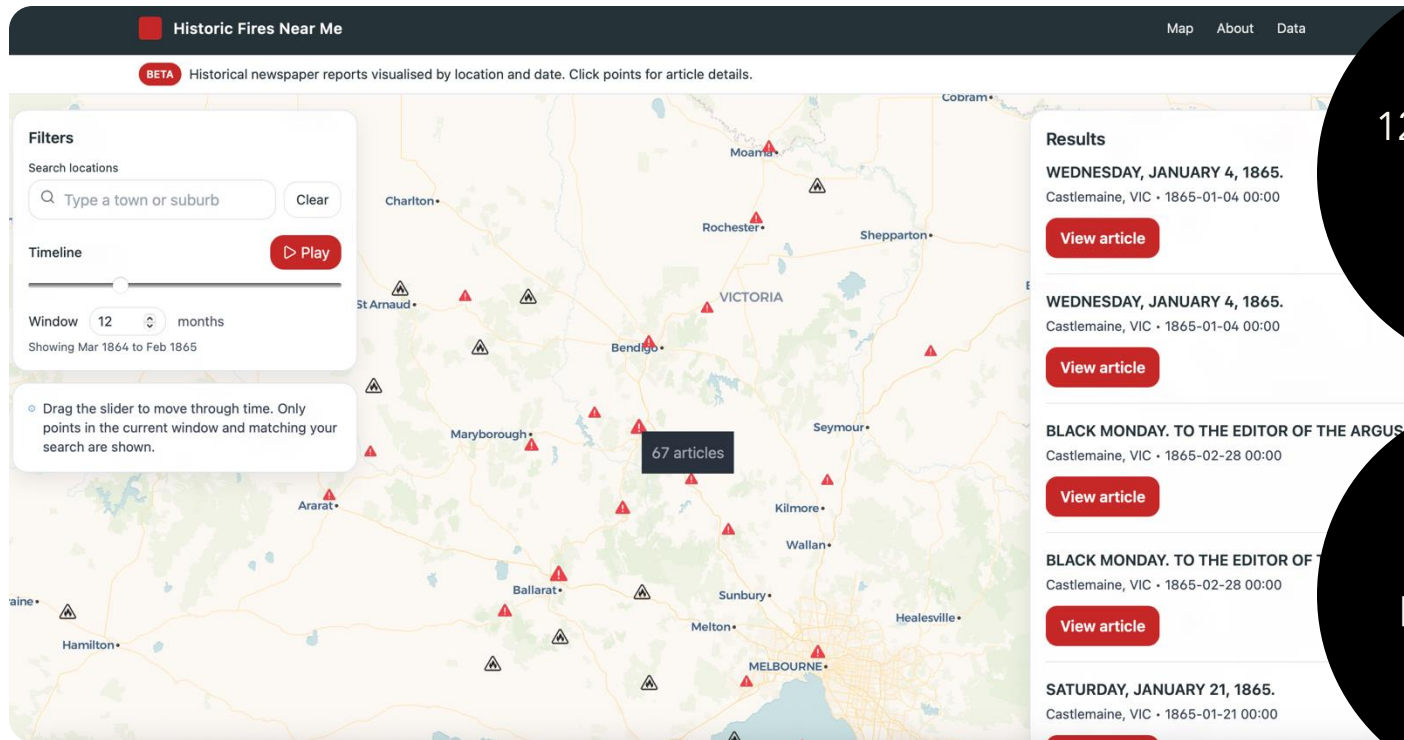


Fiannuala Morgan

HISTORIC FIRES NEAR ME

(Re)Constructing Fire Records

Lecturer, Publishing and Communications, University of Melbourne



120260 records
from 42754
newspaper
articles

Covers the
period 1850-
1900

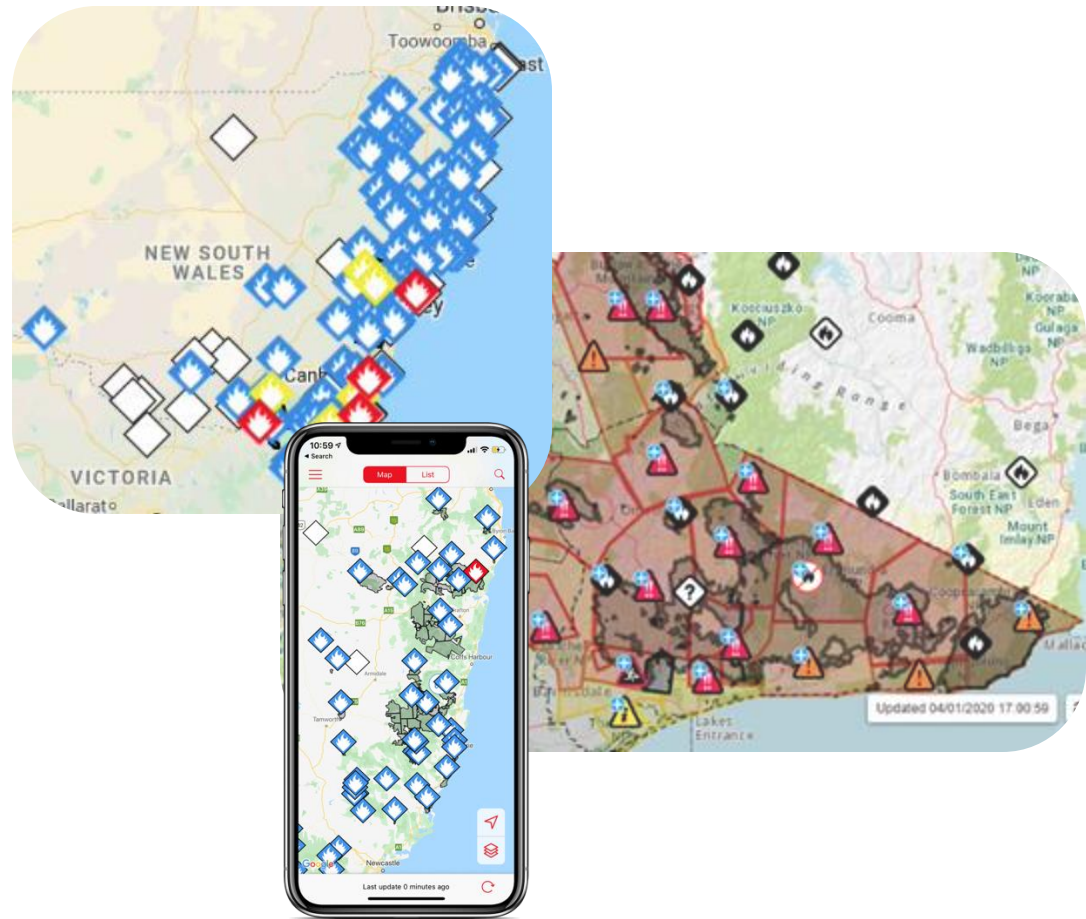
<https://historic-fire-emergency-app.vercel.app>

"While there is no doubt these bushfires are bad and may get worse, fuelling more talk of the nation battling an unprecedented fire threat this summer, the blazes that continue to plague the eastern states and Western Australia are nothing new. They do not compare with some of the more extreme fire disasters in Australia's short history, such as the Black Thursday conflagration of 1851 that burned five million hectares and was so intense that ships 30km off the coast of Victoria reported coming under ember attack."

Johnstone, Craig. 2019. "History of Disasters Shows There Is Nothing New about Nation's Destructive Blazes." *The Australian*, December 31, 2019.

<https://historic-fire-emergency-app.vercel.app>

In November 2019 the official app of the NSW Rural Fire Service, "Fires Near Me," became the fastest downloaded App on both Android and Apple platforms. The app, designed to alert users to both proximity and severity of bush-fires, became the official prism through which the unfolding disaster was interpreted. The map possessed an intensity that belied its simplistic rendering as users watched fires tick over from "watch and act" to "emergency" status in real time. Although temporally located, the severity of certain fires meant they became a static part of the interface. An uncanny habituation occurred for the user as event was rendered geography and fire became a recognisable and immutable aspect of the landscape.



