

---

# The Impact and Value of Research in the Arts and Humanities - A Systematic Literature Review

---

2025

Carter Bloch, Alan Irwin, Evanthia Kalpazidou Schmidt, Anna Vigsø Pedersen, and Amalie Due Svendsen

**Contact person:**

Carter Bloch, Professor  
Centre Director  
Phone: +4587165901  
Email: [carter.bloch@ps.au.dk](mailto:carter.bloch@ps.au.dk)

This report was funded by The Augustinus Foundation, journal number 2024-3415



DANISH CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN  
RESEARCH AND RESEARCH POLICY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
AARHUS UNIVERSITY



## Contents

<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 About the study .....	8
<b>2.0 The impact agenda .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.0 Research assessment in the Arts and Humanities: challenges and ways forward .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Challenges to research assessment in the Arts and Humanities .....	15
3.2 Beyond Metrics: Rethinking research evaluation in the Arts and Humanities .....	17
<b>4.0 Unpacking the value of Arts and Humanities research .....</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 Types of value .....	20
4.2 Value and A&H disciplines .....	26
4.3 Pathways to impact .....	28
<b>5.0 Knowledge transfer and interaction in the Arts and Humanities .....</b>	<b>32</b>
5.1 Knowledge transfer channels .....	32
<b>6.0 Promoting value creation in A&amp;H research .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>7.0 Conclusions and implications for funders .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix I: Methodology .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Appendix II: Disciplines covered in literature .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Appendix III: Informant overview .....</b>	<b>57</b>

## Executive summary

The aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of value in Arts and Humanities (A&H) research, as well as how value creation takes place, and the factors that promote or hinder its recognition. We have conducted a review of work on how the value or impact of A&H research can be conceptualised and on key aspects of value creation processes, including knowledge transfer, collaboration and interactions both with other research fields and societal stakeholders. We have also reviewed practical examples of value creation in the A&H, which are especially helpful in demonstrating the diversity of value creation within the field.

In addition to the literature review, the study incorporates insights from 29 semi-structured interviews with scholars from a variety of perspectives. This interview material has been helpful in a number of respects. Among influential scholars who have worked with value and impact in the A&H, interviews have allowed them to reflect on the existing state of the art in this field and comment on recent developments. Others have participated as A&H researchers, sharing their own views and experiences in promoting the impact of their work. Yet others have spoken from the perspective of actors seeking to support A&H research: for example, as representatives of university leadership, funding institutions or interest organisations.

This executive summary presents the main findings of the study. We first set the stage by discussing the context that A&H research works within, then explore how value and impact are conceptualised and enacted. We conclude with insights into how the impact of A&H research can be promoted.

### **There has been increasing pressure on the Arts and Humanities to demonstrate its impact.**

The 'impact agenda' refers to increasing focus placed on the economic impact of A&H research, which can be linked to the rapid expansion of universities, the increased application of what has been termed 'new public management' and a broad concern to commercialise university research.

Considering societal impact in the context of Arts and Humanities research, what we are calling here 'the impact agenda' may be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity. With an impact concept defined primarily in economic terms, many A&H scholars feel that their work is under-valued and, as a result, under-prioritised. Consequently, the impact agenda has been met with substantial critique from A&H scholars. However, we have also found that parts of the literature (and several of our interviewees) take a pragmatic and largely constructive approach to the 'impact agenda', seeking to broaden the 'impact' term to better reflect value creation in A&H and also to actively promote the value of A&H research to a range of stakeholders.

This prompts questions of how the impact agenda has influenced the development of A&H disciplines. There are for example concerns that disciplines that are unable to demonstrate impact will decline or disappear. At the same time, other scholars observe that the Arts and Humanities will always be in movement, in many cases responding to changes in society around them.

### **Current approaches to research assessment do not fully recognise the context of Arts and Humanities research and its value.**

In addition, A&H must address research assessment measures that are predominantly tailored to STEM fields. Unlike the natural and technical sciences where citation-based metrics and standardised indicators are more

widely used, such approaches are often misaligned with the epistemological foundations, publication practices, and research outputs of A&H disciplines.

