

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-47900-4 — Mudie's Select Library and the Shelf Life of the
Nineteenth-Century Novel

Karen Wade

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Publishing and Book Culture

edited by

Samantha J. Rayner

University College London

Leah Tether

University of Bristol

MUDIE'S SELECT LIBRARY AND THE SHELF LIFE OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

Karen Wade

University College Dublin



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-47900-4 — Mudie's Select Library and the Shelf Life of the
Nineteenth-Century Novel

Karen Wade

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009479004

DOI: 10.1017/9781009478991

© Karen Wade 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of
relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons
version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take place
without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009478991 under a
Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC 4.0 which permits re-use, distribution
and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes providing appropriate credit to
the original work is given and any changes made are indicated. To view a copy of this license
visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009478991

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-47900-4 Paperback

ISSN 2514-8524 (online)

ISSN 2514-8516 (print)

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-47900-4 — Mudie's Select Library and the Shelf Life of the
Nineteenth-Century Novel

Karen Wade

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

Mudie's Select Library and the Shelf Life of the Nineteenth-Century Novel

Elements in Publishing and Book Culture

DOI: 10.1017/9781009478991

First published online: January 2025

Karen Wade

University College Dublin

Author for correspondence: Karen Wade, karen.wade@ucd.ie

ABSTRACT: Mudie's Select Library was a major nineteenth-century literary institution. Substantially larger than its competitors, the library leveraged regional and global distribution networks and close commercial ties with publishers which allowed it to maintain a key position within the British publishing industry. In its heyday, it was widely believed that novelists and publishers were required to conform to aesthetic, moral, and formal standards established by Mudie's, or risk the rejection and consequent failure of their books. However, the lack of a comprehensive study of the library's holdings leaves open questions about what the library actually stocked, and to what extent the library could determine a novel's fate. This Element describes a data analysis of a collection of Mudie's catalogues spanning eighty years, in order to reassess understandings of the library's role in the nineteenth-century publishing industry. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/mudiesselectlibrary

KEYWORDS: Mudie's, nineteenth-century novels, nineteenth-century libraries, nineteenth-century British publishing, library catalogues

© Karen Wade 2025

ISBNs: 9781009479004 (PB), 9781009478991 (OC)

ISSNs: 2514-8524 (online), 2514-8516 (print)

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Accession, Retention, and Delisting of Novels	22
3	Selection in Practice: A Ten-Year Sample of Published Novels and Their Shelf Lives	44
4	Cents and Censorship: Representation in Mudie's and Its Impacts	56
5	Conclusion	83
	References	86