost defenceless Australian colonies. News of major European conflicts such as the Crimean War of the 1850s and the 1870 Franco-Prussian War generated enormous excitement in Sydney and Melbourne creating, in the first case, a widespread Russophobia and, in the second, concern that Britain and therefore the Australian colonies might be drawn into the hostilities (Putnis & Ailwood 2007; Putnis 2007). There is no parallel in Australian press history to the “turn away from the outside world” that Wilke identified in the US press of the

nineteenth century as a symptom of American isolationism (1987, p.159).

Australia's international communication system developed within the framework of the British Empire. This was the case with respect to undersea cable connections and the later wireless telegraphy links developed in the 1920s. In 1872 the British-owned Eastern Extension Telegraph Company established Australia's first telegraphic link to Britain via Darwin and India. For thirty years it held a monopoly over international telegraphy until the opening, in 1902, of a cable across the Pacific Ocean linking Southport in Queensland with Vancouver, Canada, thus providing an alternate route to London via the Pacific. This cable was jointly owned by the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom and was designed to strengthen communication links between centres of the British Empire. It also had the effect of discouraging other possible international links such as a direct cable between Sydney and San Francisco. Wireless links with Australia, established in the 1920s, also followed Imperial lines, in this case as a matter of government policy. While radiotelegraph services were opened to Britain and Canada, approaches from US and Japanese companies to establish links to those countries were rebuffed, much to the chagrin of the governments of those countries (Putnis 2012, pp.425–426; Murray 2004, p.71). This privileging of Empire in the deployment of cable and wireless communication infrastructure was largely reproduced in the realm of news transmission, at least prior to World War Two. The Australian press, particularly in its overseas links, developed as part of an integrated "imperial news system" (Potter 2003; 2007). At the same time, major Australian papers, such as the *SMH* and the *Age*, developed their own overseas news gathering capacity, centred in London, but also reaching into continental Europe and America.

After the opening of Australia's telegraphic link to London in 1872, when the overland telegraph was built, each of two rival newspaper groups, one led by the *SMH* and the other by the *Age*, established cable offices in London from where their staff transmitted a daily service of cables (initially about fifty words per day) for newspapers within their group. While these services largely drew on material from the London press and Reuters, stories were selected with Australian interests in mind. Major papers also developed networks of overseas correspondents. In the late nineteenth century, the *SMH* was described, with justification, as being a "receptacle for cosmopolitan news gathered by its own

correspondents” (*SMH* 1897, p.10). The paper regularly (usually monthly) published correspondence from not only London but also Berlin, St Petersburg, Vienna, Rome, Paris and New York. However, by the first decade of the twentieth century, the cablegram had become the most important form of international news. As delegates to the first Imperial Press Conference, held in London in 1909 observed, “people these days would not wait for a long mailed letter, but wanted quick news” (Hardman 1909, p.42). Lord Crewe, the Secretary for the Colonies, explained: “In the press ... much can be done by letters from correspondents. But unfortunately, in this hurried age, we all desire to see and hear some new thing, and it is the cablegrams and not the letters which create the abiding impression” (Ibid, pp.136–137).

Australian news agencies

In the first half of the twentieth century, news agencies owned by Australian press interests were the dominant players in the provision of daily overseas news to Australian newspapers. In 1895 the two rival Australian cable associations, which had been led by the *SMH* and the *Age*, merged to form the United Cable Service (later re-named the Australian Press Association). This service operated as a monopoly supplier of cable news to the Australian press until 1910 (Putnis 2006, pp.1–17). Thus, in 1905, the *SMH* and the *Age* received identical cable services from London.

At the outbreak of the World War One, two Australian news agencies operated from London. The Australian Press Association (APA) represented the morning dailies, including the *SMH* and the *Age*, while United Services Ltd. (USL), led by the Melbourne *Herald* and the Sydney *Sun*, represented the afternoon newspapers. Like their predecessors, these organisations drew on the pool of news available in London to provide a service of world news to their subscribing newspapers in Australia. In the early 1920s, however, they also set up offices in New York (Putnis 2012 p.427). The two associations merged in 1935 to form Australian Associated Press (AAP). Its chairman, Keith Murdoch, described AAP as a “thoroughly independent. Strong and complete service ... operating in the main from London ... [with a] secondary branch of the service ... in New York, operating from the *New York Times* office” (Murdoch 1935, p.4.)

At the outbreak of World War Two, Murdoch recognised that AAP needed to reduce its reliance on Reuters and strengthen links with US news agencies.

By 1941, AAP had contracts with the American Associated Press (AP) for the delivery of its world service to AAP in both London and New York. It also had similar arrangements with the two other major US agencies, United Press (UP) and William Randolph Hearst's International News Service (Putnis 2012, pp.434–435).

Following World War Two, AAP significantly expanded its newsgathering role in the Asia-Pacific region. Under an agreement with Reuters, AAP became responsible for a new joint AAP-Reuters news service that, by 1949, had its own correspondents in Bangkok, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Manila, and Malaya. The AAP-Reuters organisation was therefore well positioned in Asia to shift resources quickly to cover the Korean War when it broke out in June 1950.¹

In 1905, APA telegraphed about 1,000 words of cable news from London to Australia per day at a cost of one shilling per word.² In 1941 the Empire press rate was reduced to a penny per word³ and, by 1950, AAP was cabling around 10,000 words per day to the Australian press from London.⁴ The fact that press cable charges from the UK to Australia were far cheaper than rates from non-British Empire countries encouraged the Australian press to use London as a clearing-house for world news, distorting Australia's news geography. In the late 1930s, it cost five times as much to send a cable from Tokyo to Sydney as it did from London to Sydney (Ball 1938, p.12), discouraging direct news

1 Annual Report of Australian Associated Press for the year ended June 30, 1950. Fairfax Company Archives, Sydney. See also Anderson & Trembath 2011, pp.212-214.

2 The wordage estimate is based on expenditure records of the *Argus/SMH*-led cable association held in the Fairfax Company Archives, Sydney. Telegraph expenses, paid mainly to the Eastern Telegraph Company, accounted for about 75% of total expenditure. Expenditure in 1905 was larger than usual because of the Australian cricket tour of England. The press rate of one shilling per word, introduced in 1902, represented a significant reduction on rates that had prevailed in the 1890s but was still considered high. The principle that reduced press rates might be applied internationally, in recognition of press traffic as a public service, was first recognised at the St. Petersburg Telegraph Conference of 1875 (UNESCO 1956, p.9). A special press rate for cables between the UK and Australia was introduced in 1886, set at 2/8 per word, at a time when the rate for ordinary messages was 9/4 per word. In 1891 the cost for ordinary messages was reduced to 4/- and for press messages to 1/9 per word (Fairfax & Sons 1931, p.280).

3 This was the culmination of a series of reductions across the period of this study. In 1909, the press rate between the UK and Australia was reduced from one shilling to 9 pence; in 1912 to 7½ pence; in 1925 to 6 pence; in 1938 to 4½ pence and in 1939 to 2½ pence (Source: Annual Reports of the Postmaster-General's Department). It is important to note that rates to and from other countries could be much higher. For an analysis of the large rate variations across the world in 1954 see UNESCO 1956.

4 In the year ended June 30 1950, AAP transmitted 4,904,131 words to Australia, an increase of 19.6% on the previous year. Of these 584,621 (11.9%) were from the Pacific region, excluding New Zealand. *Annual Report of Australian Associated Press for the year ended June 30, 1950*. Fairfax Company Archives, Sydney.

flow between Japan and Australia. At the time that the penny per word press rate between London and Australia was introduced, the rate between China and Australia was 9½ pence per word, between the Soviet Union and Australia 11 pence per word, and between New York and Australia 7½ pence per word.⁵

As long-distance telegraphy became cheaper, extended cabled reports largely replaced traditional correspondence. In a typical 1905 edition of the *SMH*, cable news comprised about thirty brief reports of between one and four short paragraphs. While these covered news from around the world, they were all datelined London. In a typical 1950 edition, cable news, sourced from AAP and staff correspondents, included full reports of up to twenty paragraphs that could, if newsworthy enough, be presented just as prominently as domestic stories. Datelines included the major cities of Europe, Asia and the United States.

