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The Silent Partner: News Agencies and 21st Century news

Jane Johnston, Susan Forde

Abstract

This article investigates the ubiquitous presence of news agencies (or wire services) in the daily news. While considering the international environment, it focuses on the sole Australian news agency, Australian Associated Press (AAP), and on its dominance within the Australian news landscape. The article presents the findings of two case studies, tracing press releases through AAP and into the daily news around the world, while also analyzing the media culture that accepts copy from news agencies as “gospel”—a commodity to be used and reused without checking accuracy, and often without attribution. In addition, we identify that the heightened status of news agency copy, coupled with the “not wrong for long” approach which permeates online news, is a combination which increases the potential for error and inaccuracy. The article suggests the need for a shakeup in how media researchers view news sources, as well as a closer analysis of news agency domination within the news environment. Drawing on political economy theory, it sets the foundations for a larger study which could investigate the contemporary production of news.

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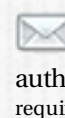
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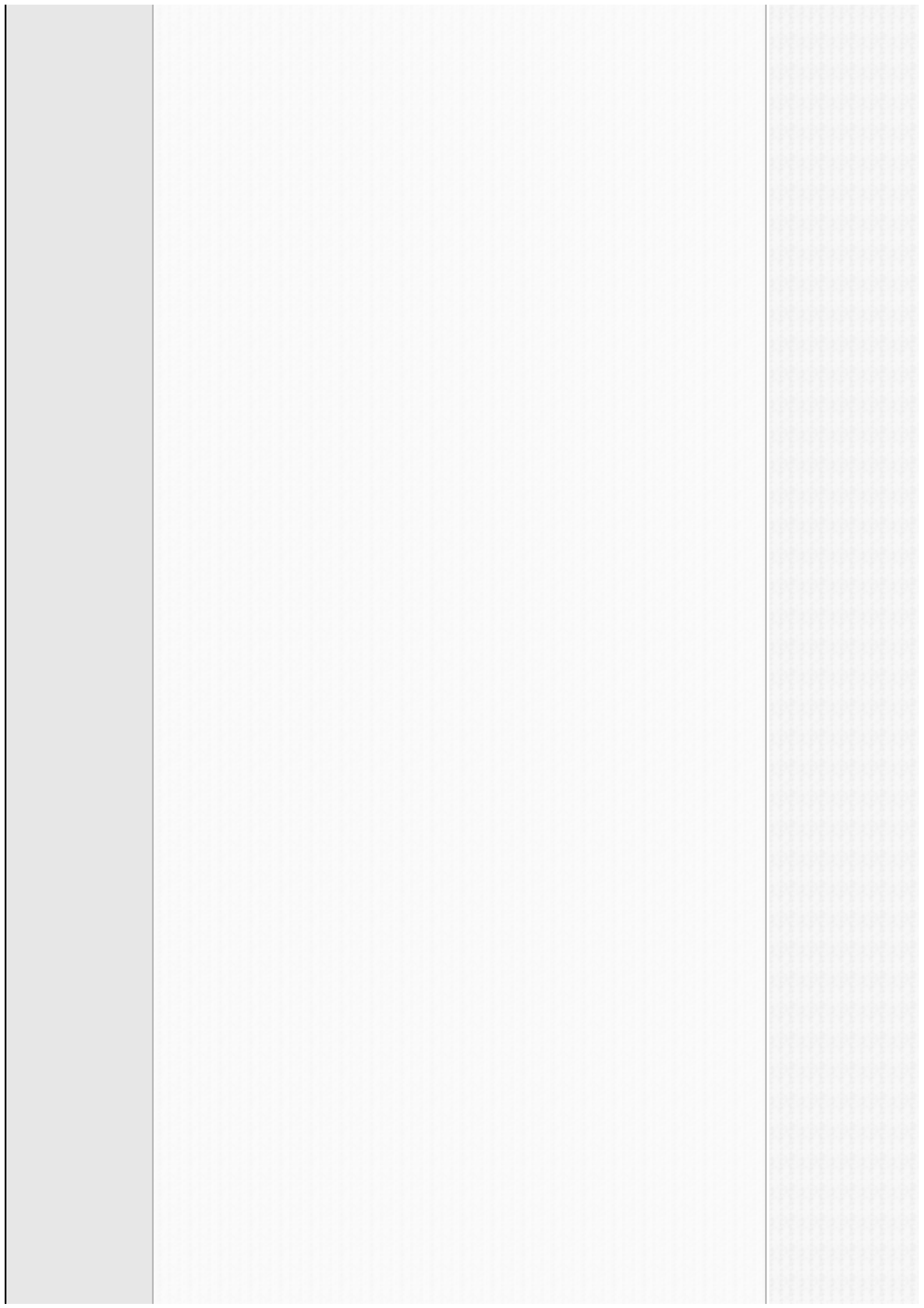
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