Critics point to the increasing institutional pressure on humanities scholars to quantify their research performance, often in ways that distort or devalue their work. Bibliometric indicators—such as citation counts, journal impact factors, and output volumes—rarely reflect the core criteria of excellence in A&H disciplines and fail to capture the qualitative dimensions of scholarly work, such as analytical clarity, narrative coherence, intellectual originality or theoretical contribution. Some argued that these narrow assessment practices undermine the intrinsic value of humanities scholarship and marginalise long-term contributions to cultural understanding, social cohesion, and public debate. This has generated calls for broader forms of assessment that can better capture the multi-faceted nature of A&H research.

### **Value creation in the Arts and Humanities goes beyond economic impact, creating multiple forms of value.**

Both the literature and interviewees have emphasised the broad nature of public value in the Arts and Humanities. A&H research plays a vital role in shaping, challenging, and expanding our understanding of cultural values, thus essentially trying to find answers to a broad spectrum of questions about human experience. Offering new knowledge and perspectives on such fundamental questions creates different forms of value depending on the specific context and nature of the research. Based on our review of the literature and on input from interviewees, we highlight the following types of value:

- *Intrinsic value* – A&H research has value in itself in aesthetic and intellectual terms.
- *Social value* – enhancing tolerance, social cohesion, democratic discourse.
- *Cultural value* – preserving cultural heritage, identity and practices.
- *Economic value* – contributing economically to creative industries and many other sectors.
- *Interdisciplinary value* – creating economic and other forms of value through combination with knowledge from other disciplines.
- *Critical and norm-challenging value* – A&H creates value by asking questions, challenging norms and creating new understandings.
- *Indirect value* – value creation may take time, be unexpected, and be based on a body of research and not simply a single contribution.

### **In Arts and Humanities, value creation and interaction with other actors is highly diverse and often less visible than in other fields.**

While Arts and Humanities research evidently contributes to society in various ways, it can be difficult to map the direct pathway from research to value, as value creation processes are often highly complex. Rather than following a single path, value creation processes can take many forms – some direct and tangible, others diffuse and long. The reviewed literature highlights a number of general points concerning how Arts and Humanities research create value, which are seen to set A&H apart from processes within STEM fields. While the most common path to value creation can be through the development and application of new knowledge, A&H research can also have value in itself (e.g. an arts performance) or can create value as an instrument, for example by challenging existing beliefs or practices.

Within A&H research, knowledge transfer and interaction are typically broader, more varied and often a more integrated part of value creation than is typically the case for STEM fields. Interaction can play a central role in value creation processes during the course of dissemination of research, where stakeholders become aware of research through a variety of potential dissemination channels, or in a more co-creative role through collaboration, public engagement, and advisory activities.

Value creation can also take place through combination with other disciplines. Many A&H scholars take part in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects that combine the expertise and practices of different fields to address complex problems. A&H research can be driven by or react to societal challenges and at the same time act as a driver of societal change, often through interdisciplinary work.

Importantly, processes can also be seen from the perspective of research utilisation by other actors. An example of the latter is the enlightenment model, where actors tap into pools of knowledge created through A&H research, potentially with original purposes that are far different from those for their subsequent utilisation.

**It is important for Arts and Humanities researchers to better communicate how their research creates value.**

A recurring theme across much of the evidence covered in this review is the need for A&H research to better and more publicly articulate why their research matters and how it can create value. Thus, it was argued by interviewees that strong narratives of the broad and nuanced ways in which A&H research can create value can help to change how impact is conceptualised. A similar case is made regarding research assessment, where A&H researchers themselves are seen by many as the best candidates to propose broader evaluation approaches that are better aligned with research quality in the A&H field. Finally, and most importantly, better communication of how A&H research creates value can help increase support for A&H research among funders and policymakers.

**Funders and policy can play a key role in fostering value creation in the Arts and Humanities.**

The tendency for funders to prioritise research that results in direct and measurable outcomes is a significant challenge to A&H researchers. At the same time, and as with the Arts and Humanities field itself, conceptualisations of the value of A&H research among funders and policymakers are evolving. At least in the (relatively few) cases we have looked at, funders can play an intermediary role in supporting A&H research and how it is viewed: on the one hand, working to establish a broader understanding of A&H impact among policymakers and, on the other, encouraging A&H researchers to reflect further upon and better articulate how their research creates value. As such, funders are also currently grappling with the demands of the impact agenda and the political prioritisation of measurable economic outcomes, while also exploring the potential to broaden the appreciation of impact and value for A&H research.