Criticism of overseas news coverage

Throughout the period of this study, institutional arrangements for securing overseas news for the Australian public and actual coverage of international events in the Australian press were subjects of ongoing criticism by politicians, community leaders and academics. It is beyond the scope of this monograph to discuss the controversies surrounding overseas news coverage in detail but some mention of major issues is warranted.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the most prevalent concern was that high press cable rates meant that coverage of overseas news in the Australian press was fragmentary. High costs led newspapers to impose strict daily quotas on the number of words the news agencies they owned could send to Australia. This led to the predominance of spot news in cables, condensed as much as possible and truncated through the use of cablese. The cable editors in Australian newsrooms expanded this material into readable news stories but the end result was often unsatisfactory – short items with little context or background to aid understanding.

At the 1909 Imperial Press Conference, delegates agreed that high cable rates greatly impeded mutual understanding across the Empire and hence limited feelings of Imperial unity. In moving a motion calling for reduced rates, Stanley Reed of the *Times of India* complained that news came in “unrecognisable

⁵ Source: Various reports on cable rates in the Australian press in 1942, 1943, and 1944.

fragments” and that “the press telegram is so short that we see overseas affairs as through a glass darkly.” Ignorance was inevitable, he thought, “as long as cable rates are so high that all news telegrams have to be compressed within the narrowest of limits” (quoted in Hardman 1909, p.140).

Keith Murdoch made a similar point more than a decade later when, at a luncheon given in his honour at the conclusion of his term as manager of USL, he complained that the outer dominions of the Empire could not be satisfied with the quantity of news they received from London. The cable capacity was there, but the cost was prohibitive. Australian newspapers “did their best and met astonishing bills. What could they do when every word cost from 7½d. to 3s.? The result was that isolation was more marked than it need be” (Murdoch 1921, p.5). Around the same time, Theodore Fink, Chairman of the Melbourne *Herald* press group, commented that Australian newspaper coverage provided only “broken gleams of light” on the momentous events occurring in Russia at the time.⁶

In 1905, the main political concern was that APA operated as a monopoly supplier of overseas news to the Australian press. This resulted in a conservatively biased uniformity of coverage across Australian newspapers. Such was the cost of telegraphy that no new entrant was in a position to break this monopoly. Furthermore, the founding members of the cable service could use their control over access to overseas news to stifle newspaper competition within Australia. Such was the degree of concern that in 1909 the Australian Senate conducted a select committee of inquiry on press cable services to Australia, which found that the APA, in conjunction with Reuters, was indeed operating as a “complete monopoly”. The main outcome of the inquiry was a decision by the Labor government of the day to subsidise a second independent news service to compete with the APA-Reuters monopoly (Putnis 1999, pp.139–155).

A long-standing criticism of cable news, which re-emerged strongly during the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921), was that cable services were unreliable in their coverage of Irish affairs. Sydney’s Catholic newspaper, the *Freeman’s Journal*, argued that, as a consequence of the cable news monopoly that operated in the early 1900s, important Irish news, including announcements relating to Home Rule, were regularly overlooked by the cable service thus

⁶ Fink to Murdoch, 5 May, 1919. Papers of Sir Keith Murdoch, MS 2823/3/4, National Library of Australia.

keeping the 25% of Australian readers who were profoundly interested in the welfare of Ireland uninformed on developments there (*Freeman's Journal* 1906, p.23). During the War of Independence, the journal went much further, accusing Australia's London-based cable services of "strangling truth" by providing a "biased and unreliable version of Irish affairs" so as to meet the expectations of Australia's anti-Irish mainstream press (O'Sullivan 1921, p.20).⁷

Another point of criticism arose from APA's reliance on Reuters and the London press for its news from Japan. As early as 1915, American academic, Walter Williams, pointed out that Reuters' close relationship with the Japanese national news agency, Kokusai, which was affiliated with the Japanese government, meant that its news reflected Japanese government interests (Williams 1915, p.7). The point was re-iterated by London *Times* proprietor, Lord Northcliffe, who, during a visit to Japan in 1921, wrote to Keith Murdoch, then manager of the Melbourne *Herald*, that, because of what he called the "Reuter-Kokusai combination ... practically all the news, such as you get in Australia from Japan, is controlled by Japan."⁸ Australian newspapers continued to fall victim to Japanese news management and misinformation throughout the 1930s (Murray 2004, p.16) leading to accusations that Australian newspapers failed in their responsibility to inform the Australian people adequately about Japan and its ambitions in the years leading up to World War Two.

In the 1930s the London-centric orientation of Australia's major overseas news suppliers came under criticism from two further directions. American diplomats in Australia complained that US-Australia relations were being damaged by a lack of consistent, impartial news flow from America to Australia. They objected that US news, often channelled to Australia via Reuters, emphasised

⁷ Keith Murdoch, then manager of the cable service for evening newspapers, United Services Ltd. (USL), thought that events in Ireland deserved more in-depth coverage than "routine cable work" from London could provide. In late 1919 he urged the Directors of USL to allocate resources so as to allow first-hand coverage of major events. He went on, "At the present moment for instance we could get a fine series of cables and a good series of articles by sending a man to Ireland to write it up from an Australian point of view." Murdoch to Theodore Fink, 28 December, 1919. Papers of Sir Keith Murdoch, MS 2823/3/3, National Library of Australia. Subsequently, Murdoch arranged for Australian journalist Chris O'Sullivan to act as USL representative in Ireland. O'Sullivan scored a major scoop for the Melbourne *Herald* and the Sydney *Sun* by securing an exclusive interview with De Valera, President of the Irish Republic, who was in hiding from the British at the time (O'Sullivan 1921). For an account of the Sinn Fein party's efforts to counter British dominance of news emanating from Ireland at the time, see Kenneally 2008, pp.43-75.

⁸ Northcliffe to Murdoch, 22 November 1921. Papers of Sir Keith Murdoch, MS 2823/3/7, National Library of Australia.

the worst aspects of American life, thus creating ill-will and misunderstandings, as well as damaging the reputation of Americans (Esthus 1964, p.5). In 1938, Melbourne academic W. M. Ball published the first detailed academic study of international news in the Australian press. He criticised AAP for being overly British in its perspective. He agreed with the American critics, noting that news from America was “sporadic and fragmentary”. He also called for greater attention to news from the Pacific region, particularly Japan (Ball 1938, pp.11–17). The newspaper of the Australian Journalists Association, the *Journalist* largely agreed, summing up Ball’s findings with the headline “Cables give no reliable guide on world affairs” (*The Journalist* 1938, p.13).

During and after World War Two, major Australian newspapers, either individually or through AAP, significantly enhanced their news-gathering capacity in Asia so as to reduce their reliance on US agency sources and gain an Australian perspective. However, criticism persisted that the Australian press devoted insufficient resources to regional newsgathering and remained overly dependent on international news agencies, especially Reuters (Torney-Parlicki 2000, pp.3–25).

Content analysis methodology

This study is based on a content analysis of all stories with a substantial overseas news content published in a sample of editions of the *SMH* and the *Age* in the years 1905, 1920, 1935, and 1950. The *Age* and the *SMH* are the two most important Australian newspapers of record published continuously over the period of the study. Intervals of fifteen years were chosen with a view to documenting significant change in news geography across the period of the study while also avoiding the years of the world wars. Each yearly sample comprised twelve Monday to Saturday issues of each newspaper, selected using a constructed fortnight methodology. This is a well-established method for constructing an optimally representative sample of coverage (Sarantakos 2005). All stories with substantial overseas country news content were identified for inclusion in the sample. In most international news flow studies the set of relevant incoming stories is registered as “foreign news”. However, in this study the term “overseas news” is preferred in recognition of local usage (Australia being an island continent) and the fact that, particularly in the early decades of the twentieth century, many Australians regarded news from Britain as news

from home and therefore hardly foreign.

