



## **THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL'S (AHRC) KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER (KT) STRATEGY 2008 - 2011**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The AHRC's Vision and Strategy 2007 – 2012 aims to position the AHRC to meet the opportunities and challenges it faces as a Research Council and to provide direction for the spending review period 2008 – 2010 and beyond. The AHRC's Strategic Aim 3 specifically addresses KT:

**'To strengthen the impact of arts and humanities research by encouraging researchers to disseminate and transfer their knowledge to other areas where it can make a difference'**

KT, Impact and Dissemination

AHRC interprets KT, impact and dissemination in the following ways:

**KT** refers to the processes by which new knowledge is co-produced through interactions between academic and non-academic individuals and communities. This includes innovative activity brought about by the application of existing knowledge to new contexts. AHRC's interpretation of KT assumes that the new knowledge that is created through such engagements delivers significant added value for both the academic and non-academic partners.

**Impact** refers to the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. Impact embraces all the diverse ways in which research related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

- fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the UK
- increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy and
- enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

The AHRC's Impact Strategy provides a framework for articulating the range of impacts derived from arts and humanities research.<sup>1</sup> It sets out the broad principles underpinning AHRC's approach to impact and mechanisms for identifying and capturing those impacts.

**Dissemination** refers to the processes by which knowledge that is generated through academic research is made available to audiences beyond the immediate peer community. Methods of dissemination can be employed to maximise the accessibility of the research to non-academic sectors and this may well lead to subsequent KT interactions. In this way, active dissemination may constitute part of the KT process.

**The AHRC's bespoke KT programmes aim to support two-way KT processes rather than one-way dissemination.**

## 2. SUMMARY

The purpose of this KT strategy is to provide a framework that:

- underpins the AHRC's interpretation of the nature of KT for the arts and humanities within the wider KT policy environment;
- strengthens the impact of arts and humanities research;
- embeds a culture of KT across the arts and humanities academic research community;
- advances understanding of arts and humanities research as an innovation driver amongst our stakeholders, notably UK government and other key non-academic organisations;
- informs the provision of dedicated mechanisms for encouraging and enabling KT in the arts and humanities;
- enables AHRC to evaluate the success of its KT activity.

## 3. CONTEXT

The AHRC's Vision is to be a recognised world leader in advancing arts and humanities research. The AHRC's delivery plan for 2008-2011 states means by which the AHRC will increase the scope, reach and impact of its knowledge transfer schemes. Through AHRC's existing KT programme and by introducing new KT initiatives where appropriate, we shall pursue AHRC's vision and four strategic aims, specifically strategic aims 3 and 4.<sup>2</sup>

AHRC operates in an environment where KT and innovation issues hold an elevated status within government policy frameworks. Arts and humanities research is increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/Policy/Documents/impact%20strategy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> AHRC: *Vision and Strategy 2007-2012*

recognised by government as a true force in stimulating innovation particularly within the emerging creative and knowledge economies. Two government strategy documents in particular offer fertile ground for the research disciplines supported by the AHRC:

- The Department of Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS) White Paper 'Innovation Nation' states the government's commitment to broaden the knowledge exchange agenda by strengthening knowledge transfer activity in particular academic disciplines, such as arts and humanities, or particular business sectors, such as the Creative Industries (CIs).<sup>3</sup> It also recognises that 'hidden innovation' (innovation that occurs outside the traditional high technology and manufacturing sectors) is increasingly important to the UK's economy and society.
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) CI Strategy 'Creative Britain' highlights the very significant contribution made by the arts and CIs to the UK's economy and cultural life, and supports strategies that help to bring the CIs in from the margins to the heart of the economy.<sup>4</sup>

The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) is charged with driving forward the DIUS innovation agenda. In doing so it recognises the AHRC's position as a leading authority on research-based KT and innovation for the Creative Economy. Through our learning and experience in developing innovative KT models, AHRC has been well placed to provide expert advice to TSB in scoping and developing the first TSB Collaborative R&D Competition for the CIs 'Application of Digital Technologies' and the Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) for the CIs.<sup>5</sup> The AHRC/TSB relationship has been enhanced further through AHRC's co-funding of applications to the CI collaborative R&D call, where a significant arts and humanities academic element is evident. For the future and in addition to maintaining our support for innovation in the CIs, the focus of our engagement with TSB will shift towards engaging arts and humanities with a broader range of sectors covered by TSB's Technology Programme in order to actively challenge perceived barriers to KT in the arts and humanities (in both academia and the commercial world) and evidence the value of the research we support to a broader range of user sectors.

