



ANZAAB *Aspects of Book Collecting* Vintage Comics

Camberwell Books & Collectibles

Background: Old Comics—usually comic book magazine format, with sequential panels.

Range: Comic papers, books and magazines—Australian, British or American pre 1960's, though not limited to this period.

Availability: Reasonably readily available, although one must seek out the markets. Early Australian material is very scarce, particularly from the World War II era when much material was consumed by wartime paper drives and the like. This was also a period of high fascination for the local comics aficionado. The loss of American imports due to currency restrictions led to a blossoming of home-grown material which was threaded through with Australian flavours. There was also a blood-curdling element as well, no doubt induced by the harsh war milieu of those times. Many of these issues were “one shots” (that is, one time only productions) due to the wartime ban on new serial publications.

Price-range: \$5 to \$250,000. Comics are generally collected in the categories listed above. The most valuable are the early American originals, with key issues—such as *Marvel Mystery* #1, *Superman* #1 and *Detective* #27 (which includes the first appearance of Batman)—being worth in excess of \$100,000 dollars each. British comics are often tabloid or comic-paper format, with titles like *Mickey Mouse Weekly* and *Film Fun* being respective examples collected. Also keenly pursued are digest format items such as *Thriller Library* and *Super Detective Library*.

Australian comics, previously a poor cousin to their American and British brethren, are now avidly sought. Australian newspaper reprint titles such as *Ginger Meggs*, *Fatty Finn* and *Bluey & Curley* are relatively common. Much more elusive are the wartime “one shot” titles referred to above, some issues of which are known only by inference with no actual copy having been recorded to date—great scope for the modern day comic-driven Indiana Jones!

Footnote: Three excellent references are: George Perry and Alan Aldridge *The Penguin Book of Comics* (Penguin, 1967; revised edition 1971); Mick Stone and Annette Shiell Bonzer – *Australian Comics 1900s-1990s* (Elgua Media, 1998; copies available from Camberwell Books & Collectibles); and John Ryan *Panel by Panel – An illustrated history of Australian comics* (Cassell, 1979).