<https://historic-fire-emergency-app.vercel.app>



"It is clear from many nineteenth-century sources that bushfires had become an inescapable part of Summer life in Australia. But the history of bushfires in the second half of the century is fragmentary because they were so common that they were not reported unless they were close to settled districts, widespread, or disastrous."

- Collins, Paul. (2009) Burn the Epic Story of Bushfire in Australia, Scribe, Brunswick, Australia. p.75.



Download all results using the
Trove API (Application
Programming Interface)

[Home](#) / [Search results](#)

All

Newspapers & Gazettes

Magazines & Newsletters

Images, Maps & Artefacts

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Lists

Newspapers & Gazettes

bushfire

Advanced search

NEWSPAPERS & GAZETTES

119,775 total results

Sort by: Relevance

BUSHFIRE BUSHFIRE INCIDENTS

Article Illustrated - Yass Tribune-Courier (NSW : 1929 - 1954) Thursday 19 January 1939 - Page 7

... with little harm, owing to the force of the wind. No man was more valuable at the **bushfires** on the Wee ... **BUSHFIRE BUSHFIRE INCIDENTS** One man was in his car on the other side of the Murrumbidgee when he ... 992 words

Text corrected by 3 Voluntroves

BUSHFIRE

Article - The Longreach Leader (Qld. : 1923 - 1954) Friday 15 October 1954 - Page 24

... **BUSHFIRE** Last week-end a fire started on the Corfield Reserve, which ex-tended to "Venture Downs ... 62 words

Text corrected by 2 Voluntroves

REFINE YOUR RESULTS

Type

☐ Newspaper (118k)

☐ Gazette (1k)

