# The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development

*Edited by*
Stayci Taylor · Craig Batty

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**Rita Benis** is a researcher at the Centre for Comparative Studies (Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon). With a grant from FCT, she is currently finishing her doctorate on Manoel de Oliveira's screenplays. She has a Master's degree in Comparative Literature and teaches Screenwriting and History of Cinema. Rita is a member of the research project Cinema and the World, and she co-edited the electronic magazine Falso Movimento (also published, 2015). She has translated books and published articles/chapters on the relationship between image and writing. An award-winning screenwriter, she has worked in cinema since 2000 and has collaborated with Teresa Villaverde, Margarida Gil, Inês Oliveira, António Cunha Telles, Jorge Cramez, Vincent Gallo and Catherine Breillat.

**Wendy Bevan-Mogg** is Programme Leader for the M.A. in Producing Film and Television at Bournemouth University. She began her career working for distributor Artificial Eye and sales agent Pathé International, before moving into production. She has worked as a script editor, producer, executive producer and line producer, with notable credits including Nick Whitfield's *Skeletons* (winner of the Michael Powell Award for Best British Feature at the Edinburgh International Film Festival 2010), Rufus Norris' *Broken* (Critics' Week, Cannes 2012) and Esther May Campbell's *Light Years* (Critics' Week,

Venice Film Festival 2015). Before joining Bournemouth, she spent two years in the development team at Creative England and taught at Leeds Trinity University.

**Angie Black** is a senior lecturer in Film & Television at VCA, University of Melbourne and a multiple-award winning filmmaker. Her debut feature film *The Five Provocations* (2018), premiered at The Melbourne Queer Film Festival, was likened to "a Luis Buñuel or David Lynch film" at the Adelaide Film Festival and distributed by Label Distribution. Black has directed more than ten short films, including award-winning short films *Bowl Me Over* (2001), winner best comedy St. Kilda Film Festival and distributed by Palace Films, and *Birthday Girl* (2008), winner audience award Women on Film Festival and selected for the Australian Women's horror anthology *Dark Whispers* Vol. 1 (2019). She has a Ph.D. on performance approaches in film production and an M.A. in screenwriting. Her extensive body of film work utilises practice-led research to explore innovative approaches to filmmaking and actively promote on screen diversity.

**Lucy Brown** is an associate professor and Head of Division for Film at London South Bank University. She is an authority in film and television with 20+ years' experience as an educator and practitioner. She began her career at the British Film Institute before moving into production. She has filmed around the world for the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Disney and Nickelodeon and has credits on multiple BAFTA and Royal Television Society programmes, including the acclaimed series *Grand Designs* (1999–). Lucy is a passionate advocate for equality, diversity and inclusion. She is Founder of Women in Screen and Chair of Trailblazing Women On and Off Screen and the Media Education Diversity Group for the National Association for Higher Education in the Moving Image (NAHEMI). She is Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, winner of several Excellence in Education Awards and co-author of *The TV Studio Production Handbook* (Bloomsbury).

**Susan Cake** teaches scriptwriting at Queensland University of Technology. Her doctoral research focused on reflective and creative writing processes to examine how writing narrative comedy performed creative resistance against the corporatisation of education. She has over 15 years' experience teaching screen production in the vocational education and training (VET) sector and is a screen and media curriculum specialist. Susan has written screen and media curriculum for Australian and overseas education and training organisations and was the curriculum specialist for a $250,000 ABC-funded project to support TVET Journalism training in the South Pacific. Susan's current research explores expanding conceptions of writing for "the screen".

**Jill Daniels** is a filmmaker and Senior Lecturer in Film at the University of East London. She has been making films since 1989 and has won many international awards, including Best Experimental Film for *My Private Life II* (2015) at Ann Arbor Film Festival in 2017. Her current practice focuses on

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**Marida Di Crosta** is Associate Professor at LYON-3 University, where she teaches screenwriting and story design for digital media. The founder of a two-year Master's Degree in Screenwriting for multiplatform content, she is the author of several publications on interactivity within narrative design and strategies. A former writer/producer, Di Crosta also worked on various interactive drama projects. Her research has progressively been focused on data-driven storytelling and the use of AI algorithms in scriptwriting.