Research that takes place in museums, galleries, libraries and archives, and university research that flows into them is fundamental to their activities, enabling them to present and interpret their collections to the public that visit them as well as those who access them through publications or online. Research also underpins the key contributions of museums in education and learning; in attracting tourists to the UK; in contributing to social cohesion and ethnic inclusion; in promoting economic and social regeneration; in inspiring creativity and innovation; in creating social capital and networks; and in

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<sup>3</sup> DIUS (March 2008): *Innovation Nation: Unlocking Talent*

<sup>4</sup> DCMS (2008): *Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy*

<sup>5</sup> Creative Industries Technology Innovation Network (CITIN) <http://www.citin.org/>

generating national pride and good citizenship. During the past three years through consultation with sector, the AHRC has developed an integrated strategy for museums, galleries, libraries and archives, and has become one of the main UK funding bodies to support research in this sector through the assignation of Independent Research Organisation status for ten organisations. AHRC has recently invested £3M to enable UK museums, galleries, archives and libraries to co-produce with universities high quality research enabling them to better interpret, communicate and present their collections to a wider public.<sup>6</sup> This funding enables UK museums, galleries, libraries and archives to act as key intermediaries between the UK research base and the wider public.

AHRC will continue to work with museums, galleries, libraries and archives, engaging with their activities, encouraging the development of knowledge through partnership working and recognising their expertise and contribution to research.

**The high quality of the research base across AHRC's large subject domain offers a rich and powerful source of partnership opportunity for a wide range of user sectors and communities. This is the AHRC's distinctiveness (Unique Selling Point - USP) in KT.**

The AHRC aims to create opportunities and incentives that increase the flow, value and impact of world class arts and humanities research from academia to wider non-academic, public and private sectors. We shall work proactively to ensure that arts and humanities researchers have access to and gain benefit from engaging in flexible models of KT support, and to ensure that their research interests are diversified and enhanced through contact and partnership working with a broad range of user sectors.

Whilst the AHRC runs a number of bespoke KT programmes, the challenge remains to encourage increased KT activity in all Programmes areas, especially research grants.

This strategy focuses on the four key areas of activity encompassed by KT in the AHRC and sets out statements of intent under each of these areas:

- Policy development and advocacy
- Building and sustaining strategic partnerships with other organisations
- Connecting partners
- Generic strategies to support KT

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<sup>6</sup> Information on the 13 awards funded under this research programme is available at <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/MuseumsandGalleriesResearch.aspx>

#### **4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY**

As a Research Council, the AHRC is in a unique position to operate at policy level to promote and foster KT for the arts and humanities.

Prior to the establishment of the AHRC in 2005, there was no national body with a remit to enable KT and act as catalytic advocate for the arts and humanities research base. The arts and humanities research community previously had little centralised KT support within HEIs and/or their needs had been shoehorned into support designed for Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) based activities. Since 2005 AHRC has made significant progress in understanding the complex nature of KT in the arts and humanities and in creating opportunities for the research community to undertake dedicated KT activities in a flexible and tailored way. This understanding has been informed by an AHRC-led Task Group within DCMS, which undertook a range of activities and provided policy advice around research support and KT for the CIs, and is still developing through accumulated in-house experience. More recently the AHRC contributed to the DCMS-led strategy for support for the CIs and is represented on the Delivery Partners' Group of the DCMS Creative Economy Programme established to take forward the 26 recommendations from the strategy.<sup>7</sup>

The AHRC will strengthen its leading intermediary role at national and regional government levels within and across the national innovation and policy landscapes.