The unit of analysis in this study is the story. Separate stories were usually readily identifiable either by having their own heading or, in the case of cables, their own dateline. On occasion, lengthy features or editorials were judged to contain more than one story. This occurred when there was a marked change of topic often signalled by a space break in the text but sometimes just by a new paragraph. Stories could be of any length. A two-line cable qualified as a story. However, tabular reports of share prices, shipping movements and sporting results with no introduction or commentary were not included.

The sampling procedure generated a total of 3,928 relevant stories distributed across the years and the newspapers as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Number of stories in the total data set by year and newspaper

	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	<i>The Age</i>	Total
1905	473	465	938
1920	461	423	884
1935	661	573	1,234
1950	495	377	872
Total	2,090	1,838	3,928

Each of the stories was initially coded according to one of three prominence levels: low for stories up to 100 words, medium for stories between 100 and 300 words, and high for stories over 300 words. However, for the analysis presented in this paper it was decided that all stories should be weighted equally. This decision followed testing which showed that, for results presented here, running the analysis using weightings (three points for high, two for medium, and one for low) produced outcomes almost identical to those produced when no weightings were used.

Each story was coded by newspaper title, year and month of publication, countries featured in the story (up to three per story, one of which could be Australia if the story also had overseas news content), country of origin of the story (date-

line), main topic, and story type.⁹ Subsequently, countries featured in the stories were grouped into nine world regions so as to enable an analysis of news flow to Australia by region. Regions adopted for this study are: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, Oceania, the UK, and Other (Antarctica and Arctic).¹⁰

In the analysis presented, the key coded variables for each of the 3,928 stories in the sample are: newspaper title, year of publication, countries featured in the story (referred to in the text below as “significant country references”), and country of origin of the story. Of the 3,928 stories in the sample, 2,070 (52.7%) had one, 1,459 (37.1%) had two and 399 (10.2%) had three significant country references, yielding a total of 6,185 significant country references. This number included 790 references to Australia that were excluded from the analysis below because of our focus on overseas news.

A country of origin was identified for each story based on dateline information or other evidence such as the country of origin of a source newspaper in the case of newspaper extracts. Of the 3,928 stories in the sample, 3,196 originated from overseas countries while 732 (mainly commentaries, editorials and letters) originated within Australia. Stories originating in Australia were not included in the analysis of countries of origin presented below.

⁹ All the coding was undertaken by a single senior research assistant using coding instructions prepared by the first author of this monograph. Stories which met the criteria for inclusion in the sample were identified through a close reading and mark up of photocopies of all pages of the selected newspapers. Information on each story was entered on a standardised coding sheet. Coding of significant country mentions in a story proved fairly straightforward since in nearly all cases the country was named. In some cases the country was determined from mentions of other relevant matter such as a country’s capital city or political leader. Historical changes affecting country nomenclature were dealt with on a case-by-case basis with priority given to maximising the comparability of data across the selected years of the study. Ireland was treated as part of the UK in 1905 but as an independent country in 1920 and thereafter. In 1950, stories mentioning North Korea, South Korea or both were given the single country coding “Korea”.

¹⁰ The regional groupings chosen are an adaptation of those developed for the classic UNESCO sponsored study *Foreign News in the Media* (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. 1985). As the authors of that study recognised, the grouping represented a less than perfect breakdown of the world but was less contentious than other possible classifications. The following boundaries set for the 1985 study have been adopted in this study: North America includes Bermuda; Latin America also includes Mexico, the Caribbean countries and Cuba; Africa does not include Egypt; the Middle East includes Egypt and Iran but not Turkey which is included in Europe. The following changes have been made to the 1985 study boundaries for the purposes of this particular project: The groupings “Eastern Europe” and “Western Europe” have been combined as “Continental Europe”. The United Kingdom is treated as a separate grouping in its own right. Asia extends from Afghanistan eastwards. However, Australasia and Oceania have been deleted from “Asia” and form their own grouping entitled “Oceania”.

The pattern of overseas news: 1905

Of the 938 overseas stories in the 1905 sample, 473 were in the *SMH* and 465 were in the *Age*. The fact that both papers gave almost identical attention to overseas news is not surprising. Both were 10–14 page morning broadsheets (up to 22 pages on Saturdays) that took the task of reporting major world events seriously. Both were owner-subscribers of the same London-based cable news service. They published around 30 overseas news items per weekday and up to 60 on Saturdays. The majority of these were brief, discrete, cables – abbreviated news. Important items were fleshed out by explanatory summaries and commentary prepared by experts in the local newsroom (“Notes on the cable news” and “Notes from various sources” in the *Age* and daily “Comments on the situation” in the *SMH* in relation to the Russo-Japanese War) as well as by regular, substantial editorials on international affairs. In their reporting of the major international news event of 1905, the Russo-Japanese War, the *SMH* and the *Age* sought to be newspapers of record, publishing all available cables on the progress of the war on a daily basis and also regularly publishing maps to help readers follow the various campaigns.¹¹ They also acted as newspapers of record in their coverage of the 1905 Australian cricket tour of England which comprised 35 matches, including five Test Matches, conducted from May until September.

The biggest international news event of 1905 was, by far, the on-going land and sea war between Russia and Japan. This war broke out on February 1904 after Japan and Russia were unable to agree about their respective claims over Manchuria. The war progressed with a series of disastrous military defeats for Russia, culminating in late May 1905 when in the battle of Tsushima, the Japanese navy destroyed the Russian Baltic fleet, which had sailed to the Japan Sea from Europe to join the conflict. At a subsequent peace conference, held in the US at the instigation of President Theodore Roosevelt, compromises were reached over territorial claims. Peace was restored in September 1905.

The 938 stories in the 1905 sample yielded 1,349 significant country references, excluding references to Australia. In all, 63 countries registered, though 42 of these had five or fewer references. The top twelve countries on this mea-

¹¹ On the important role that newsmaps (maps published alongside newspaper articles) played in reporting and visualising war in early twentieth-century Australian newspapers see Woods 2016.

sure are listed in order in Table 2. These countries account for 87.4% of total country references. The results presented in Table 2 confirm the importance of news from Britain for the Australian press and the salience of the British Empire as a news community. Of all overseas country references, 29.6% were to the UK. On a system of calculation where stories could be assigned up to three country references, 42.7% of stories referenced the UK. New Zealand received 65 country mentions, South Africa 29 and Canada (not in the table) ten. This is consistent with the assessment made by historians writing about the British Empire from a communication network perspective that “impulses [carrying information] travelling along connections between Britain and each of her colonies tended to be far stronger than those travelling along connections between different sites of colonization” (Potter 2007, p.646).

Table 2: Significant country references: Top twelve countries, 1905

Rank	Country	Number of References		Percent of stories referencing this country
		Frequency	Percent	
1	UK	399	29.6%	42.7%
2	Russia	252	18.7%	27.0%
3	Japan	147	10.9%	15.7%
4	USA	75	5.6%	8.0%
5	Germany	74	5.5%	7.9%
6	France	68	5.0%	7.3%
7	New Zealand	65	4.8%	7.0%
8	South Africa	29	2.1%	3.1%
9	China	28	2.1%	3.0%
10	Morocco	16	1.2%	1.7%
11	India	15	1.1%	1.6%
12	Poland	11	.8%	1.2%
Other countries		170	12.6%	18.2%
Total		1,349	100.0%	

Note: The total of percentages in the last column in this table and in Tables 3, 4 and 5 exceeds 100% reflecting the coding rule that allowed up to three country references per story.

It is noteworthy that New Zealand received almost as many country mentions as the US even though, in 1905, the US was about ten times larger than New Zealand in population and 87 times larger in GDP.¹² The US was also heavily involved in the peace negotiations that led to the end of the Russo-Japanese War. The results indicate the great attention given by the *SMH* and the *Age* to the major international and national conflicts of the day. The high figure for Russia arises from both its war with Japan and its internal unrest. The Morocco figures arise from what later became known as the First Moroccan Crisis, a conflict between Germany and France over their Moroccan interests.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of significant country references by region. The fact that continental Europe with 35.6% of references exceeds the UK with 29.6% of references indicates the importance both the *SMH* and the *Age* attached to coverage of European affairs, though the figure is somewhat inflated by the unusual newsworthiness of Russia in 1905. The Asian figure (15.9%) is almost entirely accounted for by the Russo-Japanese War. The whole region of Latin America scores less than 1% of references.