**Kath Dooley** is a filmmaker and academic in the Discipline of Theatre, Screen and Immersive Media at Curtin University, Western Australia. She is the author of *Cinematic Virtual Reality—A Critical Study of 21st Century Approaches and Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2021) and the co-editor of *The Palgrave Handbook of Screen Production* (2019). Kath has written a number of short and feature-length screenplays, and has directed several award-winning short screen works. Her research interests include screen production methodology for traditional and immersive media, screenwriting and diversity in screen practice and education.

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**Rose Ferrell** is a screenwriting researcher and an independent screenwriter and filmmaker with three decades' experience as a technician and writer in drama, documentary and commercial production. Her specialist research is on the screenwriter's voice, particularly exploring the interrelationships between cultural inflection and voice in screenwriting creative practice. Her work has appeared in several publications, including in the Palgrave Handbook series (2019, and this present publication). Rose currently lives in regional Western Australia where she finds inspiration for madcap dramatic characters and off-beat adventure in that stunning frontier, the wild Australian west.

**Ezzard Flowers** is a Wirlomin and Minang Noongar from the Great Southern region of Western Australia. He was born on the United Aborigines Mission Gnowangerup in 1958. In 2015, Ezzard was awarded the John Curtin Medal at Curtin University in Western Australia. This award acknowledged Ezzard's contribution to the "Koorah Coolingah" (Children Long Time Ago) exhibition, a major arts project held in the regional town of Katanning in the Great Southern of Western Australia and which showcased a collection of Noongar drawings that had been discovered in the Herbert A. Meyer Collection at Colgate University, in Hamilton, New York. Ezzard is an ambassador for the Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation and cultural advisor to Greening Australia. He is also the Vice-Chair of the Wirlomin Stories and Language Project and an important contributor to the Dwoort Baal Kaat Songlines Project and the Songlines and Sustainability Project. Ezzard co-developed the script for *No Longer a Wandering Spirit—Imaginaries of Bessy Flowers* (2016) and is the short film's narrator.

**Andrew Kenneth Gay** is an Associate Professor of Digital Cinema at Southern Oregon University (USA), where he teaches storytelling, screenwriting, and short film production. He earned his MFA in Entrepreneurial Digital Cinema from the University of Central Florida in 2010, and his teaching, scholarship and creative practice have focused on the intersection of story development and "lean" entrepreneurial principles. He has published peer-reviewed scholarship on screenwriting and script development, including "Start Me Up: Lean Screenwriting for American Entrepreneurial Cinema" in the *Journal of Screenwriting* (2014), an entry on German writer/director Ula Stöckl in *Women Screenwriters: An International Guide* (2015), and "The Cowboy, the Spaceman, and the Guru: Character and Convention in the Screenwriting of Toy Story" in *Toy Story: How Pixar Reinvented the Animated Feature* (2018). He also publishes the online open educational resource (OER) Screenplayology.com, which is used in college screenwriting classes across the globe.

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**Christopher Gist** is a writer and screen content producer, previously Commissioning Editor for Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) TV and TVNZ (New Zealand), and Head of Development for South Pacific Pictures. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in screenwriting at the University of South Australia, and a sessional Honours supervisor for the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

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**Sharon Huebner** is a multi-disciplinary researcher in the complex spaces of relational collaborations, politics of agency, applied ethics and Indigenous principles, practices and governance. She received an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) for a fellowship commencing 2022, and holds a Ph.D. from Monash University, Australia, 2016. Sharon is co-writer and director of *No Longer a Wandering Spirit – Imaginaries of Bessy Flowers* (2016).