Place

☐ New South Wales (48k)

☐ Victoria (18k)

☐ South Australia (17k)

☐ Western Australia (15k)

☐ Queensland (11k)

☐ ACT (6k)

☐ Tasmania (7k)

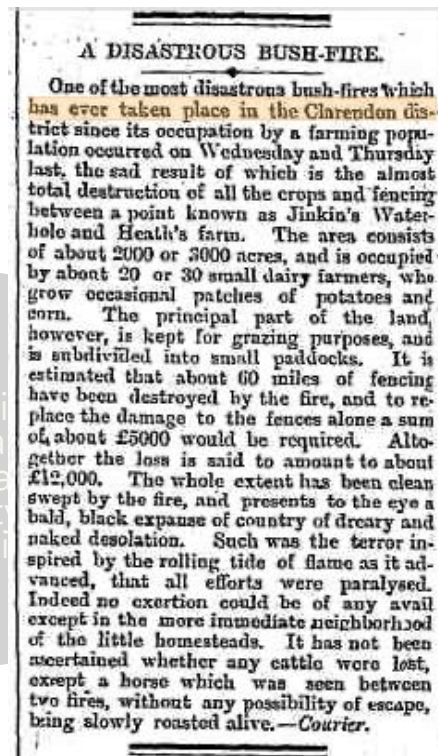
Show more

Search for
bushfire in Trove

Extract 200
words
surrounding
'bushfire'

Identify
place names
using Natural
Entity
Recognition

Break individual articles into smaller segments, 200 words
surrounding mention of 'bushfire' retaining all important
metadata



"A DISASTROUS BUSH-FIRE." *Geelong Advertiser* (Vic. : 1859 - 1929) 16 January 1878: 3. Web. 9 Apr 2025
<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article149820987>>.

Search for
bushfire in Trove

Extract 200
words
surrounding
bushfire

Identify
placenames
using Named
Entity
Recognition

Generate co-
ordinates using
custom
disambiguation
software

As I stood on the deck of one of the largest of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamers, that now almost annihilate distance between

England and her colonial possessions, taking a last look at the land where I had left youth, womanhood, kindred, friends, and the dust of parents, I thought, "Is there anything I can do in return for all God has done for me here--anything to prove my gratitude to the many true friends I am leaving: the Australians, young and old, who have thronged around us to bid us farewell?" Nearly half a century has passed since

('As', 'O'), ('I', 'O'), ('stood', 'O'), ('the', 'O'), ('deck', 'O'), ('of', 'O'), ('of', 'O'), ('the', 'O'), ('la', 'O'), ('of', 'O'), ('the', 'O'), ('Pen', 'O'), ('LOCATION'), ('and', 'O'), ('Ori', 'O'), ('ORGANIZATION'), ('Company', 'O'), ('ORGANIZATION'), ('', 'O'), ('s', 'O'), ('steamers', 'O'), ('', 'O'), ('that', 'O'), ('now', 'O'), ('almost', 'O'), ('annihilate', 'O'), ('distance', 'O'), ('between', 'O'), ('England', 'LOCATION'), ('and', 'O'), ('her', 'O'), ('colonial', 'O'), ('possessions', 'O'), ('', 'O'), ('taking', 'O'), ('a', 'O'), ('last', 'O'), ('look', 'O'), ('at', 'O'), ('the', 'O'), ('land', 'O'), ('where', 'O'), ('I', 'O'), ('had', 'O'), ('left', 'O'), ('youth', 'O'), ('', 'O'), ('womanhood', 'O'), ('', 'O'), ('kindred', 'O')

		South_extract_unannotated.txt
		The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
		The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
		The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
	PERSON	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
	PERSON	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Chuck	PERSON	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Greif	PERSON	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Australia	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
LONDON	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
DOWNEY	PERSON	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Peninsular	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Oriental	ORGANIZATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Company	ORGANIZATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
England	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Sydney	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Harbour	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Australia	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
New	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
South	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt
Wales	LOCATION	The_Golden_South_extract_unannotated.txt

Apply Named Entity Recognition to text segments to extract all 'relevant' location information



Search for
bushfire in Trove

Extract 200
words
surrounding
'bushfire'