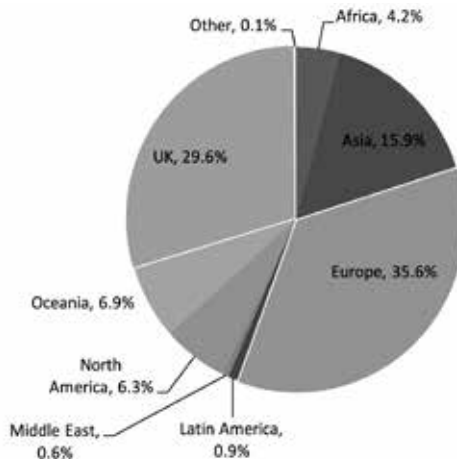


Figure 1: Significant country references by world region

Next, we examine the country of origin of stories sourced from overseas. In 1905 stories were overwhelmingly sourced from the UK irrespective of whether

¹² Historical GDP figures quoted in this paper are sourced from *Historical Statistics of the World Economy: 1–2008 AD*. Available from www.ggd.net/maddison/Historical_Statistics/horizontal-file_02-2010.xls

the content related to the UK. 92.5% of stories originating from overseas were sourced from the UK. Of the other 7.5%, 5.5% came from New Zealand, 0.7% from the US and 0.4% from Japan. Thus, nearly all stories about Japan's role in its war with Russia came to Australia via London. Notable, though statistically minor, exceptions were cables from Japan occasionally provided to the *SMH* by the Japanese Consul in Sydney and occasional despatches (not captured by the sample) from Australia's two war correspondents covering the conflict, F. Lionel Pratt for the *SMH* and W. H. Donald for the *Age*.

The pattern of overseas news: 1920

Of the 884 overseas stories in the 1920 sample, 461 were in the *SMH* and 423 were in the *Age* thus indicating similar degrees of attention to overseas news. Little had changed in the size and format of these newspapers since 1905. Weekday editions were usually 12–14 pages (though on Wednesdays the *SMH* carried additional classified advertising taking the paper to 20 pages) while Saturday editions could reach 26 pages. Weekday editions carried around 30 overseas stories, mainly cables, while Saturday editions carried around 50. Short cables still dominated, though longer ones of around 500 words were also published occasionally. Both papers were owner-subscribers of APA. In the aftermath of World War One, both papers reported extensively on international affairs, as one would expect. This included reports on Australia's participation in the League of Nations.

In 1920 no single international conflict dominated the news to the extent the Russo-Japanese War had done in 1904–5. Ongoing controversy relating to the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles, which had been signed in June 1919, generated many stories as did Russian Bolshevik victories, conflicts arising from the Irish War of Independence, and the establishment of the League of Nations. Many stories referencing the UK were generated by the Prince of Wales's tour of Australia between April and June and his subsequent tours of New Zealand and the South Pacific. The latter were covered by a special APA reporter who accompanied the Prince on the battlecruiser *H.M.S. Renown*.

The 884 stories in the 1920 sample yielded 1,191 significant country references, excluding references to Australia. In all, 58 countries registered, though 36 of these had five or fewer references. The top twelve countries are listed in order in **Table 3**. These countries account for 86.4% of total country references.

Table 3: Significant country references: Top twelve countries, 1920

Rank	Country	Number of References		Percent of stories referencing this country
		Frequency	Percent	
1	UK	497	41.7%	56.5%
2	USA	126	10.6%	14.3%
3	Germany	81	6.8%	9.2%
4	Russia	63	5.3%	7.2%
5	France	53	4.5%	6.0%
6	Ireland	45	3.8%	5.1%
7	New Zealand	40	3.4%	4.6%
8	Japan	39	3.3%	4.4%
9	Poland	25	2.1%	2.8%
10	South Africa	21	1.8%	2.4%
11	Italy	21	1.8%	2.4%
12	Canada	18	1.5%	2.0%
Other countries		162	13.6%	18.4%
Total		1,191	100.0%	

Figure 2 presents the distribution of significant country references by region. In 1920, the UK (41.7% of country references) is the most mentioned in the Australian press, followed by Europe (28.8%) and North America (12.1%). The Asian figure (6.9%) is almost entirely accounted for by Japan which, in 1920, was finalising a new treaty with the UK.

It will be recalled that, in the 1905 sample, 92.5% of overseas stories were sourced from the UK irrespective of their content. In the 1920 sample this was reduced to 68%. Much of the increase is picked up by the US which, in 1920, is the direct source for 16% of stories. The datelines “New York” and “Washington” appear daily in the *SMH* and *Age* in 1920 but were entirely absent in 1905.

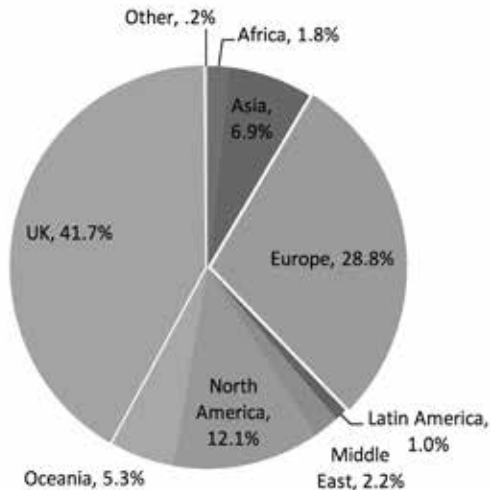


Figure 2: Significant country references by world region 1920

The pattern of overseas news: 1935

The 1935 sample comprised 1,234 overseas stories, an increase of 40% over the 1920 figure. The growth was shared fairly evenly between the two newspapers. Of those stories, 661 were in the *SMH* and 573 were in the *Age*. The growth in the number of stories can be attributed partly to the growth in the size of the papers. The size of the *SMH*, averaged over the twelve issues in the 1920 sample, was 14.6 pages while for 1935 it was 19.3 pages. The figures for the *Age* were 13.6 in 1920 and 17.6 in 1935. The turbulent political and military situation in Europe in 1935 was also a factor in the increase. This is supported by the fact that 55% of the stories in the 1935 sample appeared in the second half of the year when turmoil in Europe intensified.

In their weekday editions, the *SMH* and the *Age* carried around 50 overseas stories, mainly cables, while Saturday editions carried over 60. Short cables on political, commercial and sporting subjects, together with brief reports of newsworthy events such as disasters, accounted for the majority of items. However, longer cables of up to 1,000 words from overseas correspondents were also in evidence. In the 1920 sample, 64.3% of all overseas stories were low in prominence (100 words or less). In 1935 this category accounted for

55.1% of stories.

1935 was a year of international turmoil in Europe and elsewhere. Germany, under Hitler, was re-arming. Italy, under Mussolini, sought to build a new empire in Africa. France was experiencing economic and political instability while the League of Nations was proving to be increasingly ineffective in preventing armed conflict. At the same time, Japan, which had occupied Manchuria in 1931, was preparing for its 1937 full-scale invasion of China. The major international news event of the year was in early October when Italy invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Around 120 Western journalists travelled to Abyssinia to cover the war (Anderson & Trembath 2011, p.96).

The *SMH* and the *Age* continued to subscribe to the same cable news service becoming, in May 1935, founding members of AAP, which began to operate on 1st July. Under the AAP agreement, member newspapers could, in addition to receiving the standard AAP service, maintain their own supplementary cable news services thus enlarging the scope for diversity in cable news.¹³ Both papers also used news received via the British Official Wireless, a news service conducted by the British Foreign Office. It should also be noted that the availability of airmail, which had commenced between Britain and Australia in 1934, greatly enhanced the effectiveness of each newspaper's own correspondents.