The climate for A&H research appears to vary across countries. Our review is not comprehensive in its international coverage, though the reviewed literature and interviews provide some insights on several countries, including Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Broadly speaking, these commentaries suggest that countries vary in political views of the value of A&H research, particularly in terms of how highly they prioritise economic value relative to a broader recognition of its societal importance and public value creation.

While the interviewees identified some significant challenges in terms of evaluation and funding, they also proposed ideas for how to develop research evaluation and funding schemes in a manner that aligns with and promotes A&H research. Some asked for greater willingness to fund risk-taking and curiosity-driven research that could lead to ground-breaking results. Others suggested that foundations should support A&H researchers in articulating the societal value of their work: for example, within research proposals. Others again asked for new measures of impact that recognise and capture value created in A&H.

**Implications for funders**

These findings carry important implications. Funders play a pivotal role not just in enabling A&H research, but also in shaping the conditions under which it is recognised, evaluated, and publicly understood. Funders can

take an active leadership role in prioritising and promoting the public value and societal relevance of A&H research. This review yields a number of recommendations which are presented here in succinct form:

- Adopting a flexible approach to assessing the societal value of A&H research helps take into account the inherent diversity of the field and the wide variety of forms and pathways through which public value is generated.
- Including A&H researchers in the design of evaluation systems and supporting the involvement of A&H scholars directly in the co-creation of research assessment frameworks helps to ensure they reflect the epistemological and value creation logics of the field.
- Funders are encouraged to acknowledge and adopt broader and more inclusive terminology and practices in funding calls, evaluation criteria, and strategic documents. Terms such as 'value' or 'public contribution' better reflect the multifaceted nature of A&H research and foster more constructive dialogue.
- For many researchers in the field, challenging dominant narratives, questioning assumptions, and stimulating broader societal debate are central scholarly values. While this may sometimes be perceived as disruptive, it is in fact a key strength of A&H research and should be actively recognised and supported by funders and other stakeholders.
- Support communication and engagement. Consider how to facilitate both the communication of 'impact stories' and value creation cases related to A&H research and the development of communication skills. This might include active support for A&H scholars who participate in public debate or use other avenues of engagement, dissemination and communication.
- Invest in capacity-building for articulating value in A&H research and support dedicated training programmes, workshops and other initiatives that help A&H researchers to express the broader societal, cultural, and ethical value of their work in accessible and compelling ways.
- Support longitudinal and qualitative tracking of A&H contributions and fund studies that trace the long-term societal contributions of A&H research beyond short-term metrics. Possibilities include retrospective value creation studies, ethnographic approaches to understanding how A&H work circulates in society or experimental research without requirements of demonstrating immediate utility.

## 1.0 Introduction

Research and research policy have increasingly directed attention towards issues concerning the impact of research. This focus appears to be driven by a range of factors, including: the wish to demonstrate accountability with regard to public funding, the need to measure and benchmark research quality, and a growing interest in understanding and documenting the connection between research and its societal use (Penfield et al., 2014). Research in the Arts and Humanities (A&H) is no exception from this trend, stimulating considerable debate over the impact of A&H research, as well as on how this impact can be demonstrated (Pedersen et al., 2020; Reale et al., 2018).

At the same time, there is a lack of consensus on how valuation and impact in A&H can be understood and measured. Indeed, some scholars question whether the 'impact' concept is even appropriate in terms of capturing how A&H research matters for society (Belfiore, 2015; Collini, 2012). In contrast to disciplines within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), the societal impact of A&H research may be more difficult to grasp. Hence, a better understanding of the nature of A&H research, as well as how value creation takes place, are central to an appreciation of research impact in A&H and the factors that can promote or hinder it.

The Danish Centre for Studies in Research and Research Policy (CFA) at Aarhus University has undertaken a study of existing knowledge about the societal impact of Arts and Humanities research. The goal of this study is to review and synthesise work on the impact of A&H research, including how this impact can be conceptualised and the role of funding and evaluation in promoting this research and its impact. The study was funded by the Augustinus Foundation.