Identify
placenames
using Named
Entity
Recognition

Generate co-
ordinates using
custom
disambiguation
software

Developed 'heuristic' program to determine
geographic coordinates



https://github.com/Finnoscarmorgan/Historical_Fires_Near_Me

G10

2.333340551

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	
	location	entity	filename	Longitude	Latitude	State	mean_media	median_med	n_results	winnerPct	searchType	title	newspaper_i	newspaper_t	page	date	category	words	illustrated	corrections	snippet	url	
1	.Port River	LOCATION	18790114-24	138.51011	-34.76178	SA	0	0	1	100	fuzzy	SOUTH AUSTI	241	The Colac He	1 S	1879-01-14	C Article	305	N	0	Asad accide	https://nla.g	
2	.Rapid Bay	LOCATION	18750417-26	138.4849	-35.52609	SA	0.58134894	0.32192	3	100	fuzzy	NEWS OF TH	288	South Austr		10	1875-04-17	C Article	8481	N	1	Mr. T. O'Leary	https://nla.g
4	.Richmond R	LOCATION	18800224-41	152.967778	-28.498333	NSW	0	0	1	100	fuzzy	NEW SOUTH	41	South Austr		5	1880-02-24	C Article	468	N	0	The Associati	https://nla.g
5	.Rivoli Bay	LOCATION	18800124-18	140.071418	-37.515138	SA	0	0	1	100	fuzzy	INTERCOLON	1813	The Pastoral		3	1880-01-24	C Article	2115	N	0	SYDNEY, Jan	https://nla.g
6	'Jerry's Plain:	LOCATION	18751127-26	150.901111	-32.481667	NSW	0	0	1	100	fuzzy	Local and Ge	282	The Singletor		2	1875-11-27	C Article	3264	N	0	The Weather	https://nla.g
7	'Lachlan Rive	LOCATION	18711223-52	146.741499	-42.796499	TAS	0.31892594	0.31892594	3	66.666667	fuzzy	Destructive f	52	Australian To		17	1871-12-23	C Article	1250	N	0	THE early par	https://nla.g
8	'Lachlan Rive	LOCATION	18711223-52	146.741499	-42.796499	TAS	0.31892594	0.31892594	3	66.666667	fuzzy	Destructive f	52	Australian To		17	1871-12-23	C Article	1250	N	0	THE early par	https://nla.g
9	'Mount Bens	LOCATION	18851215-71	139.79905	-37.04387	SA	0.01087499	0.00828023	5	80	fuzzy	KINGSTON. C	715	The Narracox		2	1885-12-15	C Article	266	N	0	The extremel	https://nla.g
10	'the Junction	LOCATION	18650320-11	150.334444	-33.298333	NSW	2.33334055	1.95483731	22	68.181818	fuzzy	BLACK MONI	110	Portland Gua	2 S		1865-03-20	C Article	3183	N	1	The country f	https://nla.g
11	'ÆPort Augu	LOCATION	18641119-39	137.763823	-32.491054	SA	0.00390023	0	3	100	fuzzy	EPITOME OF	399	Kapunda Her		2	1864-11-19	C Article	2252	N	0	The twin mun	https://nla.g
12	'æöf' ew Sou	LOCATION	18720207-40	147.017778	-32.161667	NSW	0	0	1	100	fuzzy	INTERCOLON	406	The Wallaroo		3	1872-02-07	C Article	270	N	0	The Narrapor	https://nla.g
13	J]Malmsbury	LOCATION	18630106-56	144.385417	-37.18875	VIC	0.0223179	0.02588591	6	83.333333	fuzzy	THE BUSH FI	558	Geelong Adv		3	1863-01-06	C Article	1196	N	1	WEDNESDAY	https://nla.g
14	Abbey Green	LOCATION	18800122-8	151.784169	-30.109635	NSW	1.04545898	0.54813463	3	100	exact	PASTORAL NE	8	The Maitland		7	1880-01-22	C Article	3174	N	1	GUNNEDAH	https://nla.g
15	Abbot	LOCATION	18791216-8	147.783333	-20.066667	QLD	0	0	1	100	exact	PASTORAL NE	8	The Maitland		7	1879-12-16	C Article	2067	N	1	GUNNEDAH	https://nla.g
16	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18990801-12	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	GREATER BR	1297	The Daily Tel		5	1899-08-01	C Article	227	N	0	LONDON, 31	https://nla.g
17	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18930216-34	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	THE BENDIG	346	Bendigo Adv		2	1893-02-16	C Article	4704	N	6	THE sheeting	https://nla.g
18	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18930225-62	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	Our Letter-B	621	Weekly Time		8	1893-02-25	C Article	1302	N	11	"Contributio	https://nla.g
19	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18651223-13	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	SUMMARY	13	The Argus (M	1 S		1865-12-23	C Article	22796	N	11	When the No	https://nla.g
20	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18650204-28	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	INTERCOLON	287	South Austr		5	1865-02-04	C Article	2667	N	0	THE SHENAN	https://nla.g
