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Capital, labour and currency: book love in the economy of young adult publishing

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between emotion, production and sales in the book publishing industry, specifically how ‘book love’ operates in the publication and promotion of Young Adult (YA) titles. Through interviews conducted in 2020–2023, the article examines how commissioning editors, booksellers and associated professionals in Australia experience and use emotion in their production and sale of YA titles. It argues that emotion plays three economic roles in the intersubjective transferral of ‘book love’ through the chain of production, distribution and sales. Australian industry professionals mobilize book love as capital, as labour and as currency in fulfilling the expectations of their roles. This deployment of book love helps titles find their way into the hands of target readers.

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Introduction

The process by which books make their way into the hands of readers depends on a supply chain involving the allocation and exchange of resources between authors, publishers, editors, booksellers, and librarians. Yet their activities are also relational performances of reading identity enacted through imagined narratives of shared passion, or book love. This article examines the role of book love in this relational performance, through narrative accounts of emotion in interviews with Australian book industry representatives (particularly commissioning editors and booksellers). It finds that a love of books is a critical, intangible factor in the publishing economy that simultaneously plays roles as capital, labour and currency.

The discussion focuses on Young Adult (YA) books to investigate how commissioning editors and bookselling staff employ book love to connect with others, including other industry professionals, intermediaries such as teachers, librarians, and parents, and both the actual and imagined target readership. It also focuses on the Australian industry. Australia is a small market: publishing industry revenue was \$AUS1.9 billion in 2023, compared to other English language markets the U.S.A. (\$AUS65 billion), the UK

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(\$AUS13 billion) and Canada (\$AUS2.9 billion) (IBIS World 2023a, 2024b, 2024a, 2023b). Australian publishers are highly reliant on local booksellers to promote their books, and both publishers and booksellers are committed to promoting Australian literature. The activities of publishers and booksellers are significantly constrained by offshore retailers – particularly online bookseller Amazon, which is increasing its market share and circumscribes the sustainability of domestic online booksellers (Throsby, Zwar, and Morgan 2018, 5).

Australian publishers and booksellers have adapted their trade practices to maintain competitiveness in this context. Previous research has noted, for example, that local booksellers have established faster delivery times than international players, while publishers have tested new business models such as new kinds of author royalty agreements, competitive ebook pricing and the introduction of subscription models (Throsby, Zwar, and Morgan 2018, 7). While such research has identified tangible or ‘hard’ strategies to compete, this article identifies the deployment of emotion as a relational or ‘soft’ strategy that book industry players use. The article begins by contextualizing the discussion of emotion in narratives about book production and sales through a review of scholarly research on emotion and emotional economy in social analysis. Following a discussion of the approach and methods adopted for the current research, the article then uses interviews with Australian commissioning editors and bookshop staff to identify the roles that book love plays in their professional exchanges.

The emotional economy of book love

This article brings together two themes in scholarly literature: work on the ways emotion functions as an element in the consumer economy, and work that specifically discusses a love of books as a constitutive part of identity.

The emotional economy

The ‘affective’ turn in humanities research has been underpinned by multidisciplinary recognition of emotion as a vital force in shaping social structures and relationships (Barclay 2021; Lemmings and Brooks 2014). Such research focuses on the structural significance of emotion as a source of insight into the culture and history of particular societies and social processes (Reddy 2001; Rosenwein 2006; Stearns and Stearns 1985). Emotion is regarded as an embodied experience produced by a particular cultural environment or a bodily sensation shaped and interpreted through the lens of temporal social norms, rather than a biological universal (Barclay 2021; Matt 2011; Plamper and Tribe 2015). The interconnectedness of feeling and cognition is a key element of this analytical framework, as is the position that emotions are things people *do*, not things they just *have* (Scheer 2012, 194). As it requires effort, emotion is a form of labour, as much as a state, and it is managed to allow workers to successfully perform their jobs (Hochschild 1983).