##### **Specifically we shall introduce initiatives that intend to:**

- **advance understanding of arts and humanities research as an innovation driver amongst our stakeholders, notably UK government, TSB and other non-academic organisations**
- **increase our understanding and promote the characteristics of arts and humanities research that hold significant value to the wider economy and to areas of public policy**
- **through production of case study evidence and advocacy, encourage our research base to actively engage with and contribute to key areas of public policy and wider public understanding**
- **increase opportunities for AHRC-led cross-Research Council (RC) programmes that address cross cutting policy themes and develop co-production models of knowledge exchange**

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<sup>7</sup> DCMS (2008): 'Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy'

- **strengthen AHRC's relationship with the TSB to increase the contribution of arts and humanities research to the national innovation agenda.**
- **embed KT in AHRC Programmes areas, especially research grants.**

## **5. BUILDING AND SUSTAINING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

The AHRC engages with a variety of user communities in a number of ways to create strategic partnerships that promote the interests of arts and humanities research and its contribution to social, economic and cultural life. Through these engagements, the AHRC seeks to develop a better understanding of users' needs and to build more effective working relationships.

The AHRC does not place restrictions upon the type of non-academic partner that may engage with arts and humanities research. The profile of partners during the first three years of operation of our KT schemes evidences engagements primarily with the commercial sector (including the BBC) and also with Museums and Galleries, charities (including the Heritage sector) and public sector organisations.<sup>8</sup> The AHRC will seek to encourage diversity among the range of partners in KT schemes and offer novel thematic areas that stimulate collaboration with new strategic partners and enable us to develop our unique Knowledge Exchange Programme model and other novel models of creative engagement.

During 2007 AHRC developed a strategic relationship with TSB in pursuit of our efforts to stimulate innovation in the knowledge economy. In parallel with this and in common with all the Research Councils, AHRC was set a financial target by DIUS over the period 2007 – 2011 to engage with TSB programmes. The main mechanism for delivering this engagement will be through the AHRC's sponsorship of TSB's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which is set to increase over the period. However, the most significant progress and impact achieved by AHRC has been through our influence and engagement with the TSB's Collaborative R&D funding activity for the CIs. The AHRC's co-funding with TSB of a number of successful collaborative projects from this activity represents a major step change in progress for AHRC in engaging with an organisation that, through its fundamental focus on technological innovation, has in the past borne no obvious relationship with arts and humanities research. The AHRC will build upon and strengthen our strategic relationship with TSB especially in areas where the potential value

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<sup>8</sup> Whilst the BBC is a public sector organisation it also has a significant commercial arm in BBC Worldwide and through its remit to commission 25% of its content from the private independent production sector. As the express intention of the BBC is to exploit any resultant Intellectual Property (IP) from the AHRC/BBC Knowledge Exchange Programme projects, subject to a pre-agreed IP agreement with each individual university, the projects may be viewed as collaborations with a commercial sector and indeed are considered as such by the Office of Science and innovation.

and contribution of arts and humanities research are less evident though nevertheless carry significant promise in contributing to innovation processes.

The majority of KT is necessarily influenced by user needs and contexts and is by its nature cross-disciplinary within arts and humanities and beyond. The AHRC will actively seek to sustain our existing strategic partnerships and build relationships with new partners which promote our KT interests, develop our understanding of KT in the arts and humanities, and evidence a range of impacts from arts and humanities research.