**Hannah Ianniello** is an academic and writer from Sydney. She has numerous academic and creative publications in international journals and was most recently the featured writer in the Honeyguide Literary Magazine (US). Hannah is an award-winning screenwriter and her academic research bridges literature, screenwriting and musicoliterary theory with a focus on the representation of jazz musicians and violence. Hannah holds a Ph.D. from Western Sydney University and a Masters of Creative Writing from The University of Sydney. She specialises in teaching screenwriting, creative writing and academic writing at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

**Marco Ianniello** is Head of Film and Screen Production at The University of Notre Dame Australia. He is an award-winning filmmaker and screenwriter and his work was screened at festivals around the world and on Australian television. He is currently completing a screenwriting practice Ph.D. investigating the structuring of long-form screenplays and the nature of change in the television drama protagonist.

**Dave Jackson** is a screenwriter, novelist, songwriter and senior lecturer in Creative Writing at Liverpool John Moores University. His Ph.D. by creative practice was entitled *Violet City: Personal & Cultural Mythologies in the Development of a Fantasy Novel*. The novel, published by Mediadrome in 2017,

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**Hester Joyce** combines creative practice (with expertise in screenwriting, performance and screen biography) and research into screen cultures. She completed a Harry Ransom Fellowship at the University of Texas, Austin in 2015. She has served as co-editor of the *Journal of Screenwriting* and is co-author of *New Zealand Film & Television: Institution, Industry & Cultural Change* (2011). She has published articles and book chapters on screenwriting, screen aesthetics and New Zealand cinema. Hester is Adjunct Associate Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, at La Trobe University, Australia.

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**Florian Krauß** is a substitute professor in Media Literacy at the Technische Universität Dresden and research fellow at the University of Siegen, Germany, leading the project "Quality Series" as Discourse and Practice (funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 2018–2022). Previously, Krauß was a lecturer in the Department of Media Studies in Siegen and a research associate at the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Potsdam. In 2011, he completed his Ph.D. thesis on the diasporic reception of Bollywood films in Germany (Bollyworld Neukölln: MigrantInnen und Hindi-Filme in Deutschland [Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2012]). He is the co-founder and co-head of Netzwerk Drehbuchforschung, the German network for screenwriting research. Recent publications on media industry studies and screenwriting research include the anthology *Teen TV* (Springer VS, 2020) and articles in *SERIES, International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*; *Journal of Popular Television*; *VIEW Journal of European Television History & Culture* and others.

**Rachel Landers** is a filmmaker with a Ph.D. in history. Her films have screened all over the world and won a number of prestigious awards including the Australian Documentary Prize and the Premiers History Multimedia Award. In 2011/2012 she received the NSW Premier's History Fellowship and was appointed Head of Documentary at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School. In 2015, she released the ABC/DVA/Screen Australia documentary *Lest We Forget What?* for the centenary of World War 1. She published her first non-fiction book *Who Bombed the Hilton?* with New South Books in 2016 which won the prestigious national Nib award for Excellence in Research in the Creation of a Literary Work. In 2018 she was appointed head of Media Arts and Production at UTS. She is currently working on a number of film projects and writing the monograph *Hybrid Documentary and Beyond* for Routledge.

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**Christina Milligan** is a researcher-practitioner in screenwriting and screen production at Auckland University of Technology. She is an award-winning producer of feature and television dramas and documentaries, and much of her industry work reflects her indigenous heritage as a member of the Ngāti Porou tribe of the Māori people. She is completing a Ph.D. thesis on the work of the indigenous screen producer. Christina serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Screenwriting* and is the government-appointed Chair of Te Puna Kairanga (The Premium Production Fund), a fund designed to support high-end film and television production as part of the New Zealand government's response to the effects of Covid-19 on the screen industry.

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**Cath Moore** is a filmmaker, author and educator. She completed her masters in screenwriting at the Australian Film Television and Radio school before attaining a Ph.D. on Danish screenwriting practices. With a focus on screen narrative development and Scandinavian cinema she has published with the *Journal of Screenwriting* and *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network*. She was also a contributor to the books *Refocus: The Films of Susanne Bier* (Edinburgh Press, 2018) and *Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). Cath is currently a creative writing teaching associate at The University of Melbourne and lectures in the film and television department of the Victorian College of the Arts. Her debut novel *Metal Fish Falling Snow* won the 2021 Victorian Premier's YA literary award.