The 1,234 stories in the 1935 sample yielded 1,674 significant country references, excluding references to Australia. In all, 67 countries registered, though 44 of these had five or fewer references. The top twelve countries are listed in order in **Table 4**. These countries account for 88.6% of total country references.

In the 1935 sample, just over 50% of stories with overseas news content included significant reference to the UK, a figure lower than in 1920 (56.5%). The US is also lower, perhaps reflecting a 'crowding out' effect arising from the prominence of European affairs in 1935. Four British Empire countries other

¹³ At the time of the establishment of AAP, major morning newspapers also established a joint supplementary cable service. Evening newspapers did likewise. Participants in the morning newspaper service were the *SMH*, the *Age*, the *Argus*, the *West Australian*, the *Advertiser* and the *Courier-Mail*. The service had a full time correspondent in London and, by the end of 1935, part-time correspondents in New York, Honolulu, Shanghai, Singapore, Cape-town, Colombo, Calcutta and Tokyo. These correspondents generally worked for local papers such as the *Shanghai Times*, the *Straits Times*, the *Cape Argus*, the *Statesman*, and the *Japan Times*. They only filed stories occasionally. In any case, the development would have come too late to be reflected in the 1935 data (*Supplementary Cable Service*, Fairfax Company Archive).

than Britain – New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and India figure in the top 12 though with relatively small percentages. It is noteworthy that New Zealand scores higher than Japan, despite the threat to stability in Asia that Japan posed at the time. The prominence accorded Italy, Abyssinia, Germany and France reflect their prominence in international affairs.

Table 4: Significant country references: Top twelve countries, 1935

Rank	Country	Number of references		Percent of stories referencing this country
		Frequency	Percent	
1	UK	621	37.1%	50.7%
2	USA	144	8.6%	11.8%
3	Italy	140	8.4%	11.4%
4	Abyssinia	110	6.6%	9.0%
5	Germany	104	6.2%	8.5%
6	France	100	6.0%	8.2%
7	New Zealand	67	4.0%	5.5%
8	Japan	61	3.6%	5.0%
9	South Africa	45	2.7%	3.7%
10	Canada	39	2.3%	3.2%
11	India	28	1.7%	2.3%
12	China	24	1.4%	2.0%
Other countries		191	11.4%	15.6%
Total		1,674	100.0%	

Figure 3 presents the distribution of significant country references by region. The UK (37.1%) is the most mentioned in the stories published in 1935, followed by Europe (26.8%), North America (10.9%) and Africa (10.2%). An increase in the country references in the African region is accounted for by references to Abyssinia and South Africa.

It will be recalled that, in the 1920 sample, 68% of stories sourced from overseas were sourced from the UK irrespective of their content. In the 1935 sample this

is reduced to 61.9%. Clearly, the UK remained the primary source for overseas news published in the *SMH* and the *Age* in 1935 but with reduced dominance. At the same time, the spread of other source countries increased. The 1935 sample included 101 stories sourced from the US (9.8%), 52 from France (5.0%), 30 from Germany (2.9%), 26 from New Zealand (2.5%), 21 from Italy (2.0%), and 20 from each of Japan and South Africa (1.9%).

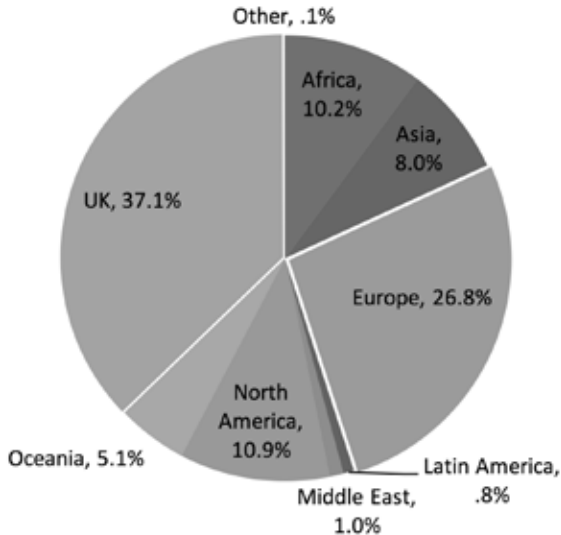


Figure 3: Significant country references by world region 1935

The pattern of overseas news: 1950

The 1950 sample comprised 872 overseas stories, a decrease of 30% over the 1935 figure. The decrease was greater in the *Age* than in the *SMH*. Of the 872 stories, 495 were in the *SMH* (down from 661 in 1935) and 377 were in the *Age* (down from 573 in 1935). The decline in the number of stories cannot be attributed to any reduction in overall newspaper size as the newspapers of 1950 were somewhat larger than those of 1935. The size of the *SMH*, averaged over the 12 issues in the 1935 sample, was 19.3 pages while for 1950 it had grown to 23.1 pages. The figures for the *Age* were 17.6 in 1935 and 18.3 in 1950. The explanation lies in the radical makeover both papers underwent in the early 1940s. News was moved to the front pages of the paper, previously devoted

to classified advertising. This change consolidated a number of trends in news presentation. Less of the news was presented as a series of separate, short items. More space was devoted to extended news stories, which drew upon a number of cabled sources. Headlines were larger and it was not unusual for major stories from overseas to be spread across three columns. One result was that stories were generally longer in 1950 than in 1935 and there were fewer of them on each page. In the 1950 sample, 35.6% of stories were of high prominence (over 300 words) up from 20.6% in 1935. In 1950, 36.5% of stories were of low prominence (up to 100 words) down from 55.1% in 1935.

In 1950, the *SMH* averaged about 40 overseas news stories per day while the *Age* averaged just over 30 stories. Overseas news appeared across the main news pages of each paper rather than in a separate section. The front pages generally carried six to ten overseas stories, one of which was often the lead story, particularly during the Korean War.

AAP continued to be the main supplier of cable news for both papers. Stories attributed to AAP carried datelines from major cities across the world. This is not to say, however, that AAP had its own reporters in all these centres. In 1950, AAP held non-exclusive rights to news from a large number of agencies and overseas newspapers including Reuters, United Press, Associated Press, the *Times* (London) and the *New York Times*. AAP staff in London and New York processed news from these sources for Australian requirements. It was incorporated into the daily AAP feed and published under the AAP banner.

AAP did, however, have its own correspondents in Asia. It entered into a partnership with Reuters in 1947 under which AAP took prime responsibility for news coverage of the Asia-Pacific region for its own subscribers and for Reuters' world service. This represented a major re-orientation of Australia's journalistic outlook and news-gathering resources towards Asia. Australia's geographic proximity to Asia and its post-World War Two strategic interests in the region led to the idea that AAP had a special role in reporting on this region both for Australia and the world.

By 1950, initial optimism regarding post-war international co-operation through the United Nations had given way to the realisation that the world was sharply divided between East and West, communism and capitalism. European affairs were blighted by the iron curtain that Russia had drawn across Europe. In the Asian

region post-war national independence movements and associated processes of de-colonisation led to instability in Malaya (the ‘Malayan Emergency’ in which the Royal Australian Air Force became involved), Indonesia and Indo-China. The biggest news event of the year was the Korean War, which broke out in June. Australian troop involvement commenced in October. Around this time, the Australian government accredited ten journalists and photographers to cover the war from an Australian perspective (Torney-Parlicki 2000, p.119). Hence, as well as receiving AAP material, the *SMH* and the *Age* were also able to send their own correspondents to gain additional coverage.

The 872 stories in the 1950 sample yielded 1,181 significant country references, excluding references to Australia. In all, 66 countries registered, though 43 of these had five or fewer references. The top twelve countries are listed in order in Table 5. These top countries account for 81.8 % of total country references.