21	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18650204-28	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	INTERCOLON	287	South Austr		5	1865-02-04	C Article	2667	N	0	THE SHENAN	https://nla.g
22	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18941215-56	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	ITEMS OF NE	582	Mount Alex		2	1894-12-15	C Article	2260	N	0	The muggy, o	https://nla.g
23	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18790215-46	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	INTERCOLON	464	Freeman's Jo		8	1879-02-15	C Article	1533	N	0	A TERRIBLE b	https://nla.g
24	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18911223-13	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	PASTORAL IN	13	The Argus (M		6	1891-12-23	C Article	477	N	0	SWAN HILL. [	https://nla.g
25	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18980207-30	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	SUMMARY OI	30	The West Aus		4	1898-02-07	C Article	677	N	1	The average i	https://nla.g
26	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18980207-30	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	SUMMARY OI	30	The West Aus		4	1898-02-07	C Article	677	N	1	The average i	https://nla.g
27	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18980127-73	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	VICTORIA. MI	73	Kalgoortie Wi		23	1898-01-27	C Article	821	N	0	The Fitzgeral	https://nla.g
28	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18980208-81	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	TELEGRAMS.	819	Southern Tim		3	1898-02-08	C Article	114	N	0	During a rece	https://nla.g
29	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18980208-81	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	TELEGRAMS.	819	Southern Tim		3	1898-02-08	C Article	114	N	0	During a rece	https://nla.g
30	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18980208-81	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	TELEGRAMS.	819	Southern Tim		3	1898-02-08	C Article	114	N	0	During a rece	https://nla.g
31	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18951214-37	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	Queensland I	377	Queensland		7	1895-12-14	C Article	538	N	0	The Drayton i	https://nla.g
32	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18950130-66	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	Glare Mem.	655	Riverina Rec		2	1895-01-30	C Article	267	N	0	SPOUTING Af	https://nla.g
33	Abbotsford	LOCATION	18950130-66	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	Glare Mem.	655	Riverina Rec		2	1895-01-30	C Article	267	N	0	SPOUTING Af	https://nla.g
34	Abbott	PERSON	18531216-21	118.391	-26.3255	WA	0.00244387	0.00244387	4	50	fuzzy	General Intel	21	The Courier (		2	1853-12-16	C Article	994	N	2	At a recent m	https://nla.g
35	Abbott	PERSON	18531216-21	118.391	-26.3255	WA	0.00244387	0.00244387	4	50	fuzzy	General Intel	21	The Courier (		2	1853-12-16	C Article	994	N	2	At a recent m	https://nla.g
36	Abbott	PERSON	18531221-26	118.391	-26.3255	WA	0.00244387	0.00244387	4	50	fuzzy	VAN DIEMEN	283	Geelong Adv	4 S		1853-12-21	C Article	337	N	0	A fearful fire	https://nla.g
37	Abercrombie	LOCATION	18840111-16	149.292778	-33.935833	NSW	2.5027465	2.52212666	11	90.9090909	exact	INTERCOLON	16	The Brisbane		5	1884-01-11	C Article	890	N	0	A strong north	https://nla.g
38	Abercrombie	LOCATION	18910224-56	149.292778	-33.935833	NSW	2.5027465	2.52212666	11	90.9090909	exact	Local and Ge	56	Bathurst Frei		2	1891-02-24	C Article	1122	N	1	TRUCKING Y	https://nla.g
39	Abercrombie	LOCATION	18910224-56	149.292778	-33.935833	NSW	2.5027465	2.52212666	11	90.9090909	exact	Local and Ge	56	Bathurst Frei		2	1891-02-24	C Article	1122	N	1	TRUCKING Y	https://nla.g
40	Abercrombie	LOCATION	18950130-66	152.004715	-24.832224	QLD	3.6151353	0.00916909	10	50	exact	Glare Mem.	655	Riverina Rec		2	1895-01-30	C Article	267	N	0	SPOUTING Af	https://nla.g