**David Moore** completed a Master's in Film & TV Production and a Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne University, before commencing his Ph.D. studies in 2019 on the topic of improvisation in screenwriting applied to found footage films. For the past 20 years David has worked as a lecturer of film, screenwriting, graphic design and creative industries in the Middle East, Vietnam and Australia. David has also written and directed 15 short films, participating in many International film festivals including Abu Dhabi, San Francisco, Calgary, Tabor, Montreal and the Commonwealth Film Festival in England. He has won several awards for writing and directing his short films and has also written several feature films and a book of short stories. Prior to becoming an educator and expat, he ran his own creative design agency in Sydney, Australia for 13 years.

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**Sarah Renger** studied German literature, education, film, television and media studies in Berlin, Mainz, Potsdam-Babelsberg and Los Angeles. In 2020, she received her doctorate from the University of Leicester, UK, with her dissertation "The Poetics of German Transmedia Storytelling and World-building". She has been a lecturer at the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany, since 2014. Since 2010 Sarah has been a writer and director for transmedia series and documentaries. She also works as a media educationist in schools.

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**River Seager** is a Ph.D. student at the University of Dundee, where they have been awarded funding from the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities to pursue this work. Their thesis, "Knights in Tarnished Armor: Masculinity in the literature and screenplays of Alan Sharp" explores themes of gender throughout Sharp's canon. Their research interests include screenwriting studies, Scottish Modernism, transmedial analysis and the interaction between Scottish and American creative industries.

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# Introduction

*Stayci Taylor and Craig Batty*

When we put out the call for book chapters on the topic of script development in July 2017, little did we know that four years later we would be publishing the second of two books—one that, as you will have noticed, contains 40 chapters. This volume follows our first edited collection arising from this call, *Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives* (2021). Back in 2016, when we started to drive a research agenda on the topic of script development—with colleagues Louise Sawtell and Bridget Conor, and subsequently also Philippa Burne, Glenda Hambly, Hester Joyce (see Chapter 29), Marilyn Leder, Noel Maloney, Radha O'Meara (see Chapter 8) and Mark Poole—we knew that there was a scholarly gap, and we were keen to address this gap through strategic collaboration and publishing. While a few publications explicitly interrogating the topic of script development had already emerged (see, for just one example, Taylor & Batty, 2016), the first official output from this formalised endeavour was a special issue of the *Journal of Screenwriting* in 2017, which began to lay the foundations for research in this area of screenwriting studies. Two books and over 60 chapters and journal

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articles later, we can probably no longer say that script development is an 'emerging area'.

Reflecting on our initial call for book chapters, which generated so much interest that we produced two edited collections, it is interesting to see what we foregrounded as important and in need of scholarly attention. For example, we wrote in the call that 'this collection is intended to explore singular instances of script development 'in action' across various countries and cultures'—and, indeed, this collection features contributors from around the world reflecting on their own experiences of participating in and researching script development, across geographical, historical, cultural and political contexts. We also flagged our interest 'in both mainstream and niche practices across all forms of screen media [to] present a rich and diverse set of analyses of script development' to help us understand 'what it is, what it looks like, and how it is being approached in various personal, industrial and geographic contexts'. Thanks to the contributions of our authors, this goal has been achieved, with some distinctive and arguably world-first case studies and scholarship in the field.

Looking at the two collections, the first, *Script Development*, is in many ways an extension of the special issue of the *Journal of Screenwriting*. While it has case studies and specific contexts (e.g. how Denmark and Australia compare in their discourses on script development; how two Ph.D. candidates innovated development practices to address their research needs; how notions of quality and betterment appear in script development discourse), it very much provides further theorisation about how we might understand the practices of script development—useful, we hope, in continuing to provide scholarly foundations for further work in the area. What this, *The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development*, offers is a much more diverse, eclectic and 'lived' account of script development.