At the same time, following Ahmed (2014), emotion can be seen as a form of capital. It helps organize the boundaries delineating the individual and the social. As Ahmed explains, emotions circulate between like-minded people and are distributed in a social economy, but do not reside within signs or commodities. Strong and Whiting (2018), for

example, describe how band posters displayed in pubs help to invoke community and a 'shared vernacular culture' between staff and music fans (2018, 155). Illouz (2018) sees emotions as integrated into the financial economy, arguing that cognitive and aesthetic forms of capitalism have converted emotions into commodities central to a sense of personal and group identity that consumer purchases help build. In playing this role, emotions provide relief from 'real life' (Ricatti and Klugman 2020, 792), while also intensifying Western emotional life (Illouz 2018). Video-sharing platform TikTok, for example, invites a worldwide reading community to express and share the emotions associated with reading, using the hashtag #BookTok. This performance of emotion affirms Illouz's (2018) assertion that emotion is integral to social identity and the contemporary consumption experience. BookTok posts position the expression of emotion as a marker of the authentic identity of content creators as book lovers (Reddan et al. 2024), and the sharing of emotions on BookTok allows Australian young readers to connect to an international community of book lovers.

Book love and book lovers

The emotion we discuss in this article is love, specifically 'book love'. Much prior scholarship on this topic focuses on consumption. For Pressman (2020) 'bookishness' is an identity and an aesthetic strategy that celebrates the materiality of books as cultural artefacts (2020). Birke's (2021) analysis of performances of bookishness identifies readers who 'take to social media to celebrate [...] being a person who regards reading, not only but often particularly reading printed books, as an integral part of life' (2021, 150). Their passion for reading is supported by online interactions including conversations, shared narratives, and livestreamed acts of 'slow reading' (2021). A shared love of reading has long been seen to connect readers (Long 2003; Radway 1991). Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo (2019) identify the Goodreads social media platform as having a social dimension that allows readers to connect with each other. For Olave (2020), the iconic status of books inspires book love. For the consumer 'book lovers' she studies, reading and books are essential parts of their identities and everyday experience.

Book love is also performed by book industry professionals. In narrative interviews, publishers, commissioning editors and booksellers often identify as book lovers and see this as critical to their choice of work and their ability to do it well (Squires 2020; Wright 2005a). The book love they narrate is an affective response conditioned by the professional and cultural context in which it is expressed. For them, book love is an act of reverence required by the iconic cultural status books occupy. The status of books as sacred objects deserving of more respect than other consumable objects (Rodger 2018) contributes to a sense of the book trade's 'distinctiveness' as a market for symbolic goods, which requires workers who possess the necessary cultural capital to appreciate the value of books and communicate that value to customers (Wright 2005a). Books are mythologized to romanticize the business processes of the book trade and elide their status as commercial goods (Squires 2020).

The performance of emotion also contributes to professional identity, such as in Wright's (2005a) work on booksellers. Crucially the 'embodied expertise' of workers, who have a 'genuine appreciation of books' transforms bookshops from retail spaces to places that produce '*meanings about*' books and reading (Wright 2005b; emphasis

in original). These skilled performances of book love, which are genuine – or truly felt – reinforce existing hierarchies of cultural value that celebrate reading as a ‘respectable’ activity (Wright 2005a). Aligned to book love, commissioning editors described their ‘gut reaction’ to books in both Squires’ (2017) and Childress’s (2017) interviews. Squires reflected: ‘What was evident in the interviews was that editors needed to fit their editorial taste-making and selection to their company environment. Gut reactions were, in actuality, learned business decisions, in constant negotiation with that environment’ (2017, 31). Subsequently, Squires suggests that passion is engineered: ‘Numerous interviewees talked about having sufficient passion to get their titles through acquisitions meetings – “you have to get the passion going” (2020, 259). These affective responses are personal aesthetic responses that draw on a normative discourse within publishing that mythologizes the ‘dynamics of the evaluative moment’ (2020, 255). Similarly, Childress points out that publishers’ ‘guts’ are conditioned by the framework of values underlying the company’s policies and commercial decisions (2017, 607). This work of embodying corporate culture suggests again that emotion serves as a form of professional labour. While these authors chiefly focus on the role of such emotional responses to books as contributing to production, such as the commissioning of books or the creation of the bookshop experience, this article identifies emotion as relational. Squires, Childress and Wright base their research on the US and UK industries; arguably, the relational deployment of book love is more important in smaller industries such as Australian publishing and book-selling than their global counterparts, because publishers and booksellers have less ability to compete on price or range due to the small domestic market they predominantly service.