**We intend to:**

- **evaluate the AHRC's flagship collaboration with the BBC and implement means to take forward the partnership in a sustainable way**
- **seek to build relationships with new strategic partners that foster novel models of user-led knowledge exchange and that stimulate collaborations with research disciplines that are so far under-represented in KT activities**
- **strengthen the AHRC's strategic partnership with TSB to deliver a step change in the social, economic and cultural impact from arts and humanities research across key technology areas, in particular:**
  - **lead on a series of joint activities that explore and stimulate topics of interest between TSB key technology priorities and the humanities disciplines and that leverage TSB interest in AHRC Strategic Programmes**
  - **achieve maximum impact through new collaborations from the TSB's Knowledge Transfer Network for the CIs**
  - **work with TSB to widen the reach of the AHRC's Knowledge Catalyst scheme in order to increase the number of small businesses that can gain a competitive edge through R&D activities**
- **develop strategic relationships with the Devolved Administrations (DAs) and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to identify and implement activities that increase arts and humanities engagement with, add value to and influence DA policy agendas and regional economic prosperity.**

## **6. CONNECTING PARTNERS**

The role of the 'translator' in KT is one of key significance especially during the early and most risky stages of any collaboration, in seeding new collaborations and in establishing a meaningful dialogue between partners. This role has been fulfilled by central KT offices in

HEIs, by other intermediaries such as arts and media centres which provide a 'knowledge bridge' between HEIs and wider society, and by individual researchers who develop sustainable relationships with academic communities and individuals.

For the AHRC the issue of brokerage is a central area of activity. Given the size of the arts and humanities research base and the potential scale of non-academic sectors, there is an increasing need to develop an effective mechanism to address brokerage in a more systematic manner. Effective and systematic brokerage will be fundamental to increasing the level of participation in KT across the breadth of the arts and humanities research domain and in demonstrating at a policy level the range of ways in which arts and humanities research makes a difference beyond academia.

**The AHRC intends to implement a dedicated 'Knowledge Broker' activity, which will aim to:**

- **increase the awareness of arts and humanities researchers of the potential impact of their research beyond their immediate discipline and broaden the range of arts and humanities research disciplines that engage in knowledge transfer/exchange activities**
- **increase the awareness of user sectors of the value of arts and humanities research to innovations processes and increased economic competitiveness both in the UK and globally**
- **enhance the active exploitation of AHRC research by increasing the number of knowledge transfer/exchange partnerships between arts and humanities researchers and user communities**
- **stimulate new avenues of knowledge transfer/exchange with non-academic partners that have not previously worked with the arts and humanities research base**
- **assess the extent to which the AHRC's KT activities are facilitating engagements that would otherwise not have occurred.**

## **7. GENERIC STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**

### 7a) Provision of appropriate support mechanisms

In 2005 the AHRC became the first national UK organisation with a unique remit to encourage and support engagements between its academic communities and wider society

in order to deliver mutual benefits. Since then the AHRC has implemented a flexible portfolio of KT activities to promote these engagements:

- AHRC sponsorship of the Technology Strategy Board's (TSB) Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) product
- Knowledge Catalyst
- Knowledge Transfer Fellowships (KTFs)
- Pilot AHRC/BBC Knowledge Exchange Programme (KEP)
- Sponsorship of RCUK's Business Plan Competition

Together, these programmes seek to offer a range of flexible support for both research and user communities, and are linked to an accumulated understanding of the distinctive forms of knowledge creation and transfer in the arts and humanities. This portfolio has been designed to address specific barriers to KT in the arts and humanities, to encompass a range of interactions and creative engagements between arts and humanities researchers and a variety of user sectors, and is underpinned by the AHRC's interpretation of KT (section1, page 1).

In addition to bespoke KT schemes, there are a number of other AHRC programmes that are closely aligned with AHRC's KT strategy:

- Collaborative Doctoral awards (CDAs) provide HEIs and students with the opportunity to collaborate with a non-academic partner.<sup>9</sup> CDAs facilitate KT and provide the student with invaluable experience of work outside academia. AHRC will continue to run the annual CDA competition increasing the number of awards from 60 in 2008/09 to 70 in 2009/10 and 75 in 2010/11 and to support CDAs through AHRC strategic initiatives as appropriate.
- The Research Networking scheme replaced the Research Networks and Workshops Scheme from 1 January 2009.<sup>10</sup> This scheme is designed to encourage and enable discussion and development of ideas on a specified thematic area, issue or problem through, for example, new research networks or running a short-term series of workshops, seminars or similar events.

