

*The 2021 Leila St John Award  
for distinguished services to children's literature  
in Victoria is presented to  
Paul Collins*

It was on the caped backs of superheroes that Paul began his journey to becoming a champion of Australian publishing. Growing up in a house without books, Paul found his way to storytelling through a passion for comic books such as The Hulk, Captain America and Spider-Man.

Leaving school at 15, early jobs soldering steel for air conditioners and electroplating had Paul contemplating a life in factories. Instead, he decided to work for himself, and pursued a career in publishing.

No science fiction magazine was published in Australia at that time, so Paul gathered a team and launched Void Magazine in 1975. With access to a stable of authors, Paul proceeded to edit and publish Australia's first science fiction anthology, Envisaged Worlds.

In 2006, Paul approached Macmillan Distribution Services, asking if they would distribute his books if he started publishing for younger readers through to young adults. Ford Street Publishing launched in 2007 and grows with each year.

Paul has written more than 140 books for children and young adults, ranging from picture books to door-stopper fantasy novels. His work has been translated into many languages.

He has edited well-regarded anthologies for young readers, giving authors and illustrators the opportunity to have their work released with major publishers in series such as Shivers (HarperCollins), Spinouts (Pearson – co-edited with Meredith Costain), and The Quentaris Chronicles (Lothian/Hachette – co-edited with Michael Pryor).

Along with publishing and writing, Paul hosts events, such as An Evening With ..., and professional development days such as Keeping Books Alive for the Children's Charity Network (of which he is an ambassador). Paul also runs the Creative Net Speakers' Agency, organising literary festivals across the country for primary and secondary school students.

Paul is to be commended for his contribution in enriching Australian children's literature through his commitment to children's publishing.

