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Much colonial print culture originated outside the colony and had to pass through a port city to reach its readers. In the precinct of the port, Customs and Excise officials examined print material to determine that it was not suspect in some way – pirated, seditious or obscene. Customs officials hence came to oversee colonial copyright policy as well as the protocols of censorship. This paper examines the shaping of literary institutions in the port city, arguing that we need to pay attention both to processes on land but also to the larger ecology of the port and how this shaped the functioning of departments like Customs and Excise. In exploring this shore-shaped story, the book offers a hydrcolonial model of literary studies that is material, ecological, oceanic, amphibious and centered on objects as much as people.