Our analysis of interviews with Australian commissioning editors, booksellers and other industry workers supports the argument that emotion serves as labour, as professionals cultivate love of books as a shared point of connection with others. However, the article also argues that book love performs two additional elements associated with economic exchange: as capital – that is both personal and professional; and as a currency exchanged between professionals and readers. It is part of these book professionals’ work to feel and express emotion, and to recognize, relate to and fuel it in others. Their success depends on their ability to invest ongoing effort in the intersubjective transferral of ‘book love’ to guide a title from manuscript to a book selected and enjoyed by a reader. The YA focus of this article means that we examine activity in relation to a small share of Australia’s book publications. The publishing representatives interviewed were involved in YA lists that published 2–3 to 12 titles per year. However, the small number of annual YA publications is also reflective of the fact that many of the interviewees represented small publishing companies. As a sample, this representation is reflective of the fact that Australia’s industry contains a significant proportion (71%) of small companies (IBIS WORLD (2023a), 10). Of the 19 booksellers interviewed, 16 worked for independent bricks and mortar bookstores. The remaining three booksellers worked for a discount department store, a regional branch of a bookstore chain and an online bookseller. Even for the four independent booksellers who worked at stores specializing in children’s and YA books, YA titles comprise a small proportion of their stock. However, our research was timely, because after a long decline, Australian YA book sales spiked over the period in which

interviews were conducted (2020–2023), largely due to social media influence such as booktok (IBISWORLD 2023a, 19).

Approach and method

The article draws on interviews conducted from 2020 to 2023, as part of a larger study examining young Australians' leisure reading tastes and practices and the cultural intermediaries that influence their reading choices. This study used a cultural economy approach, as interpreted by cultural studies, in its conceptual focus on the interdependent systems through which reading culture circulates (du Gay, Paul, and Pryke 2002). It mapped the network of influences on book production through (1) a deep analysis of institutional and group discourse that (2) identified industry structures, perceptions, and practices which influenced what kinds of reading material were produced and circulated for young people.

The researchers approached 50 publishing industry representatives in Australia, including specialist and generalist booksellers, children's and educational publishers and their marketers, commissioning editors and/or agents, and publishers to offer a broad perspective and regional scope on the production and sale of young adult titles in the Australian book market. The analysis in the current paper is focused chiefly on interviews with commissioning editors and retail booksellers. Reference is also made to other interviews from the larger study for the purposes of comparison or elaboration of the themes discussed: marketing staff, a publishing director and a publishing company CEO. See [Appendix 1](#) for a list of interviewees cited in the paper.

Interviews are identified by the professional role of the interviewee with an alphabetic label specific to their company and role. They are labelled in the chronological sequence in which the interviews occurred. Compound titles are abbreviated. Examples include Bookseller A, [Commissioning] Editor F, Marketing [Coordinator] F. Not all interviews in the alphabetic sequence are cited in the paper.

Interviews were conducted using videoconferencing software. Transcripts were ordered by industry sector (commissioning editors, booksellers) ahead of initial coding of themes for detailed analysis. Coding of key themes was undertaken separately by all four authors and refined through a series of meetings.

Analytical approach

The analysis emphasizes narrative elements in the interviews. As Bruner (1986) noted, narrators produce an intelligible self in terms of believability and adherence to values to convince the hearer or to make sense of their experience. For Gergen and Gergen (1988), narratives express relationship, making sense of the speaker's connection to the world of the story and of the world of the listener. In personal narratives – stories that include the self – the 'relationality' of the narrative (Gergen and Gergen 1988, 40) invites study of the ways a speaker connects with those around them, their personal investment in those connections and how identities are produced in that talk.

The narratives provided by our interviewees were interrogated using discourse analysis, drawing on insights from Labovian analysis of oral recounts of personal experience.