Table 5: significant country references: Top twelve countries, 1950

Rank	Country	Number of References		Percent of stories referencing this country
		Frequency	Percent	
1	UK	321	27.2%	36.9%
2	USA	262	22.2%	30.1%
3	Korea	107	9.1%	12.3%
4	Japan	47	4.0%	5.4%
5	Russia	46	3.9%	5.3%
6	France	39	3.3%	4.5%
7	New Zealand	31	2.6%	3.6%
8	Malaya	27	2.3%	3.1%
9	China	26	2.2%	3.0%
10	Italy	22	1.9%	2.5%
11	India	20	1.7%	2.3%
12	Germany	18	1.5%	2.1%
Other countries		215	18.2%	24.7%
Total		1,181	100.0%	

Australia’s 1950 news geography is markedly different to that of 1935. The US is much more prominent. In 1950 the US accounts for 22.2% of all country references (8.6% in 1935) while 30.1% of stories with overseas news content included significant reference to the US (11.8% in 1935). The UK, while still ranked as the top country, is much less prominent in 1950 than in 1935. The percentage of stories referencing the UK is down from 50.7% to 36.9%. British Empire countries are, as a whole, less prominent in 1950 than in 1935 while Asian countries are more prominent. Korea occupies third place with 9.1% of country references. It is noteworthy that of the 107 references to Korea all but four occurred in the second half of the year, after the actual outbreak of war in late June. This underlines how dominant a single event can be in determining the newsworthiness of a country at a particular point in time.

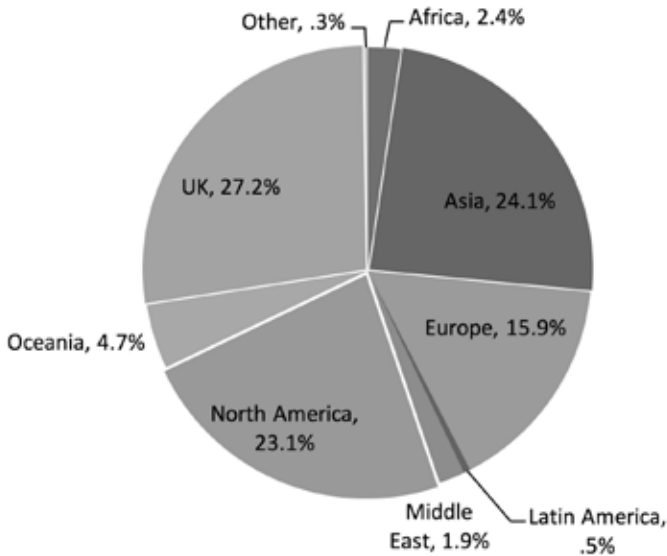


Figure 4: Significant country references by world region, 1950

Figure 4 presents the distribution of significant country references by region. The UK (27.2%) remains the most mentioned region in the stories published in 1950 but by a small margin. It is closely followed by Asia (24.1%) and North

America (23.1%). The regional data further demonstrate that Australia's 1950 news geography is markedly different to that of 1935. It shows a shift away from Europe towards Asia. In 1935, continental Europe accounted for 26.8% of country references but, in 1950, just 15.9%. In 1935 Asia, accounted for just 8% of references while in 1950 it accounted for 24.1%.

The shift in the news geography of the Australian press between 1935 and 1950, as assessed by the relative prominence given to various countries and regions in the content of news, is paralleled by a shift in the geographic pattern of news distribution. It will be recalled that in the 1935 sample 61.9% of stories from overseas were sourced from the UK irrespective of their content. Just 9.8% were sourced from the US. In the 1950 sample 37.6% of stories sourced from overseas countries were from the UK while 28.4% of stories were from the US. In the 1935 sample 7.9% of stories were sourced from Asian countries while in the 1950 sample the figure was 16.5%. Japan (35 stories) Korea (24) and Singapore (17) were the most prominent Asian sources.

Changes and continuities

The news geography evident in overseas news coverage by the *SMH* and the *Age* varies greatly amongst the years selected for this study. This is largely accounted for by the fact that each newspaper gave blanket coverage to the major international news events of each year, particularly if armed conflict was involved. In 1905, the spotlight was on the Russo-Japanese War, in 1935 on the Italian-Abyssinian War and in 1950 on the Korean War. The Australian press mirrored, in this respect, the main Western international news agenda in each year, a position reinforced by the fact that AAP and its forerunners drew heavily on the international news agencies for their news feeds. The impact of events is evident in the rise and fall pattern in the prominence of countries associated with them. In the 1905 sample Russia had 252 country references while in the 1920 sample it had 63. Japan had 147 references in 1905 but only 39 in 1920. Italy had 140 references in 1935 but only 22 in 1950.

While the country focus of news shifted markedly in accord with the location of major world crises, the degree of 'news concentration' – considered here as the proportion of total significant country references accounted for by references to the top five countries – varied little. In 1905, the top five countries accounted for 70.2% of all country references, in 1920 the figure was 68.8%, in 1935 66.8%

and in 1950 66.3%. The impact of specific global events on this concentration is seen in the fact that Russia and Japan were in the top five in 1905, Italy and Abyssinia were in the top five in 1935 and Korea was there in 1950. The other major impact on concentration was the news prominence of the UK and the US across all four years, though with significant variations as discussed below.

The UK had the largest proportion of country references for each of the years of the study – 29.6% in 1905, 41.7% in 1920, 37.1% in 1935, and 27.2% in 1950. This reflects the continuity of very strong cultural, political, and business links between Australia and the UK across the whole period of the study. At the same time, one can surmise that the fall from 37.1% in 1935 to 27.2% in 1950 reflects the increased importance of the US to Australia's interests in the post-World War Two period, as well as the increased attention given by the press to Asian affairs.

In 1905, the US ranked as the fourth most prominent country, but was the second most prominent country in 1920, 1935 and 1950. In 1935, the US accounted for 8.6% of all country references. In 1950, the figure was 22.2%. This rise marked the beginnings of a trend towards the greater relative prominence of US news. The 1995 study of international news flow noted earlier, found that the US was by far the most newsworthy country in Australia at that time. It was twice as prominent in the news as the UK (Putnis, Penhallurick & Bourk 2000, pp.1–19).

The most striking continuity across the regional data is the lack of news from Latin America – just 0.9% of significant country references in 1905, 1.0% in 1920, 0.8% in 1935 and 0.5% in 1950. In 1950, Brazil had no mentions and Argentina had just three, notwithstanding that the GDP of each of these countries was significantly larger than that of Australia. There was little change in this pattern in later decades. A 1975 study of the AAP news feed to the Australian press found that just 2.2% of its output emanated from Central and South America (Grundy 1980, p.124). Clearly, no consideration was given to global balance in news selection. The 1979 international study found that South America accounted for just 2% of foreign news in the Australian media (Noble and Noble 1981, p.55) while the study based on a 1995 sample found that the region accounted for 3% of stories (Putnis, Penhallurick and Bourk 2000). The evidence indicates that South America has been virtually invisible in Australian news throughout the twentieth century. As regards Africa, the only consistent

news presence has been by South Africa, which ranked amongst the top 12 countries in 1905, 1920 and 1935 and was 13th in 1950.

The Asian region accounted for 15.9% of significant country references in 1905, 6.9% in 1920, 8.0% in 1935 and 24.1% in 1950. The relatively high figure for 1905 is accounted for by the Russo-Japanese War. The Asian country references are concentrated on the countries involved in that war. Japan accounts for almost 70% of all Asian country references, while China, caught up in the war, accounts for a further 15%. In contrast, the Asian country references in 1950 are much more widely spread. While Korea dominates (36.4% of all Asian country references), a large number of countries have a significant presence – for example, Malaya (9.5%), China (9.2%), India (7.1%), and Indonesia (5.7%).

From the perspective of Australia's geographical position in the world, a comparison of the 1935 and 1950 data suggests a marked turning in Australia's news geography, engendered by the Pacific War and its aftermath, towards Asia and North America and away from Europe and the UK. In 1935, Europe and the UK accounted for 64% of country references while North America and Asia accounted for just 19%. In 1950 Europe and the UK accounted for 43% of references while North America and Asia accounted for 47%. This is a very marked shift, particularly when one considers the stabilising effect on the UK figure of long-standing, deeply embedded relations with Australia in areas such as sport, governance (e.g. a shared monarchy), and business relations.