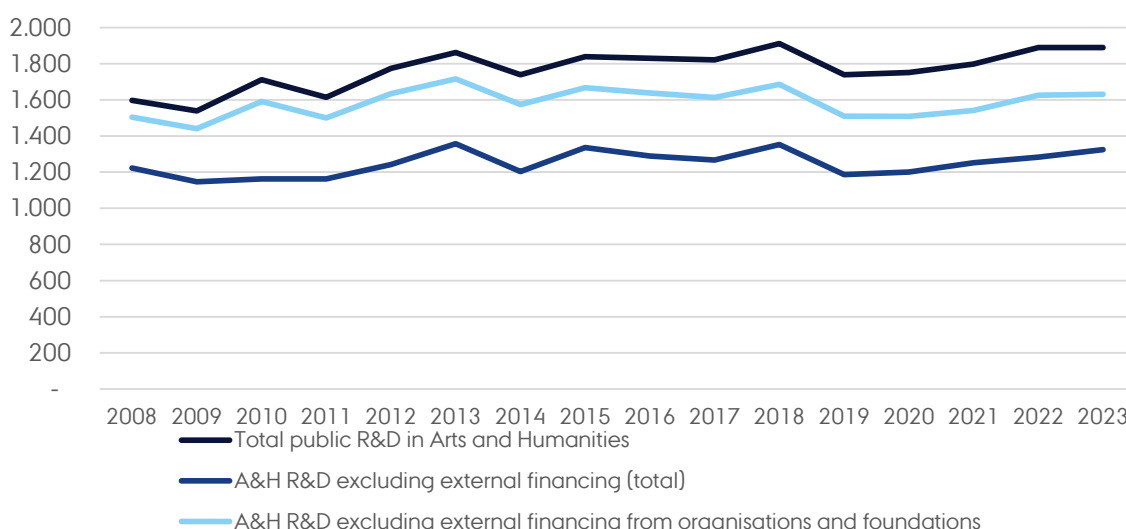
In 2023, Arts and Humanities research accounted for 6% of total public research in Denmark, compared to 8.7% in 2008<sup>1</sup>. The figure below shows the development in public R&D in the Arts and Humanities over the period from 2008 to 2023, in total and excluding external financing<sup>2</sup>. The figure shows R&D with the removal of all external financing and financing from private foundations, non-profits and other organisations (which are neither governmental nor private companies). As the figure indicates, total public R&D in A&H has increased over the period from around 1.6 billion DKK to 1.9 billion DKK. The main share of this increase is reflected in increased funding by organisations and foundations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.statistikbanken.dk/FOUOFF07> (31.07.2025)

<sup>2</sup> Internal funding is based on funding from the state budget (basisbevillinger fra finansloven). External funding includes funding from all other sources: other public sources such as DFF, Danish and foreign companies, the EU and philanthropic foundations, non-profits and other organisations (<https://www.statistikbanken.dk/FOUOFF09>).

### Public R&D in the Arts and Humanities 2008-2023 (mill. kr. in 2023 prices) - total and excluding external financing



Source: Statistics Denmark, tables FOUOFF07 and FOUOFF09. The most recent year is provisional. Please note that the breakdown by main area is calculated differently in table FOUOFF07 than in the other tables: whereas the institutions in the survey are generally assigned a main subject based on the subject area in which they conduct most of their research, this table is based on the amount of research conducted within the individual subjects. There will therefore be deviations for this table compared to other tables with calculations for main subjects.

## 1.1 About the study

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What discourses surround the increased focus on research impact in the Arts and Humanities?
- What characterises the value and impact of Arts and Humanities research, and how does it compare to STEM research?
- What characterises the impact pathways connected to Arts and Humanities research?
- What are the challenges of current research assessment practices for Arts and Humanities researchers and the promotion of Arts and Humanities research? And how can funders address these challenges?

This study is based on a systematic literature review as well as insights drawn directly from experts in the field of societal impact, A&H researchers and other key stakeholders. The literature search was based on the OpenAlex database, a bibliographic catalogue with a broad scope in terms of publication types including grey literature, books and book chapters. The initial search in OpenAlex resulted in over 11,000 publications, which were then screened for relevance and inclusion in the review. Snowballing was used to include additional relevant works that were cited by the reviewed publications. In total, this process yielded a sample of 121 publications that were included in this review.



In relation to the included literature, it is important to note that the demarcation of A&H in the scientific landscape is not easily drawn. While most agree that the disciplines of history, philosophy, literature, and musicology belong to A&H, other disciplines are more debated. Especially, the overlap between humanities and social sciences is often pronounced. In addition, many Arts and Humanities scholars work in inter- and multi-disciplinary research environments, for instance in interdisciplinary research centres. Consequently, boundary making is not straightforward since different conceptual understandings and the nature of research make these boundaries blurry and unstable. While most of the reviewed publications cover A&H as a whole, some publications also zoom in on specific disciplines within this broader field, for instance in relation to case studies. These publications showcase the disciplinary heterogeneity that characterises A&H research. Appendix II provides an overview of the individual disciplines covered in the included literature.