For Labov and Waletzky (1967), clauses in oral narratives tend to be organized in functional sequences, which make the overall story 'comprehensible and worth recounting' (De Fina and Johnstone 2015, 154). Among these are evaluative clauses that help audiences understand why the narrator is telling the story and why they should listen to it (153).

Our primary interest, however, is in the cultural work being done by this kind of semantic organization in the context of our interviewees' personal and professional experience and their understanding of their identities as book lovers; that is, we approach interviews as a form of metacognition through which participants represent their experience and knowledge to themselves and others. Our interviews do not simply provide a window on what the interviewees think, but how they might make that experience intelligible to others.

Narrative analysis

The talk gathered in our research interviews contained multiple moments where participants used techniques of personal narrative, describing scenes or dialogue relevant to their work, giving narrative recounts of their experiences in the book industry and of how they imagine others experiencing books. These recounts are rarely whole stories, but moments of text that make sense by linking material together in a narrative logic of sequences of events taking place in a story time separate to the telling. We placed less emphasis on other discursive moves – such as giving facts, opinions, analysis – because of our interest in moments when story was drawn upon to express relationships with others in the industry and with book readers in an emotional economy. Both narratives of personal experience and recounts of others' stories (Norrick 2013) are included in the analysis below. The narratives of each group – the commissioning editors and booksellers – are discussed and compared, with a focus on where they identified emotion as playing into their work.

Emotional expression by editors and booksellers

Consistent with Squires and Wright, our interviews with commissioning editors and booksellers alike referred to the emotional associations of their work. While they consistently used stories and terms that connoted love, their emphases on the objects of that love varied according to their profession. Commissioning editors often described a career choice shaped by their own love of books in childhood or youth, as expressed by Editor F:

I was such a big reader and reading books was my thing. I always did it and I learnt about life from books. But of course then actual life is different to what the book is. But I found books just a solace at various times. This thing of, you just come across the right book and then suddenly it's dramatized in a way that makes you reflect on your own. So for me, books are life. To me, books are thinking, books are feeling. So I just wanted to spread the joy of that and show how easy it is to do that and how rewarding it can be.

The two sentences starting, 'So', signal the speaker's evaluation of the point of the story for the listener (Daiute and Nelson 1997). Here, the point is both that publishing is a vocation in which a personal love of books and professional work come together ('for

me, books are life') and that the pleasure to be found in books at the heart of their purpose as a publisher ('I just wanted to spread the joy'). The fact that such narratives were willingly and regularly offered by the commissioning editors suggests that emotion operates as a through-line from the personal identity, often as a young person, to their current professional identity.

Commissioning editors also envisaged book love in their readers, describing for instance how even non-readers 'fell in love' with the Harry Potter series. In fact, several interviewees juxtapose readers' love of a book as indicative of a book's quality with lacklustre sales to narrate the emotional value of books as being outside the vagaries of the market. Editor E, for example, describes the poor sales of a book that was 'widely beloved' as a case that 'really doesn't make sense to me, that it hasn't done better. Also, we know that teens love it.' Stories that 'make sense', then, are those that take place in a world of book love where beloved books also achieve commercial success.

While editors often began with their *own* love of reading, booksellers were more likely to express enjoyment in *sharing* or *fostering* a love of books. Booksellers' responses were often directly social, with book love expressed primarily in interactions with actual readers and other professionals. Bookseller C described being 'really passionate' about helping young people find books they enjoyed. Bookseller B described how interacting with readers around books was central to her professional identity, and sense of herself as a booklover: 'I am really passionate about finding the little niche books that I know some kid – I guess, the 16-year-old version of me – would have wanted to read.' In this typical account, Bookseller B conflates the memory of herself as a 16-year-old with the bookshop customer ('some kid'), but in contrast to commissioning editors such as Editor F above, the excitement of discovering loved books as a young person is secondary to the excitement of sharing that love and witnessing excitement in the young reader making that discovery.

