

Topic	Question	
NRI (General)	1. Should the proposed definition of NRI in the 2026 Roadmap be modified – such as by elaborating what is meant by “nationally significant”, or by other changes? <i>If yes, please contribute a potential definition or definitions.</i>	The AHA supports the proposed definition of NRI in the 2026 Roadmap, but would emphasise that the inclusion of “skilled personnel” rightly recognises that people are an essential component of research infrastructure in Australia.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Systems	<p>2. What should be done, and over what timeframe, to ensure future NRI investments respect cultural protocols, and support self-determination and promote benefit sharing, in line with the Australian Government’s Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data?</p> <p>3. How might an appropriate balance be achieved between investment in a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Research Data Commons capability, and provision of uplift in capability across relevant discipline and theme-oriented NRI? <i>Your response should include consideration of possible design approaches for a dedicated capability and/or of mechanisms and incentives for alignment and collaboration across NRI providers.</i></p>	<p>Q2: We support the proposal from the Improving Indigenous Research Capabilities (IIRC) project, led by Professor Marcia Langton AO FASSA through the HASS & IRDC for a standalone NCRIS capability: “A new National Research Infrastructure (NRI) capability focusing on scaling up the Improving Indigenous Research Capabilities (IIRC) project is critical for recognising, securely storing and effectively and appropriately utilising the wealth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data for research, policy-making, and cultural preservation ... To support Indigenous data governance, protect cultural heritage, and integrate Indigenous knowledge into research, significant investment in long-term research infrastructure is required. This includes dedicated resources for managing, protecting, and sharing Indigenous data to facilitate large-scale research, policy development, and community-driven initiatives. Such investment is essential to meet growing demands for digital infrastructure, data security, cultural protocols, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to maintain control over their knowledge.”</p> <p>Specifically, we urge the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally appropriate AI and ML tools developed for automated cataloguing and indexing for audio, video and visual media. • Scalable, high-quality remote sensing and geospatial infrastructure (e.g. GIS, satellite imagery, real-time monitoring tools) for environmental management. • Integrated, interoperable data systems and data sharing platforms that facilitate the collaborative integration of Indigenous and Western knowledges. <p>High-capacity storage systems for audio, video and visual media; secure cloud storage and decentralised data centres to support the protection, ethical management, and responsible use of Indigenous data for research, policy and decision-making.</p> <p>Q3: It is critical to ensure Indigenous research infrastructure is realised holistically. Indigenous historical knowledges and ways of being do not readily fit siloed approaches to knowledge where the natural environment, language, history, culture and social wellbeing are treated as distinct objects of knowledge and stored in discrete repositories. Indigenous historical knowledge infrastructure requires the linking and interconnection of galleries, museums, collections, health services, land and water authorities, institutional archives and existing NRI such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography. We urge especially a linking and interconnection with <u>PARADISEC</u> (Pacific languages and Indigenous Australian languages) and <u>LDaCA</u> (<u>Language Data Commons of Australia</u>).</p>

The Humanities	<p>4. What are the current top three priorities for NRI investment for the humanities?</p>	<p>(i) Investment in Archives and Libraries There needs to be greater investment in the accessibility of the records held by major public institutions, but especially the National Archives of Australia (NAA). This is not simply a matter of digitisation. Much of Australia’s official record, still in paper form, remains practically sealed off to researchers because the system of clearing open-period documents overseen by the NAA tends to produce protracted processes and long waiting-times, sometimes extending over 5-10 years. This is largely the result of underfunding of the NAA and lack of investment in the document clearance process by the government agencies to which documents are referred for advice. As a result, there is a large gap in the research of the recent Australian past. For historians, as for some other humanities disciplines, libraries and archives play a similar role to laboratories for scientists. The creation of original knowledge in the humanities depends, to a great extent, on the discovery and analysis of new sources. Innovation in historical research, however, is currently hampered by standards of access to the documentary record that meet neither the legislated requirements nor international best practice.</p> <p>(ii) Investment in conservation and collecting While there have been emergency injections of funding in recent years, a great deal of Australia’s audio-visual record, and some of its paper record, remain highly vulnerable and in danger of destruction. Public institutions have also lacked the resources to engage in systematic collecting of material. Systems are being developed for the preservation of born-digital documents in official contexts; it is less clear what is being done outside official contexts, to ensure that the papers of major organisations and significant individuals are being collected for the sake of future historical and other humanities scholarship. The maintenance of existing NRI in the humanities is an urgent priority.</p> <p>(iii) Investment in workforce development through better targeted research support for Early Career Researchers The decay of the humanities in Australia’s universities is well enough known, and its drivers – national and global – are generally well understood. Its full consequences are less often discussed. In the most recent ARC DECRA round, the success rate was 13%, and very few of those successful projects were in the humanities. This is not a level of investment in the future of a humanities workforce that indicates any seriousness or system on the part of decision-makers about the future of the humanities in Australia. Meanwhile, universities continue to cut staffing levels in the humanities or, when they hire, recruit staff to teaching-intensive positions with little scope for research.</p>
	<p>5. What new or emerging areas of humanities research will require NRI investment in the next 3—5 years?</p>	<p>We anticipate that the following <u>new and emerging areas of humanities research</u>, corresponding to matters of urgent national interest, will require NRI investment in the next 3-5 years, which should include research personnel, access to documents and archives via digital infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health e.g., health systems policy, prevention, health promotion, supportive care • Environment • Democratic governance, civic society, social cohesion • Intergenerational wealth inequality, including housing