Furthermore, a number of publications choose a combined focus on humanities and social sciences and sometimes also humanities, arts and social sciences. As these publications are highly relevant to the overall research questions of this review, they are included in the analysis.

In addition to the reviewed literature, 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted to qualify and nuance the findings of the literature review. The group of interviewees included:

- key scholars identified through the reviewed literature
- representatives of university leadership, funding organisations, or interest organisations
- researchers from different Arts and Humanities disciplines

Quotes and insights from interviews are italicised and highlighted in blue throughout the report. For more information on data and methods used in the study, please refer to Appendix I.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews literature discussing the current focus on the so-called 'impact agenda' and its implications for the Arts and Humanities. Furthermore, different attitudes in the literature and reactions from interviewees to the impact agenda are explored. Chapter 3 examines the challenges of evaluating research quality in the Arts and Humanities, highlighting the inadequacy of standardised, citation-based metrics rooted in STEM paradigms. Chapter 4 unpacks the types of value and impact of Arts and Humanities research focusing on particular examples of research impact, as well as the diverse pathways to impact. Chapter 5 delves further into these pathways by exploring concrete channels of knowledge transfer identified in the literature and interviews. Chapter 6 discusses the role of funding in promoting Arts and Humanities research, and lastly Chapter 7 outlines the conclusion and points to ways forward in promoting value in the Arts and Humanities.

## 2.0 The impact agenda

Within contemporary research policy, discussion over societal impact features prominently. This is true across all disciplines. However, and as we will discuss extensively in this report, it raises special issues and concerns with regard to the Arts and Humanities (see for example Donovan & Gulbrandsen, 2018; Hazelkorn, 2015; Pedersen et al., 2020).

The UK's Research Evaluation Framework (REF) has been particularly influential within what we can call 'the impact agenda'. For the 2021 REF exercise, 25% of research quality assessment was based on impact. Research impact was here defined as 'an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia'. In this definition, the final two words – 'beyond academia' – are probably the most crucial. For the next UK research evaluation, a similar approach applies: 'REF 2029 will foster the connection between research and societal impact, seeking to encourage high quality research with tangible benefits for society and the economy.'<sup>3</sup>

As Benneworth et al. (2016) note, discussions of the societal impact of A&H research are by no means new. One of our expert interviewees suggested that such discussions can be traced back to the post-World War II period when scientific research became closely related to societal development and national policy. Nevertheless, and as Benneworth et al. observe, 'the issue acquired a real boost in the 1980s with the emergence of new and far more instrumentalist approaches to policy-making' (2016, p. 8). In this, the 'impact agenda' can be linked to the rapid expansion of universities, the increased application of what has been termed 'new public management' and a broad concern to commercialise university research (Benneworth, 2015b; Davidson-Harden, 2013; Gascoigne & Metcalfe, 2005; Hazelkorn, 2015).

Considering societal impact in the context of Arts and Humanities research, what we are calling here 'the impact agenda' may be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity. For many A&H scholars, this development has in turn led to an anxiety that societal impact will be defined primarily in economic terms (Bulaitis, 2017, 2024). The language of impact can appear restrictive and one-dimensional: forcing research to be judged by a limited set of criteria and seeking to impose an economic model of how to conceptualise and measure impact (Hug et al., 2014). Some A&H scholars have been decidedly critical of the implications of the impact agenda for their research (O'Mahony et al., 2019; Skov & Bengtsen, 2024). As one of the most articulate commentators has described the likely consequences of the increased focus in the UK on impact: 'scholars in British universities will .... [become] door-to-door salesmen for vulgarized versions of their increasingly market-oriented "products"' (Collini, 2012, p. 177).

” *The REF (Research Excellence Framework) and similar evaluation systems were resisted by humanities scholars, as they were perceived as attempts to monetise research impact rather than acknowledge its long-term significance.* (Interviewee #19)

<sup>3</sup> <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/guidance/section-1-overview/#section-aims-and-objectives-for-ref-2029>

However, we have also found that parts of the literature (and several of our interviewees) take a pragmatic and largely constructive approach to the 'impact agenda'. There is also a strong argument that this agenda should be viewed as a constructive challenge which might be addressed by seeking to broaden the 'impact' term but also actively promoting the value of A&H research to a range of stakeholders. In general terms, the tendency is for humanities scholars to approach 'impact' with some caution, viewing it as an externally defined term even as they seek to work with it and to promote the wider value of Arts and Humanities research.