Book love as capital

The accounts given by commissioning editors suggest that book love functions as a form of personal and professional capital. As personal capital, it is a felt resource that the speaker can call on to help them meet life's challenges. Examples range from references to a solace offered by books (as articulated by Editor F above), to individual enjoyment, or a life-long love for reading. The editors also see their task as to provide that capital to the young readers they imagine, with the hope of seeing them through difficult times in their lives.

The commissioning editors drew on stories of their personal experiences of book love to explain where their taste originates and how it connects them to readers, thereby also exhibiting book love as professional capital. Book love explained their attraction to the editing vocation but also suggests that they bring to their job a quality that can help them make sense of the teen experience of reading and parse that experience into their decisions about titles to acquire and develop. Some editors talked of using their memory of the love of books they experienced as young people to predict contemporary teenage reader responses, in lieu of familiarity with actual teenage readers. Editor D explains this linking of experience and decision-making:

I also think a lot about my own self as a teenager, which goes hand-in-hand with being someone who has been a booklover their whole life. I often think, 'Oh god, I would have loved this book when I was a kid or when I was a teenager'. So, I do put myself in that role a little bit.

The editor here operates reflexively, showing awareness that they are reaching backwards into their personal identity to project forward onto today's teens, as did Bookseller B in her earlier description of finding a niche book for both 'some kid' in the present and the '16-year old version' of herself. The love of books they have cultivated from a young age underpins the value of that capital, and as in Ahmed's (2014) notion of the affective economy, the value of their passion has accumulated over time (45).

Strong emotional responses to reading seem to arise most often when editors are conscious of the inadequacy, uncertainty or fickleness of the business of book publishing, especially in a small book market like Australia in which financial capital is limited. To an extent, this talk supports Squires' (2020) critique that publishing romanticizes the work that its professionals do to attempt to bridge a perceived gap between cultural ideals and commercial realities. We would also emphasize the work emotion does to bridge a gap in knowledge for editors about what those who purchase and consume books want to read (Johanson, Rutherford, and Reddan 2022), as editors rely on their memory of their own past.

Book love as labour

Book love functions as labour amongst editors and booksellers in two ways: firstly, as emotional labour that editors and booksellers commit to the book itself, and secondly as labour needed to share interest in the book with other professionals in the book industry and with readers. As an example of the emotional labour invested into a book title, Editor E described the response to a particular manuscript at their company: 'We were like, "Oh, this is sounding really good. Quick everyone, read it!". So there were, I think, six of us reading it all at once because everyone was really excited by it'. The professional readers worked to encourage each other to experience excitement, in order to smooth the process by which the title was acquired. This is an account of a relational process by which the book is attributed iconic status (Olave 2020).

Emotional labour is also evident when commissioning editors and booksellers share passion. Company CEO B, also an editor, described shared book love as the driving motivation behind the decision to establish a publishing company:

We started out as a family-run business, so we started around my parents' kitchen table, and reading had always been a big part of our family. But also, my grandparents were immigrants to Australia on my dad's side. So they came to Australia not speaking any English. So that concept of access to education had always been really important to us as well.

The company's aims, Company CEO B then says, were to 'close the literacy gap and encourage a joy of reading'. Resonating with Editor E's description of publishing staff sitting around a table to nurture their excitement over a new title together, Publishing Director C described the importance of sharing affect, because a kind of mass book love is important to the likelihood that an individual will enjoy a particular title: 'the book that everybody loves, that everybody is talking about, that's the best way to guarantee that you're going to enjoy a book'. Bookseller B describes her need to 'find people in Sydney in

the industry that are as passionate about kids' books and teen books as I am', to provide a source of recommendations and advice. Love is not simply individually felt, but is collectively formed, consciously encouraged and supported by these professionals.

