Indigenous Australian Life Histories - A new genre of 'writing' and a new paradigm of publishing?

Abstract
An increasing number of Australian indigenous autobiographies have been collaborations between their subject speakers, an often non-indigenous facilitator and, in one case, an initiating publisher. Most of these books are based on oral reminiscence, recorded and initially edited by the non-indigenous collaborator in consultation with the subject, a contact that is maintained while the book goes through the publication process. The characteristics of this genre are identified in the paper, along with the processes involved in creating, editing and publishing such texts. The role of the publisher in the origination and production of these works is also examined.

Citation

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Research Paradigms To find an Indigenous means of research, I first determined the orientation and paradigm that best suited my research. To help me make this determination, I paid attention to the ideas expressed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), who identified. This way of being not only creates new knowledge but transforms who researchers are and where they are located (p. 174). Shawn Wilson (2001) suggested that an Indigenous methodology implies talking about relational accountability, meaning that the researcher is fulfilling his or her relationship with the world around him or her. Indigenous Australians write history in a number of genres. The genre that they have found most accessible, and in which they have been most prolific, is the story that each person has wanted to tell about their own life and times – autobiography. Some published stories have been facilitated by another person who has recorded and edited their words; other autobiographies are entirely the work of the autobiographer him or herself. These works are of great value to any person who is interested in Australia’s colonial past and in Indigenous Australian perspectives on that past. However, scholarly historians of Australia have hardly begun to make use of Indigenous Autobiographies as evidence or as a source of perspectives on the past that are not found in other written sources.

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