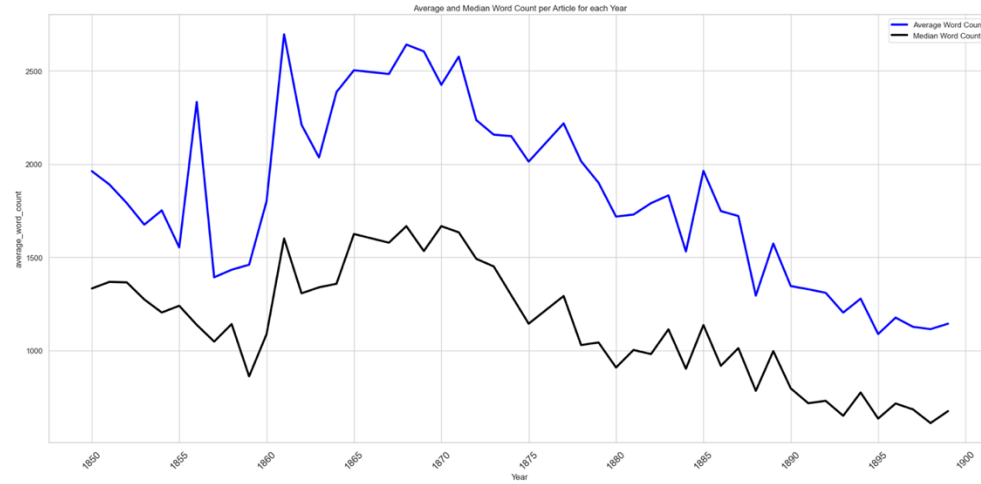


Figure 4. Average and median word count for all bushfire articles 1850-1900



Figure 16. Newspaper articles as percentage of total Trove articles over time

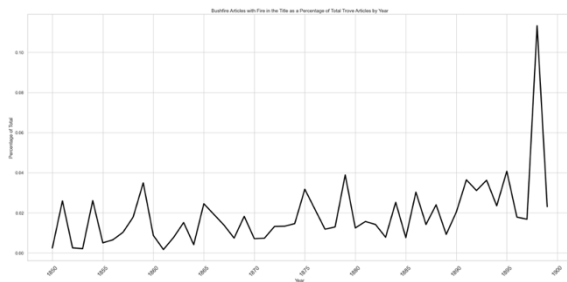


Figure 17. Newspaper articles with fire in the title as percentage of total Trove articles over time

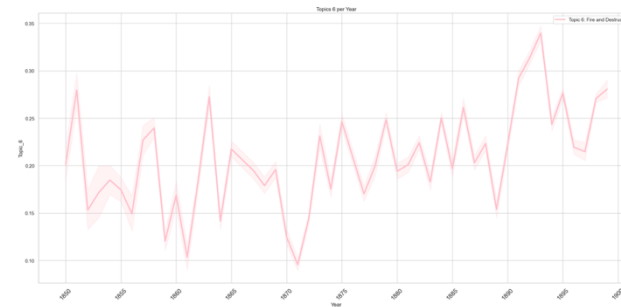


Figure 19. Topic modelling of the text from the body of bushfire newspaper articles 1850-1900 featuring a topic focused on the scale of the destruction of bushfires.

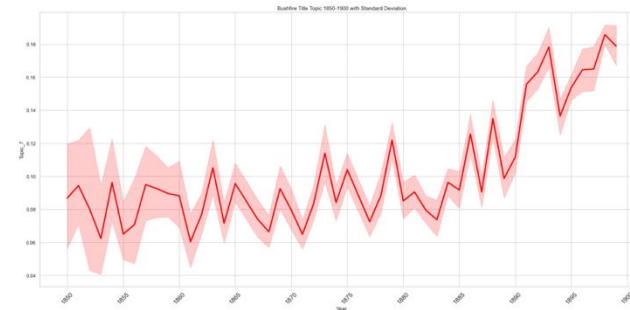
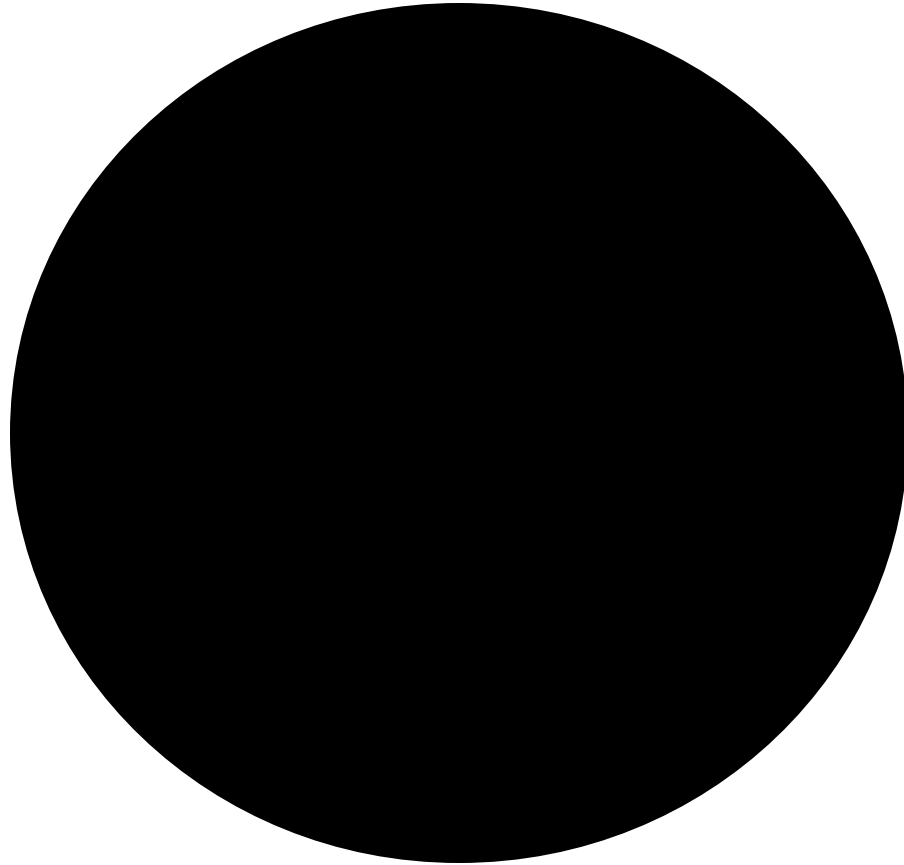
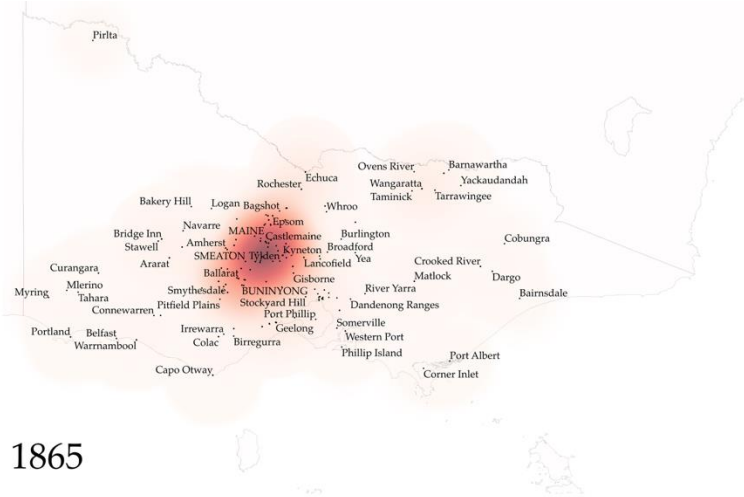
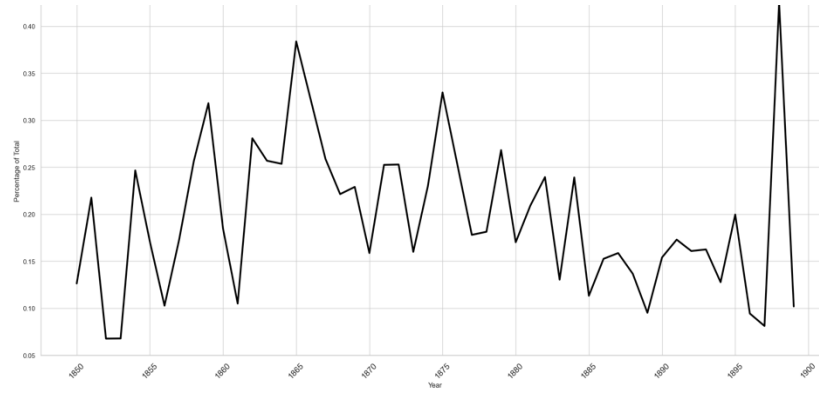