The connection between the tasks that commissioning editors and booksellers perform and the labour involved in book love is evident when their accounts are contrasted with comments by other publishing professionals. A marketing director in company E participated in a joint interview alongside an editor from the same company. Marketing Director E contrasted her own role to that of the editor, to explain that hers did not rely on practising book love: usually I love everything, but my role is definitely more skewed towards making sure that we can sell the book itself as a product, which sounds a little bit cold but ... we are trying to sell it as a product. Similarly, at company C, the Publishing Director had moved into their role after having been a commissioning editor, and found decreased need to do the emotional labour of sharing book love:

Within the company ... I've seen my primary role now as really to have successful books that are going to make the company money. So I'm not so focussed on the value of encouraging kids to read, even though it's still there fundamentally. I feel passionately about it but it doesn't drive what I do so much anymore. (Publishing Director C)

These two sets of comments provide a perspective on the relationship between the commercial imperative of the book trade and the cultural status of books as 'sacred': a relationship in tension (Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo 2019; Murray 2019; Squires 2017). The more the work is commercial, the less relevant these interviewees find book love.

Book love as currency

The final theme that emerged was that of emotion as a currency. Like capital, a currency signals value, but value that is transferrable. The different players in the book chain who make decisions – to acquire in the case of editors, to stock in the case of booksellers, or to buy in the case of consumers – value book love in one another and pass it between them. It is not simply the sharing – or labour – that is important in this exchange, but the transferability and value of what is exchanged. Marketing Director D, for example, discussed social media: 'it's wonderful that it exists and we can use it and you can find influencers who love reading and love talking about books and sharing what they're reading.'

Commissioning editors, who are at a distance from readers, focus on this offer of transferrable value, but booksellers focus more on an ongoing relationship formed over book recommendations: 'Once you get them on one book and they love it, then they'll come back for those recommendations' (Bookseller C). Passion is exchanged across the divide between themselves as professional adult and the young reader. This passion is a source of connection with teen readers and a marker of the authority of a cultural intermediary as a trusted source of book recommendations. Both editors and booksellers emphasized the affective dimensions of YA as a category in which book love is an important currency. For example, Editor A identifies the work of the #LoveOzYA group, a national organization that promotes Australian youth literature, as an example of community that connects teen readers with YA books by 'consolidating the love of Australian YA' using a hashtag and social media presence. Bookseller M described 'loving' YA readers because of their capacity

for book love, which they identified in the behaviour of fans: 'it's such a passionate readership ... what other category would you see people paying hundreds of dollars for special editions?' This love is social – their love for the YA reader is based on the reader's ability to express love for books – but also entangled with Bookseller M's own commercial interests, manifesting in the consumer's willingness to spend 'hundreds of dollars' on a book.

Booksellers also required book love from their professional associates. Bookseller C, for example, required book love from publishers' sales representatives, complaining that when representatives were not sufficiently interested in the lists they were promoting, it was difficult to rely on their recommendations:

We're really let down by our specialty reps who should be reading young adult and kids' stuff. If you're going to be selling it to me, then you should be able to say 'Oh, I'm passionate about this', 'I love this', or 'I found this very troubling'. (Bookseller C)

By contrast, Booksellers D and I commended the school librarians in their districts as being 'really, really passionate about curating their library' (Bookseller D), which they saw as underpinning a capacity to engage their student readers.

These examples are forward-looking stories about what will happen or should happen, and a lack of book love (in sales representatives) is depicted as jeopardizing the business of connecting young people with reading as intermediaries without book love lack anything to exchange. As a currency, book love enhances the reputation of professionals as reliable, trusted advisors and thus increases their ability to get the books they love into the hands of readers. Failure to engage in the exchange of book love threatens to diminish the value and reliability of the social exchange that accompanies the physical book.

The importance of this currency is highlighted when it fails. Some booksellers narrated their difficulty engaging teenage customers in conversations about books, suggesting that often young people struggled to identify and articulate their feelings about particular titles and the practice of reading. Bookseller L saw their own role as to help them develop these expressive skills:

I do feel sometimes that they do need that encouragement to locate the things that are worth talking about. They will often start with, 'Oh yeah, it was good', or 'I didn't like it'. Then I'll be, 'and what didn't you like about it?' ... It can be like pulling teeth. (Bookseller L)

Where teenagers were passionate about books, this passion did not always work in booksellers' interests. Bookseller M described the power of social media to magnify negative emotions. A miscommunication about the publication date of a popular title, which was not available in Australia until two weeks after it was released in the UK, led to a 'really bad' outpouring of disappointment and anger on YA Twitter when the title was not available on the advertised date. The bookseller commented about the fan groups, 'I love them and I love their passion, but it's an explosive corner of Twitter and you don't want to be engaging [in it] ... That's the downside I guess when you have these super-passionate customers' (Bookseller M).