	<p>6. Should Australia focus on developing a specialist humanities research infrastructure workforce or a generalist research infrastructure workforce with humanities domain expertise and ability to bridge across discipline? Responses expressed in terms of the pros and cons of each approach would be especially useful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of generative AI on education, social cohesion etc. <p>Universities are essential humanities research infrastructure: they provide essential support for humanities research through the provision of resources (such as libraries and archives) but they also employ researchers to teach and research in their discipline areas. Developing a humanities research infrastructure workforce requires ongoing investment in universities to build secure career paths for researchers, particularly through ongoing roles and balanced workloads with adequate time for research.</p> <p>The AHA supports the development of a specialist humanities research infrastructure workforce, as disciplinary specialists are more likely to drive innovative responses to complex questions in their own disciplines. A generalist research infrastructure workforce may mean that it is easier to disregard or dispose of discipline experts in humanities. We affirm the importance of discipline experts in devising and maintaining humanities research infrastructure, possibly through employing disciplinary experts as liaison officers to connect approaches across disciplines.</p>
<p>Research Infrastructure Workforce</p>	<p>7. What are the critical skills that the NRI workforce should have regardless of their technical expertise?</p>	<p>Regardless of their specific technical expertise, <u>Australia's NRI workforce must possess the following critical skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and adherence to ethical research practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g., appropriate attribution of sources and ideas, consent, maintenance of confidentiality and data security • Civic literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ possession of the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in and contribute to maintenance and strengthening of democratic society • Digital literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ capacity to use digital technology to advance knowledge and awareness of issues of intellectual property, GenAI inaccuracy, disinformation, etc. • Capacity to work collaboratively and collegially
	<p>8. What is the best approach to retain staff and to add new capabilities to the current NRI workforce?</p>	<p>The best approach to retain staff and build new capabilities to the current NRI workforce is to offer more secure career structures and ongoing, balanced teaching/research roles in universities. While there is a shortage of ongoing roles in universities for humanities disciplines more broadly, when jobs are being offered, they are often heavily weighted towards teaching, with a minimal research allocation or no allocation for research at all. Postdoctoral fellowships and fixed term contracts do not offer long-term security or the possibility of building lasting careers.</p> <p>The AHA also recommends the creation of research roles in the National Cultural Institutions to expand capabilities in the NRI workforce, which would strengthen connections between university research and the GLAM sector.</p>

<p>Translation and Industry</p>	<p>9. How can NRI facilities ensure their capabilities are made widely known and available to potential users in relevant industry sectors across Australia's cities and regions?</p>	<p>Humanities researchers, including historians, are much more involved in both public and private sector 'industry' than often assumed. One example in the discipline of history is the employment of historical researchers in legal estate management. Another is the presence of historians in heritage conservation and architectural contexts. Historians have been contracted to contribute to major government strategies and statements in fields such as immigration and democracy. Nonetheless, there has been a heavy official commitment in recent years to the idea that the skills of historians and other humanities graduates lack real-world relevance. Formal linkages between universities and industry tend to be underdeveloped not least because universities, more interested in the commercial potential of STEM, invest little in fostering such connections. Outside the context of ARC Linkage Grants, there have been limited formal schemes; initiatives tend to be serendipitous, rather than systematic. Yet, to take one example, government and universities could invest in fostering closer links between teachers, commercial producers of educational materials, and history academics to produce high-quality materials in areas of need – which tend to be great when a new curriculum is adopted.</p>
	<p>10. How can NRI facilities build the know-how and support that will lead to an increase in productive research-industry collaborations?</p>	<p>In the case of history, key NRI facilities are often in the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums). The formal connections between these institutions and the community of historical researchers may well be weaker now than 20 years ago. In general, this means very limited understanding of how each side works, knowledge exchange that is at best ad hoc, and limited discussion of how institutions – GLAM and university – might work together with industry partners for human betterment. Every major NRI facility should have a budget-line that is specifically related to working with external partners to promote research translation. At present, there is too much emphasis on public outreach concerned with visitor numbers and media publicity, and not enough on identifying opportunities to collaborate with universities and industry in ways that generate new knowledge and could yield the very widest and deepest benefits to Australians through a more prosperous economy and a higher quality of life.</p>
	<p>11. To improve research translation capability, can you identify and briefly describe needed enhancements of existing NRIs, and/or new NRIs?</p>	<p>We need a genuinely national approach to research infrastructure, one based on a mapping of existing and required capacities. What we actually have, at present, is a collection of mainly disconnected projects, capacities and databases that are subject to the vagaries of university funding or, in the case of the national cultural institutions, chronic under-funding and continuing efficiency dividends. The incentive structure in universities, meanwhile, is antithetical to industry connections. As a result, NRI in universities tends to be deployed to leverage traditional forms of esteem rather than for building industry partnerships. Prestige lies with traditional outputs. Employment and promotions ride on category 1 grants, and monographs and articles, preferably with international publishers: in other words, remoteness from the eyes and needs of Australian people is actively encouraged. Even museum exhibitions, subsumed under the category of NTROs (Non-Traditional Research Output), are given a residual or supplementary role. These distorted incentives for academics, which distance them from the public, are a result of the university rankings produced by for-profit-companies, which international customers/students use to choose their destination. Government needs to work closely with universities</p>