Figure 18. Topic modelling of the text taken from the headlines of bushfire newspaper articles 1850-1900 featuring a topic focused on the scale of destruction of bushfires.

⁷⁵ The most representative words for the topic that indicate the scale and severity of damage from bushfires, derived from topic modelling of bushfire newspaper article headlines, include: “bush fires,” “fire,” “telegraph,” “great,” “destructive,” “disastrous,” “near,” “electric,” “damage,” “Monday,” “destroyed,” “burnt,” “extensive,” “destruction,” “Tuesday,” “terrible,” “serious,” “Sunday,” and “heat.” Similarly, the most representative words of a similar topic from the body of the newspaper articles include the terms: “fire,” “bush fires,” “destroyed,” “grass,” “raging,” “miles,” “burnt,” “damage,” “fencing,” “large,” “district,” “burning,” “acres,” and “several.”



Placenames in this dataset are more closely associated with public responses and cultural acknowledgments of bushfires than with their precise geographic locations. This concession does not invalidate the research objectives or undermine its capacity to contribute to discussions on Australian cultural and environmental history. Rather, it highlights the contingent nature of the data produced. The locations in this dataset do not necessarily correspond to the exact sites of historical bushfires but instead capture placenames that appear in linguistic proximity to the term "bushfire." Close reading and analysis indicate that this proximity typically signifies a meaningful relationship between place and disaster. Geographic locations in the corpus often reflect communities affected by, witnessing, or responding to bushfires, whether directly impacted or situated nearby. Additionally, a temporal dimension emerges, as the publication date of an article reflects public responses and cultural acknowledgments of bushfire events rather than the precise timing of the fires themselves.