With the bespoke KT programme portfolio now in place, the AHRC will focus on broadening the range of creative engagements supported through the schemes and their impacts.

**In particular we intend to:**

- **regularly review and evaluate our bespoke KT schemes to ensure that they:**

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/CollaborativeDoctoralAwards.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/ResearchNetworking.aspx>

- **continue to deliver a flexible range of support that addresses the nature of KT in the arts and humanities**
  - **encourage creative engagements between a wide range of subject areas and user sectors**
  - **produce exemplars of innovative KT that showcase the value of arts and humanities research beyond academia**
  - **meet the developing expectations and requirements of our stakeholder community**
- **seek opportunities to develop and enhance our schemes through co-funding initiatives with other national and regional funding agencies**
- **encourage award holder networking to develop and promote good practice in partnership working**
- **raise the profile of our KT funding opportunities across our stakeholder communities**

7b) Embedding a culture of impact and KT within the arts and humanities community

The Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) requires that all Research Councils demonstrate value for money and impact from the research they support. User focused research and KT provide key delivery mechanisms for a range of impacts and are drivers of innovation across business, the third sector and areas of public policy.

In September 2007, Research Councils UK (RCUK) published *Excellence with Impact* which set out RCUK's progress in response to recommendations in the report of a group chaired by Peter Warry in 2006.<sup>11</sup> *Excellence with Impact* included the following guiding principles which defined in broad terms the future approach and expectations of the Research Councils:

- excellent research with high impact is central to RCUK activities
- the onus rests with research applicants to demonstrate how they would achieve excellence and high impact
- RC guidance and assessment procedures need to be tuned to
  - Maximise both excellence and impact
  - Ensure user perspectives are strongly represented

In July 2008, RCUK published its *Statement of Expectation for Societal and Economic Impact*.<sup>12</sup> This outlined RCUK's expectations, activities and the responsibilities of grant holders to ensure impact from the research funded by the Research Councils. From Spring

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/economicimpact/excellenceimpact.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/innovation/expectationssei.pdf>

2009, all UK Research Councils will introduce new sections in grant application forms to encourage applicants to give greater consideration to the potential users, beneficiaries, and wider impacts of their proposed research with the aim of fostering an increased culture of impact and KT at the outset of the research process. These peer review changes represent the next stage in delivering RCUK's *Excellence with Impact* agenda.

**In working with our community to embed a culture of impact and KT, the AHRC will develop specific plans to:**

- **introduce the requirement to identify potential academic beneficiaries, possible impacts, and communication and impact plans to the majority of its responsive mode research schemes, and for some calls under Strategic Programmes**
- **gather and analyse data from peer review that captures user activity within the AHRC's wider funding programmes and the particular KT interests of our academic community**
- **develop an understanding of KT and impact among AHRC Programmes staff so that they will be able to support researchers in relation to KT and impact issues**
- **cultivate the research community's perception of the value and benefits of engaging in KT activity from the outset of their research activities**
- **broaden the number and range of disciplines that engage in KT activities.**

## **8. MEASURING OUR SUCCESS**

The AHRC will regularly monitor and review progress towards each of the statements of intent set out in this strategy. Specifically, we shall know if we are successful if:

- **evidence gathered by the AHRC reveals that our KT programmes are meeting the needs of stakeholders**
- **the number of academic disciplines engaging with KT increases (particularly those disciplines currently under-represented in KT activity)**
- **case studies demonstrate significant social, cultural and economic impact of arts and humanities research beyond academia**

- **the level of financial support to our KT schemes from other funding support agencies increases**
- **the number of strategic partnerships with new user organisations increases**
- **our strategic relationship with the BBC is sustained through further co-funded knowledge exchange activity**
- **the number of engagements between TSB Technology Programme areas and arts and humanities researchers increases**
- **new collaborations through the TSB's KTN for CIs evidence maximum impact for our research community**
- **the level of arts and humanities engagement with public policy increases through new AHRC-led cross-cutting programmes addressing key public policy themes.**