		to overhaul their incentive structures to encourage better industry links alongside traditional markers of achievement and esteem.
	12. How should research translation be planned for in the development of new NRI?	Too much past NRI is established and then found to be unsustainable, or nearly so, because there were no provisions for further investment. Major NRIs – for instance, in our discipline of History, a project such as the National Library of Australia’s Trove database – needed a 10- or even 20-year plan when established. It is now actually dangerous not to do so because of the problems of cyber security that magnify when digital software ages. A plan for new NRI should include provision for identifying how the capacities and/or data that it has concentrated will be socially embedded; that is, the kinds of relationships that will be developed to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from the investment.
New Research Infrastructure	13. Review the full set of available suggestions for potential new or enhanced capabilities from the published Survey responses and identify up to 3 that you regard as most important to consider for inclusion in the 2026 NRI Roadmap. Please provide a brief rationale for your view and include the response number(s) for your selection.	<p>The AHA supports the following suggestions from the published Survey responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 001 – Katherine Bode’s suggestion of enhanced AI research capacity in GLAM institutions, specifically libraries. AI is a tool that offers multiple future directions but requires intentional investment to harness its possibilities in the context of GLAM institutions. • 210 – Australian Academy of the Humanities’ suggestion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An Indigenous Research Capability, which presents an opportunity for intentional investment to recognise, store, and ethically using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data for the purposes of research, policy, and cultural preservation while allowing First Nations people and communities to maintain control over their knowledge ○ A National Research Collections Infrastructure, to preserve evidence of Australia’s past and enable HASS researchers’ access to this evidence to better articulate Australia’s national story/stories. ○ A national workforce strategy to build HASS capability, to strengthen investment in people, recognising both that people are an essential component of research infrastructure and that Humanities-trained staff possess specialist skills that deserve and require professional development and ongoing investment
	14. If you wish to propose an additional priority suggestion for a new or enhanced capability, that was not in the Survey responses, please name it here, and briefly describe the need, the capability, the medium-term goals, impacted research communities, and the timeframe over which its establishment should occur.	<p>The AHA reiterates that while new research infrastructure capabilities might be desirable, it remains critical that existing NRI is well-funded and resourced to enable its survival and future growth. Decades of efficiency dividends on our national cultural institutions and more recent cuts to the humanities in our universities have left core humanities NRI vulnerable. For example, the Australian Dictionary of Biography (the oldest, and largest collaborative research project in the humanities and social sciences in Australia) and the Australian National Dictionary Centre were recently threatened with cuts to their funds and staffing by the ANU. This highlighted the vulnerability of core NRI to the whims of individual universities. We urgently need a national approach to national institutions and national infrastructure.</p> <p>The AHA proposes the development of a National Humanities Strategy to outline Australia’s obligations to record and preserve its history and culture, not only through national cultural institutions but through</p>

		<p>universities and state GLAM institutions. At least under the present model of university funding, governance and decision-making, universities can no longer be relied upon as stewards of national institutions, culture or NRI. We call on the Commonwealth Government to move as quickly as possible to reform of these now urgent problems by implementing a revised funding regime that better reflects the actual cost of research, and revised governance standards that will produce more informed decision-making, as a matter of urgency. A National Humanities Strategy that outlines universities' obligations where they are in receipt of Commonwealth funding intended to support NRI, such as the National Institutes Grant of the Australian National University, would strengthen Australia's research culture and performance.</p>
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