In broad terms, the realities depicted in the maps of news geography generated by this study are consistent with the history of Australia's "spatial identity" (Morley and Robins 2002) and international relations in the first half of the twentieth century. They reflect Australia's strong historical links with Britain and its Empire and, through them, a strong involvement in the affairs of Europe. They reflect Australia's historic turn towards the US in the context of the Pacific War. They also reflect Australia's involvement in post-war struggles by the West to halt the spread of communism in Asia.

The detailed daily coverage accorded to the 1905 Russo-Japanese War by both the *SMH* and the *Age* may seem surprising as it pre-dated Australia's massive involvement in World War One and occurred at a time when one might imagine that Australia was still largely isolated from northern hemisphere affairs other than those involving Britain. But this was far from the case. Naval dominance

in the Pacific was at stake. Also in play were Australian anxieties about the rise of Japanese power, as well as long-standing concerns about possible Russian belligerence in the Pacific (Lack 1968). As well, the Australian press was part of already well-developed Western international news networks through its association with Reuters, which had bureaux in Tokyo and St. Petersburg, as well as in China, and correspondents covering both sides of the conflict (Desmond 1978, p.427). The Russo-Japanese War was a huge story covered, during its course, by about 200 representatives of the world's press (Desmond 1978, p.419). Its greatest celebrity was Japan's Admiral Togo, whom the British press liked to describe as the "Nelson of the East" (Westwood 1986, p.35). The war was billed as the first modern conflict between a European and an Asiatic power. In Australia, "each land and naval engagement was reported on in a tone of fascinated excitement" with particular attention paid to the effectiveness of new military hardware, such as rapid-firing artillery, machine guns, and torpedoes (Woods 2016, p.54).

With respect to the factors that are cited in the literature as determinants of international news flow, one can observe that Australia's geographic distance from the UK and Europe did not diminish interest in news from those areas even when costs were very high. Nor was geographic proximity a salient factor before World War Two, other than in the case of New Zealand and some Pacific Islands. The enlarged commitment to news from Asia following World War Two was forced on the Australian press by post-war instability in the region rather than simply because of proximity. This evidence supports Hjarvard's critique of research where "international news flow is considered to be structured by a rather limited set of factors" (2002, p.93). As he observes, such an approach is "unsuited for guiding research that aims at understanding the differences, variations, and historical developments in international news" (p.95).

The maps of news geography generated by content analysis broadly accord with the changing technological and institutional conditions of news transmission to Australia between 1905 and 1950. Across that period overseas news shifted from being a very expensive and therefore scarce commodity because of high transmission costs to being relatively plentiful and affordable, particularly for transmission within the British Empire. In that period the wordage of material sent at press rates to Australia per year increased from around 400,000 to

around 15 million words.¹⁴ Increased wordage supplied by AAP accounted for a substantial proportion of this.¹⁵ However, the greater part of the increase arose from the newspapers' use of supplementary cable services and the work of their own overseas correspondents. As well, the practice of using cablese to reduce wordage declined as cables became cheaper.

Clearly, there was a much larger flow of overseas news to the Australian press in 1950 than in 1905. In 1905, all Australian papers received the same diet of cable news while, in 1950, there was considerable variation in what individual papers received. There were many more stories produced by the system as a whole in 1950 than in 1905. However, increased overseas news availability did not translate into an increase in the number of stories published in individual newspapers. Cabled stories published in 1950 were usually much longer than those published in 1905. As well, much that arrived must have been discarded by foreign editors because of the limited size of the news hole available to them for overseas news.

Across the period of the study, AAP and its predecessor APA were the major suppliers of cabled news to the *SMH* and the *Age*. Not surprisingly, the news maps reflect the history of these organisations. In 1905, APA was based in London and drew entirely on news sources available there. By 1920, APA also had representation in New York and, as well, sent its own correspondents to major international conferences in Paris, Geneva and Washington.¹⁶ On its establishment in 1935, AAP opened newsrooms in London and New York. By 1950, AAP had also established a major presence in Asia. London still remained, however, the most significant news hub for AAP as the cheap Empire press rate made it advantageous to route news through London wherever practicable.

¹⁴ Source: Annual Reports of the Postmaster-General's Department.

¹⁵ See note 4.

¹⁶ Stories published in the *Age* and the *SMH* during 1920 refer to "the representative of the Australian Press Association at New York." Occasional references to this representation date from January 1917. The plan for APA to establish New York representation was developed during *SMH* general manager W. G. Conley's tour of the US in 1915. He was accompanied by the London editor of the APA Service, W. W. Davies, who subsequently became APA's first New York representative. (*The Journalist*, 1915, p.225)

Acknowledgements

Research for this monograph was undertaken with the support of Australian Research Council through its funding of the project “Shaping the National Outlook: Overseas News in the Australian Press, 1901–1950” (DP1096677, CI Peter Putnis). The authors wish to acknowledge the outstanding work of Christine Wise who was Senior Research Assistant to this project for a number of years and who undertook the mammoth task of coding the almost 4,000 news stories analysed as part of the project. The authors also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Warwick Blood in the setting up and testing of the news database. This monograph utilises archival materials held at the Fairfax Company Archive, Sydney and the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The authors would like to thank staff of these organisations for their assistance in accessing materials.

References

- Anderson, F and Trembath, R 2011, *Witnesses to war: The history of Australian conflict reporting*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne
- Ball, W M 1938, *Press, radio and world affairs: Australia's outlook*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne
- Boyd-Barrett, Oliver 1980, *The international news agencies*, Constable, London
- Desmond, R W 1978, *The information process: World news reporting to the twentieth century*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City
- Esthus, R 1964, *From enmity to alliance*, Washington UP, Seattle
- Fairfax, John & Sons 1931, *A century of journalism: The Sydney Morning Herald and its record of Australian life 1831-1931*, Sydney
- Freeman's Journal*, 1906, "Uncabled Irish news", 7 July
- Freeman's Journal*, 1921, "Strangling Truth" 24 February
- Galtung, J and Ruge, M 1965, "The structure of foreign news", *The Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 2, no.1
- Gerbner, G, Mowlana, H and Nordenstreng, K 1993, *The global media debate: Its rise, fall and renewal*, Ablex Publishing, Norwood N.J.
- Grundy, B 1980, "Overseas news in the Australian press", *The news in focus: The journalism of exception*, ed P Edgar, Macmillan, Australia
- Hanusch, F and Obijiofor, L 2008, "Toward a more holistic analysis of international news flows", *Journal of Global Mass Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1/2. Available from: <http://www.marquettebooks.com/images/JGMCVol1No1-2NP.pdf>
- Hardman, T H 1909, *A Parliament of the press: The first Imperial press conference*, Horace Marshall & Son, London
- Himmelboim, I, Chang, T and McCreery, S 2010, "International network of foreign news coverage: Old global hierarchies in a new online world", *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 87, no. 2. Available from: EBSCOhost.
- Hjarvard, S 2002, "The study of international news". *A handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies*, ed K

B Jensen, Routledge, London

- Kenneally, I 2008, *The paper wall: Newspapers and propaganda in Ireland 1919–1921*, The Collins Press, Cork
- Lack, C 1968, *Russian ambitions in the Pacific: Australian war scares in the nineteenth century*, Fortitude Press for the Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane
- Morley, D and Robins, K 2002, *Spaces of identity: Global media, electronic landscapes and cultural boundaries*, Routledge, London and New York
- Mowlana, Hamid 1985, *International flow of news: An annotated bibliography*, UNESCO, Paris
- Murdoch, Keith 1921, “A servant of Empire”, *The Times*, 2 July
- Murdoch, Keith 1935 “Australian Associated Press” *Newspaper News*, 2 December
- Murray, J 2004, *Watching the sun rise: Australian reporting of Japan, 1931 to the fall of Singapore*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland
- Noble, G and Noble, E 1981, “Foreign news in New South Wales media”, *Australian Scan: Journal of Human Communication*, vol. 9 & 10
- O’Sullivan 1921 “De Valera speaks”, *The Sun* [Sydney], 20 June
- Pietiläinen, J, 2006. “Foreign news and foreign trade: What kind of relationship?”, *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 68, no. 3. Available from: doi: 10.1177/1748048506063762
- Potter, S 2003, *News and the British world: The emergence of an Imperial press system, 1876-1922*, Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Potter, S 2007, “Webs, networks and systems: globalization and the mass media in the nineteenth and twentieth century British Empire”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp.621-646. Available from: doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/515446>
- Putnis, P 1999, “The press cable monopoly 1895–1909: A case study of Australian media policy development”, *Media International Australia*, vol.90. Available from: doi: 10.1177/1329878X9909000114
- Putnis, P, Penhallurick, J and Bourk, M 2000, “The pattern of international news in Australia’s mainstream media”, *Australian Journalism Review*, vol.22,

no.1. Available from: <https://search.informit.com.au/fullText;dn=200204859;res=IELAPA>

