

# Submission

## 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap

### Capability Issues Paper

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#### Introduction

The Australasian Consortium of Humanities Research Centres (ACHRC) has, since its inception in 2011, become the peak body in Australia and New Zealand for university-based humanities research, and has strong relations with national and state-based collecting institutions. We welcome the National Research Infrastructure Capability Issues Paper and, particularly its attention to a capacity for '**Understanding Cultures and Communities**'. As a consortium of professional researchers, the ACHRC is especially interested in the deepest archives and the most sophisticated tools. However, we feel strongly that the capacity in this area should be a collaboration between libraries, collecting institutions, and universities so that the full range of citizen researchers in the humanities can benefit from and contribute to the curation of cultural information about ourselves and our communities. For the sake of focus, we will confine our submission to a discussion of the most material question for our purposes in the Issues Paper.

*Question 24: Are the identified emerging directions and research infrastructure capabilities for Understanding Cultures and Communities right? Are there any missing or additional needed?*

A broad and accessible digital platform would provide essential support for the vigorous development of Australian culture and of research into it.

For at least two decades now, digital developments have been transforming research in the humanities – the materials we can access and the questions we can address through them – but these transformations have been spread unevenly over a range of projects. Because of our middle size and relatively high economic status, Australia has the capacity to do something world-leading that will bring disproportionate attention to Australian culture. The National Library's TROVE provides an exemplary prototype for what is possible. It is fundamental to the work of national and international researchers working on Australian culture and communities in large part because of its accessibility and deep resources of user-generated content. In [Deadline 2025: Collections at Risk](#), the National Film and Sound Archive has demonstrated the urgent need to also digitise our national audio-visual collections in order to preserve and make them accessible for long-term access. Unlike elite capacities in physical and medical sciences, this capacity has the power to be immediately useful to a very wide range of public as well as academic researchers, at different levels of formal and intellectual sophistication.

Consequently, we strongly endorse the approach and capacity outlined by the Academy of the Humanities in their submission to the consultation, a part of which we reprint with permission:

What researchers working across the humanities and social sciences need now, and for the decade ahead, is a national-scale facility that can expand exponentially the discovery, access, data mining, curation, analysis and interpretation that is crucial for modern research, new forms of scholarship and innovation, and research translation. This will require a next-generation approach to big data availability and curation, enabling new research across diverse datasets in the HASS sector and driving cross-disciplinary collaborations with the science sector. It will require an open infrastructure platform which can:

1. deliver prioritised **digitised research content** from Australia's dispersed and diverse cultural record, allowing the discovery of records of Australian life which document who we are as a nation – our people, places and communities – or shows how Australians have experienced and interacted with our environment, or that underpins our understanding of cultures and communities here and around the world. Discovery of records impacts on all Australians but is a particular issue for Indigenous communities.
2. allows for **content development capacity** by providing researchers with the ability to make connections across a variety of data types (newspapers, diaries, oral recordings, archives, film and sound, material objects and artistic works) and data sets, including existing, and future discipline-specific digital resources and projects developed for historical and cultural research.
3. allows access to and **development of tools** – including high end analytical tools that will support semantic text analysis, data mining and analysis to manage big data curation process for a wide variety of research needs, along with the facility to build, share, enhance and re-use data sets.
4. involves active participation of both **researchers and communities** – further building our cultural record by contributing stories, artefacts and objects of our history and heritage, digitising and correction (cf: the volunteer portals of the Atlas of Living Australia and Trove, and the community engagement models of PARADESIC, Founders & Survivors, and the Prosecution Project) and supporting the translation of research.

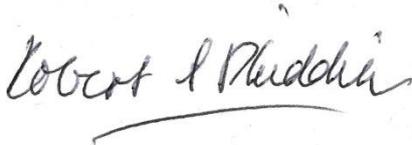
Given the volume and array of material available for digital capture, the research community needs a national facility that can:

- prioritise content digitisation in accordance with the needs of researchers
- support prioritised content digitisation to optimise data availability
- develop data capture methodologies and standards appropriate to different content types, and national interests and international collaboration
- address the ethical and legal issues surrounding copyright, ownership and access, including with reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands communities
- define data curation models and ensure these are widely adopted

- deliver digital data to research devices, including desktops/ mobile though high-capacity connections and cloud based storage
- provide a platform for the development of and access to tools to allow big data curation, sharing and re-use of data
- enable and drive cross-disciplinary research – both across HASS and with STEM, and
- mobilise citizen-researchers to assist with highly-targeted research projects.

Source: Academy of the Humanities, NRIC Issues Paper, September 2016.

We are happy to elaborate on our submission on request.



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