As another UK-based commentator has expressed this: 'impact is a deeply flawed approach .... There are diverse views on its meaning, it is very difficult to measure... and the hostility generated by the impact agenda, associated as it negatively is with the audit culture, has turned the debate gangrenous and ruled out the possibility of reasoned argument.' (Brewer, 2013, p. 6)

John Brewer argues strongly for the replacement of impact with 'public value'. This is an important discussion. However, Brewer's case is not for staying clear of societal relevance nor for refusing to engage with regional and national problems. Instead, it is best read as an attack on the 'gangrenous' manner in which a restricted notion of impact has been imposed on academic research. Brewer (2013) also suggests there is a distinction between 'impact' and 'public value': impact is often measured in terms of economic impact, whereas public value is much broader and shows how research fosters understanding about society and the world around us.

These differing perspectives on impact were echoed by the interviewees. In general, the interviewees agreed that researchers should take responsibility for communicating the significance of their work, yet many found the term 'impact' problematic, as it stems from a political discourse that tends to prioritise economic outcomes. Several interviewees suggested alternative terms—such as 'use,' 'collaboration,' 'engagement,' 'valorisation' or 'societal connection'—that may better reflect the nature of A&H research. As such, the interviews suggested that language matters when trying to understand the contributions of a field.

*'I probably prefer the term 'value', as it is a fine Danish concept that encompasses the non-monetary and the spiritual. 'Impact' can come across as very business-oriented.'* (Interviewee #26)

*'The instrumental thinking that currently dominates is not necessarily problematic in itself, but the question is how it is framed—must it always be in a positivist and economic framework? Such a framing fails to capture forms of knowledge and understanding that do not manifest immediately or in easily identifiable ways. The concept of 'impact' does not account for these dimensions'* (Interviewee #5)

This negative reaction to the concept of impact can in turn be linked to what is often referred to as a 'crisis of the humanities' (Belfiore, 2015; Benneworth, 2015b; Holm et al., 2015). The argument here is that the humanities struggle to survive in a world where commercial and instrumental values are dominant. As Benneworth (2015b, pp. 3-8) presents, the idea of a 'crisis of the humanities' dates back a considerable way: reflecting an old concern that industrialisation would sideline A&H research and education (see also Belfiore, 2015). The

increased application of market logic and policy pressures on the academic world have exacerbated concerns that A&H research and scholarship are being undervalued. As Benneworth (2015b) suggests, economic constraints have in many countries intensified pressure on disciplines that struggle to demonstrate direct utility.

“... all of the big humanities people were engaged scholars. They were on the front page of *Le Monde*. They were in the *London Review of Books*. All the time they were creating impacts, but of course they would not have liked the notion of impact. (Interviewee #25)

It is also important to observe that the societal impact of research has become a very practical issue for early-career researchers in particular (Konkiel, 2018; Millard, 2014; Skov & Bengtson, 2024). Does time spent addressing real world concerns and engaging with external communities build one's academic employment possibilities? (Vanholsbeeck et al., 2019) Or does such involvement actually get in the way of professional recognition? (Mooney, 2009)

Putting the same issue differently, is societal impact yet another burden on researchers – a box-ticking exercise designed by administrators – or can it have real meaning and purpose? (Bate, 2011; McAlpine et al., 2024). Very often, societal impact is contrasted with some notion of academic excellence or scholarly impact (Gibson & Hazelkorn, 2017; Hazelkorn, 2015). While this can be presented in either/or terms (either excellence or impact), A&H scholars have also sought to present this as a mutually positive relationship (Goggin, 2020; Lund, 2015; Saratsi et al., 2019; Westerlund & Barrett, 2020).

At times, the discussion around societal impact relates to the fundamental question of whether academic research should deliberately seek to engage beyond scholarly boundaries. More typically in our review, discussion is primarily about the terms in which impact can be interpreted and defined (O'Mahony et al., 2019; Pedersen, 2015). Many A&H scholars seek to identify the challenges of the impact agenda – and specifically consider whether they disadvantage A&H research. A number of scholars see impact in a negative light, as it is often narrowly focused on economic impact and ambitions to measure value creation (e.g. Bérubé, 2003; Bulaitis, 2017, 2020, 2023, 2024; Hazelkorn, 2015; Skov & Bengtson, 2024). However, A&H scholars also point to the broader societal value of A&H research: whether that be providing a critical and systematic reflection on societal goals, generating knowledge on key policy issues, contributing broadly to societal and economic development or providing fundamental insights into human thought, behaviour and interaction (Bakhshi et al., 2008; Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2017; Follesdal, 2006; Napoli, 2024).