1865

Bushfire event and inquiry	Review focus	Key facts and findings	Inquiry	Key outcomes
1865: Black Monday <i>Source:</i> Forest Fire Management Victoria (2023).	No formal review	Process of enacting legislation to provide for the effective management of crown and private land to manage the use of fire as it relates to timber reserves for industry and climatic change <i>Source:</i> Victoria's Forestry Heritage (2023) and The Argus (1865a).	Type: No formal review	Parliament rejects calls for disaster relief for farmers left destitute by Black Monday, arguing that 'the house is too frequently appealed to in cases of this kind' and warning that granting aid could set a precedent for annual disaster relief requests (The Argus, 1865b). Recommendations to amend the <i>Amending Land Act 1865</i> to address deforestation and fire damage in the Central Goldfields region are proposed but not implemented (The Geelong Advertiser, 1866). The Surveyor-General et al.'s (1865) report highlights the need for legislation to protect forests from fire, a concern that is reiterated in several government documents from this period (The Surveyor-General et al., 1865; Victoria Department of Agriculture, 1874). Indirect references to legislative inadequacies appear in <i>Notes and Suggestions on Forest Conservancy in Victoria</i> (d'A Vincent, 1887), which recommend creating a <i>Forest Act</i> to establish stronger authority for fire prevention (pp. 27–28). These recommendations are echoed in the <i>Report</i>
	No formal review	Extensive damage to property including destruction of homesteads and fencing <i>Source:</i> Royal Commission on State Forests and Timber Reserves (1900).	Type: No formal review but is mentioned in Royal Commission on State Forests and Timber Reserves (1900) A Royal Commission 'to investigate the general question of forestry and forest control and management in Victoria was constituted in 1897 Its final report, presented in 1901, resulted in the first effective forest legislation in the form of the <i>Forests Act 1907</i> . <i>Source:</i> Royal Commission on State Forests and Timber Reserves (1900).	THE CONVERSATION Academic rigour, journalistic flair Arts + Culture Books + Ideas Business + Economy Education Environment + Energy Health Politics + Society Science + Tech

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY

Bushfire public inquiries: From recommendations to hybrid emergency management arrangements

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Abstract

Victoria, Australia consistently experiences significant bushfires. This article examines the ways in which public inquiry recommendations after major bushfires in Victoria have played an important role in shifting the emphasis of emergency management organisations (EMOs) from bushfire response to bushfire preparedness through hybrid emergency management arrangements. Based on a qualitative analysis of Victorian public inquiry bushfire reports from 1851 to 2020, this study shows that public inquiry recommendations contribute to new emergency management arrangements. These new arrangements have seen organisational hybridity emerge as a way of achieving greater integration between EMOs. These findings have important implications for research related to managing natural hazard events such as bushfires which, to date, has proposed that public inquiries hinder the ability of EMOs to learn from bushfires and, more broadly, natural hazard events. This study also shows how emerging organisational

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DWYER ET AL.

Mythologised, memorialised then forgotten: a history of Australia's bushfire reporting

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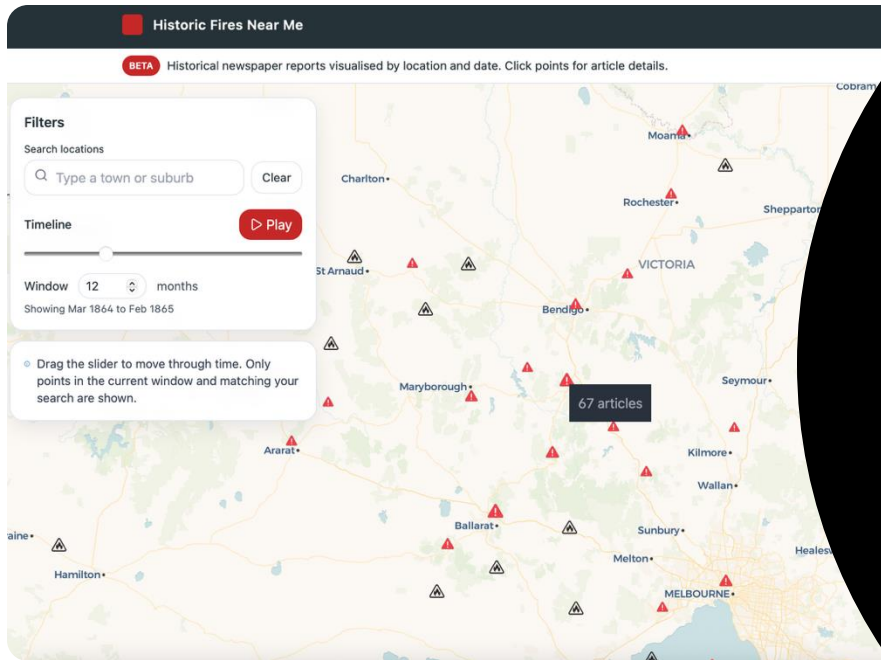
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Fiannuala Morgan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Partners



"While there is no doubt these bushfires are bad and may get worse, fuelling more talk of the nation battling an unprecedented fire threat this summer, the blazes that continue to plague the eastern states and Western Australia are nothing new. They do not compare with some of the more extreme fire disasters in Australia's short history, such as the Black Thursday conflagration of 1851 that burned five million hectares and was so intense that ships 30km off the coast of Victoria reported coming under ember attack."

Johnstone, Craig. 2019. "History of Disasters Shows There Is Nothing New about Nation's Destructive Blazes." *The Australian*, December 31, 2019.

<https://historic-fire-emergency-app.vercel.app>

Castlemaine Fire
Brigade began
1855

The Brigade's
Firebooks detail
fires in the central
Goldfields across
the 19th century