Putnis, P 2006, “How the international news agency business model failed – Reuters in Australia, 1877–1895”, *Media History*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp.1-17. Available from: doi: 10.1080/13688800600597103

Putnis, P & Ailwood, S 2007, “The Crimean war and Australia’s communication and media history”, Paper presented at the Australian Media Traditions Conference, Bathurst, November

Putnis, P 2007, “Overseas news in the Australian press in 1870 and the colonial experience of the Franco-Prussian War”, *History Australia*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp.06.1-06.19. Available from: <https://search.informit.com.au/fullText;dn=200707145;res=IELAPA>

Putnis, P 2012, “International news agencies, news flow, and the USA-Australia relationship from the 1920s until the end of the Second World War”, *Media History*, vol. 18, no. 3–4, pp.423-441. Available from: doi:10.1080/13688804.2012.721646

Sarantakos, S 2005, *Social Research*, 3rd ed., Palgrave MacMillan, New York

Segev, E 2015, “Visible and invisible countries: News flow theory revised”, *Journalism*, vol. 16, no. 3. Available from: doi: 10.1177/1464884914521579

Sydney Morning Herald 1897, “Sixty years of newspaper history”, 19 June

Sreberny-Mohammadi, A, Nordenstreng, K, Stevenson, R & Ugboajah, F (eds) 1985, *Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 countries*, UNESCO, Paris

The Journalist 1915, “A.P.A. cable service”, 25 August

The Journalist 1938, “Cables give no reliable guide to world affairs”, June

Thussu, DK 2000, *International communication: Continuity and change*, Arnold, London

Torney-Parlicki, P 2000, *Somewhere in Asia: War, journalism and Australia’s neighbours 1941-75*, UNSW Press, Sydney

UNESCO 1956, *The problems of transmitting press messages*, UNESCO, Paris

Weber, P 2010 “No news from the East?: Predicting patterns of coverage of Eastern Europe in selected German newspapers”, *The International Communication*

- Gazette*, vol. 76, no. 6. Available from: doi: 10.1177/1748048510369212
- Westwood, J N 1986, *Russia against Japan 1904-1905: A new look at the Russo-Japanese War*, SUNY Press, New York
- Wilke, J 1987, "Foreign news coverage and international news flow over three centuries", *Gazette*, vol. 39, pp. Available from: doi: 10.1177/001654928703900301
- Wilke, J, Heimprecht, C and Cohen, A 2012, "The geography of foreign news on television: A comparative study of 17 countries", *The International Communication Gazette*, vol.74, no. 4. Available from: doi: 10.1177/1748048512439812
- Williams, W 1915, "The world's journalism", *The Australian Journalist*, 25 September
- Woods, M 2016, *Where are our boys? How newspapers won the Great War*, NLA Publishing, Canberra
- Wu, H W 2000, "Systemic determinants of international news coverage: A comparison of 38 countries", *Journal of Communication*, vol. 50, no.2 Available from: doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02844.x

Cover images

Front cover, from top to bottom:

- (1927). *First mail and newspapers delivered by air at Normanton, Queensland, 1927*. Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-151429733>
- Fairfax Corporation. (1930). *Two men looking at newspapers straight out of the press machinery at the Sun Newspaper, Sydney, ca.1930s*. Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-162899486>
- Larkins, John. (1936). *News stand in a railway station offering newspapers announcing the attempt on the life of King Edward VIII, Melbourne, 1936*. Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-141706203>
- Fairfax Corporation. (1920). *Machinery in the printing room of the Sun*

newspapers, Sydney, ca. 1920s, 1. Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-163003144>

Back cover, clockwise from top:

Fairfax Corporation. (1920). *Sun Herald newspapers being loaded onto lorries, O'Connell Street, Sydney, ca. 1920s.* Retrieved September 27, 2016, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-162802564>

(n.d.). *Billboard advertising The Age newspaper, Victoria, approximately 1930.* Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-152826608>

Fairfax Corporation. (1930). *Man taking newly printed newspapers off the press in the machine room of the Sun Newspaper, Sydney, ca. 1930s.* Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-163383120>

Fairfax Corporation. (1910). *Sun newspaper worker waiting for a Fabrique De machines printing press to finish operating, Sydney, ca. 1910s.* Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-163041050>

(1919) *The Wallaroo Times office staff stand outside the premises, Kadina, South Australia, ca. 1919.* Retrieved September 27, 2016, from the State Library of South Australia, B 29280, <http://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+29280>

About the Authors

Peter Putnis is Emeritus Professor of Communication at the University of Canberra. He joined the University of Canberra in 1996 as Dean of the Faculty of Communication. Between 1999 and 2006 he was Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University's Division of Communication and Education. He has been an Expert Panel Member for the Australian Research Council in the area of Humanities and Creative Arts. He is a past president of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association and has headed the History Section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research. He has published six books as an author or editor as well as about 100 journal articles and book chapters. The focus of his more recent research has been on international communication and media history, especially the political economy of international news production in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Recent publications have appeared in the journals *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, the *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, *Media History* and *American Journalism*. He edited (with Jürgen Wilke of the University of Mainz and Chandrika Kaul of St. Andrews University) the volume *International Communication and Global News Networks: Historical Perspectives*, Hampton Press, New York, 2011.

Jee Young Lee is a doctoral candidate at the University of Canberra, and a Research Assistant at the university's News and Media Research Centre. She holds a Master's degree in Communication and Journalism from Sogang University, South Korea. Her doctoral research explores a user-centric inclusion framework for a digitised society and the role of digital divide policy in addressing exclusion. She has participated as a Research Assistant in the N&MRC's annual project "Digital News Report: Australia" which is part of a global survey by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. She worked as a Research Assistant providing quantitative analysis for the University of Canberra ARC project "Shaping the National Outlook: Overseas News in the Australian Press, 1901-1950".

Australian Journalism Monographs is published once a year. It is a double-blind peer refereed journal in accordance with relevant guidelines. Please address subscription enquiries to Dr Kerrie Foxwell-Norton: k.foxwell@griffith.edu.au

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS:

Australian Journalism Monographs welcomes submissions of manuscripts on any aspect of journalism and news media research. Manuscripts should be between 7000-12,000 words, and should not have been published elsewhere. Manuscripts will be subject to a double-blind peer review process, and referees' comments and reports will be returned to the author. Manuscripts and manuscript proposals can be submitted by email to the Editorial Coordinator, Dr Kerrie Foxwell-Norton: k.foxwell@griffith.edu.au

Calls for papers for AJM will be circulated through the Journalism Education Association-NET and any other relevant discussion lists, and will be available on the Griffith Centre for Cultural Research website: www.griffith.edu.au/humanities-languages/centre-cultural-research

The final manuscript must be submitted electronically, in Microsoft Word format. The original proposal should include an abstract of about 500 words, and a brief biography of the author(s), including institutional affiliation and address. AJM is moving to APA referencing and requests future submissions are in keeping with APA 6 formatting and referencing conventions. We do accept the footnote method for scholars who may need to provide further explanation or detail on some points.




Griffith
UNIVERSITY


BOND
UNIVERSITY
BRINGING AMBITION TO LIFE