Across the book's 40 chapters, which take us inside the writers' room, alongside the script editor, between development conversations, and outside the mainstream and into the experimental, we learn about policies, practices, collaborations, breakdowns, creative interventions, critical explanations and emotional responses to script development. With authors spanning upwards of 15 countries, and who have inhabited an array of roles—including writer, script editor, producer, script consultant and executive, this is a truly international perspective on how script development functions (or otherwise) across media and platforms. Topics range from script readers and script reporting to feedback and collaboration, to gender, diversity and ethical representation and to specific national and cultural contexts. Form, format and mediums of focus include (as we would expect) narrative film and television, but also web series, video games, cinematic virtual reality, documentary and factual programming, transmedia and animation. Among the chapters focussing on original scripts and screenplays are analyses of adaptation including case studies of a Brazilian novel, a Czech opera and an Australian YA novella. Many of our authors' sites

of analysis go beyond specific media and into such contexts as the classroom and script development services.

Comprising four parts, our handbook guides readers through the many and varied processes of script development, from the perspectives of creators of original works to consultative roles and to international perspectives, alternative approaches and specific and contextual case studies. Chapters represent key challenges, roles and cultures of script development, adding new knowledge about, and insights into, this process.

In **Part**, our contributors take us '**behind the scenes**', exploring how script development is being enacted, and how it is experienced, by those for whom this process is part of their professional, pedagogical or research practice. The chapters in this section ask questions about, and provide examples from, creators and writers of original screenplays, as well as revealing insights from those in other script developmental roles—script doctors, consultants, funding agencies, showrunners and those teaching in screenwriting training facilities. The authors in this section contribute to reflections upon, and interrogations of, roles and responsibilities, navigating development and deploying interventions across modes, forms, budgets and audiences.

In **Part: Script Development in Time and Place**, the chapters pull into sharp relief the historical, social, temporal and geographical specificities of developing screen stories, and challenge notions of 'universal' approaches to script development. Through case studies and interviews, the authors span decades, continents and applications to offer unique perspectives on a wide range of script development processes.

**Part** explores **Alternative Approaches**, whereby scholars, teachers and practitioners offer a range of approaches to script development that may be considered outside of the mainstream or that challenge dominant practices. The range of chapters in this section includes both case studies and reflections, offering new methodologies, experiments, multi-modalities and perspectives on script development innovation.

In the final section, **Part**, we explore some of the **Unique Contexts of Script Development**, discussing a range of novel challenges and specific contexts over various sites, roles and responsibilities of script development. Some of these chapters look at some of script development's social factors, and through reflection, case study and interview explore a range of considerations, dynamics and challenges including issues of communication, notions of gate-keeping and quests for greater diversity of perspective. Others focus on specific sites of practice, uncovering unique insights into script development for children's drama, transmedia narratives, green screen fantasy, the Hollywood studio system, animation and modal migrations.

To look at this book now, five years after setting out on a programme of research to celebrate and encourage further scholarship on script development, encourages us to assess how far we have come and what is yet to be achieved. The chapters in this book tell their own story and that the term 'script development' warrants its own handbook also speaks for itself, even while some of

the scholarship grapples with, or even contests, the definition (see Batty et al., 2018; Price, 2017). In this introduction, we go briefly to where all of this has landed in terms of questions, debates and research endeavours. We propose that in inviting scholars to home in on script development, we uncover aspects of screenwriting and screen production that might otherwise be overlooked, or covered more generally, in screen studies scholarship or even, arguably, in screenwriting practice/screen production research analyses. The areas of focus we raised with our colleagues in the article, 'Script Development: Defining the Field' (Batty et al., 2017) included questions we can use as a roadmap by which to further reflect.