In these examples, the currency of book love can be used to buy – or can undermine – the trust of others in the economy in which YA book recommendations are exchanged.

Discussion and conclusion

Publishing is a social economy in which book love connects different actors in the book chain. An emotional imaginary surrounds the act of reading, including the associated acts of buying, stocking, recommending and receiving books, and binds the target reader to the decisions and identity of the editor with an imagined common taste. Book love expressed here is an active offer of meaning to others in the chain of production and consumption in the book world that forms bridges across some of the unknowns in that chain. In the context of a small market such as Australia, book love can be seen as a strategy that compensates for a lack of ability to deploy strictly economic strategies such as retail discounts. Reading is less frequently discussed in terms of the meanings young people make of books, or its value in cultural or educational terms, than as a site of positive emotion. When these other attributes of reading are referenced, it is often the *passion* for literacy that is foremost.

We have theorized a love of books in the emotional economy of publishing for teenagers in three ways. It is a form of capital that serves to empower professionals working in the book chain in their personal identity and professional behaviour. Book love is also labour, an activity that commissioning editors and others invest in the titles they publish and booksellers invest in the books they recommend, and that they seek to share with readers. This labour is often directed at cultivating a love of reading in young people, with the hope that getting the right book into the hands of a young reader will spark a life-long passion for reading. Finally, book love is a currency in that it has a value that is exchanged between intermediaries and with consumers. Book love is constitutive of the professional identity of workers in the book industry and their imagined consumers; and a resource by which those workers can imagine, enact and describe their exchange with teenage readers. A love of books can be thought of as a central component of the 'gut reactions' (Squires 2017, 31) learned by people in the book industry, which shape publishing decisions and the offer of books and reading practices to teen readers. The stories that editors and booksellers told us confirm those expectations. Reading is offered up in their talk as a passion that motivates those in the business of publishing and selling Australian YA titles. In this way, the book love that is cultivated and exchanged may be seen as consistent with the commitment that Australian booksellers and publishers have to one another and to the future of an industry that is often seen as threatened by global competitors. Similar to the sharing of book love described in this article, the commitment between publishers and booksellers is energetic, relational work that maintains the shared value of local stories.

The article focused largely on commissioning editors and booksellers, comparing the different ways they mobilize book love. Love of books is as critical to the professional identity of the commissioning editors we interviewed as it is for the identities of book consumers that Radway (1991) and Long (2003) discussed. For commissioning editors, teen readers are imagined rather than experienced, and the love of books propels reading across the gulf between the professional adult and the teenage reader. These positive emotions towards reading encode an offer of a bookish identity and entry into the pleasures of the world of books. For booksellers, the performance of book love provides a source of trust between different parties. A perceived lack of emotional investment from some sales representatives and the way that emotion fuelled a social media storm

amongst disappointed fans offer examples of the negative consequences associated with the failure to perform book love or fulfil the expectations of book lovers. For both editors and booksellers, book love assists them to establish common ground with readers – real and imagined. It serves as a trusted asset that accompanies the physical product of the book, performed and exchanged between different parties within the book chain.

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Appendix 1: Publishing and bookselling companies and interviewee roles cited in the paper

Company	Company type	Role(s) of interviewees
Publishing		
A	Australian-owned company	Editor (CYA)
B	Australian-owned company	CEO
C	Australian-owned company	Publishing Director (CYA)
D	Australian-owned company	Commissioning Editor (CYA)
E	Australian-owned company	Marketing Director
		Commissioning Editor (CYA)
F	Formerly represented a range of companies	Retired Commissioning Editor
Booksellers		
B	Urban and regional multistore	Children's buyer
C	Urban independent, single-store	CYA buyer
D	Regional, independent, single-store	Manager
I	Regional, single-store independent	Sales assistant
L	Independent, children's and YA specialist, single-store	Manager and buyer
M	Online	CYA buyer