Some of those questions were along the lines 'why' and 'where' people look do develop scripts. Here and elsewhere over the past five years, researchers have used interviews, discourse analysis, ethnography and reflective practice to unpack motives for, and subsequent experiences of, commitment to script development. And while the chapters in the handbook detail many of the contexts in which script development happens (as summarised above), our contributors go further to provide in-depth analyses of 'how' scripts are developed. They do this by showing us the methods enacted 'behind the scenes' of mainstream film and television script development (including Bevan-Mogg, Krauß, Macneill, Moore, C., Taylor and Batty), sharing their own—or analysing other's—innovative processes (including Black and Dzenis, Daniels, Gay, Gist, Huebner and Flowers, Ferrell, Milligan, Strand and Svens and Turina), building case studies of the script development behind historical and/or landmark screen works (Benis, Joyce and Jontef, Miranda, Seager and Tieber) or tracking the process of becoming 'green lit' (Leal). Our authors also provide granular studies on some of the roles, stages, impacts and institutions of script development such as the showrunner (O'Meara and Moore), the table read (Cake), script development services such as The Black List (Twarog) and the political economy of script development (Sengupta). Others (Ianniello and Ianniello, Kelly, Senje and Weaving) take us into dedicated sites of script development—labs, pods and screenwriting courses—to give us a perspective on how script development is practiced outside of the 'factory line' of mainstream screen production. We also blur the boundaries of fiction and nonfiction script development with an account of using documentary methods to develop an adapted screenplay (Landers), and an analysis of script development for factual programming using fictional frameworks (Brown).

Other questions posed by the 2017 article—around the role of the script 'expert', the possibilities for script development in the academic context and the influence of format and media on the practice—are equally instructive in establishing how our authors have contributed new scholarship to the field. In this collection, for example, the role of the script 'expert' is interrogated in chapters based on interviews with writers, script editors and development executives, but also in others with more dedicated foci, such as the script reader as gatekeeper (Napoli) and the cross-cultural script consultant (Rush). When

raising questions around media and format, we had suggested in our journal's special issue that a comparative study of script development practices across media—film, television, animation, games, web series and so on—could illuminate similarities and differences. Four years on, most work still centres around more traditional film and television. Therefore, we are happy to include in the collection chapters focussed on (and troubling notions of) script development in 'web series' (Gee), cinematic virtual reality (Dooley), green screen (Jackson), video games (Di Crosta), transmedia content development (Renger), the multi-modal screenplay (Moore, D.) and animated opera (Kolokytha), while also acknowledging we have only crested the wave of multimedia possibilities. Further research might also bear in mind Steven Price's (2017) thoughts about the intersection of script development scholarship and adaptation studies, specifically the potential of practitioner engagement to 're-energize that field [adaptation] just as it has with research into the screenplay' (p. 328). While inside the collection are wide-ranging analyses of script development processes for adapted screenplays as previously highlighted, only two are from an 'insider's' perspective, which might suggest a gap in practitioner-led analyses of adapted scripts and screenplays.

Researchers drawing on the theoretical resources of sociology, cultural studies and critical policy perspectives have begun to develop an evidence based focus on asymmetrical 'access' to script development, and how broader structural and social inequalities impact upon script development practices and spaces. There is no doubt that there is scope, and need, for a lot more work here, particularly longitudinal studies of these contexts. This feels like a natural progression of the work undertaken to date, especially of the case studies offered in this book covering script development under considerations including Indigeneity and mental health (Hopgood, Huebner and Flowers and Milligan).

Screenwriting in the academy is arguably an area in which Australia has already taken a lead, specifically looking at the screenwriting doctorate, in part because of the sheer number of research degree students enrolled in practice-based work (i.e., the creative Ph.D.). While this is a niche area of script development studies, Australia provides a case in point that many established writers and script development personnel are undertaking Ph.D.s, expanding their practice through research. Whether and to what extent this informs industry practice beyond the Ph.D. is still to be determined, but in the context of increasingly conservative industries less willing to take creative risks, university research spaces might well be becoming incubators for innovation in script development. While this Handbook looks more into industry than it does to the academy, it is important in such a collection to highlight the research from those who, at the time of writing, are Ph.D. candidates (Gist, Ianniello, M., Leal, Milligan, Moore, D., Seager, Sengupta and Twarog).

The summaries of our authors' research detailed in the paragraphs above are by no means exhaustive, as many of our authors' chapters address some, or all, of the questions and categories by which we have framed our assessment