“There's usually a positive feedback loop if you write columns for papers ... it's not a matter of simplification. It's a matter of editing, really. ... And then there's a positive feedback loop. I realised that my scientific papers started changing too, because I could actually use this columnist way of writing at the introductory level, making it more amenable to a bigger public. (Interviewee #15)

An important strand of this discussion is specifically concerned with how we conceptualise and model impact (Bazeley, 2006; Benneworth et al., 2016). Does it reduce complex social and intellectual interactions to (in Collini's phrase) 'the clacking of one billiard ball against another' (Collini, 2012, p.176)? Or can it allow for more subtle interpretations of the ways in which academic research comes to have influence across different settings? A central question here concerns whether it is better to abandon the concept of impact altogether, as Brewer suggests, or else to develop, augment and enrich it in more productive ways. Within the literature covered in this review, many A&H scholars adopt the latter approach: seeking both to explore the impact agenda but also to suggest new ways of understanding the relationship between A&H research and societal impact or value (McAlpine et al., 2024; Robinson-Garcia et al., 2016). In doing so, A&H seeks to engage with the push for greater articulation of how their research matters, while at the same time arguing for a broader understanding that better reflects the multifaceted ways in which A&H research can have impact (e.g. Belfiore 2015; Benneworth, 2015a, 2015b; Benneworth et al., 2016; Braae & Brook, 2024; Brewer, 2013; Small, 2013). As one informant noted:

” *The language and questions we use to evaluate research and education comes from different logics. It is not grown out of the humanities... It is a fundamental challenge that the language and the questions we use are not suitable. These are questions that cannot be answered.* (Interviewee #5)

*'Many humanities and social science scholars will have a more diverse palette of providing impact than in the other fields, I'm absolutely sure it'll turn out that way if you start measuring like, you know, public lectures, provision of writing teaching material for high school level, radio shows, articles, podcasts, public lectures, open university lectures. I'm absolutely sure that most humanities and social science scholars on average will have a more diverse palette of communicating their research than is the case for the natural sciences'* (Interviewee #22).

Questions of impact are then hard to separate from larger reflections on the purpose – or purposes – of A&H research. In turn, these larger reflections have important consequences for how we understand and act upon research impact. Impact on whom and what – and in which terms? Societal impact of research is not just one coherent entity. Instead, it is open to many, sometimes contested, definitions, framings and practices (Looseley, 2013). These discussions also suggest that the particular position of A&H research is important within the broader debate. For many reasons, scholars in this field regularly present themselves as operating in contrast to STEM disciplines (Ochsner, 2021). Castro-Martínez et al. (2008) argue that very different channels of knowledge transfer are in place compared to the experimental sciences and engineering. As López-Varela Azcárate (2020) suggests, social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines 'cannot be treated in the same way as STEM.... because they often make a self-reflexive and complex relationship with reality, in many cases seeking to reveal ambiguities and contradictions instead of choosing to show the most marked evidences from the probabilistic and empirical point of view' (p.13).

The Arts and Humanities field itself builds on different scientific traditions, including research purposes and analytical procedures, making it more difficult to elaborate the impact of this research as compared to STEM (Hayden et al., 2018). As a result, several scholars argue that A&H research is often perceived as less useful to society compared to STEM disciplines (Benneworth, 2015b; Golhasany et al., 2021; Olmos-Peñuela et al., 2015). Olmos-Peñuela et al. (2015) suggest that this perception is influenced by policy discourses that prioritise economic growth and measurable outputs, which tend to favour STEM research.

As has already been suggested, there is a close interplay between the discussion of the impact agenda and the self-understanding of A&H research. As we have also suggested, this is often expressed (implicitly or explicitly) as a contrast between humanities research and the STEM disciplines. Broadly put, there are a number of characteristics that are seen to be important here and will be elaborated upon in later chapters.

First of all, A&H research may require a relatively long timeframe to achieve impact – or it may have more complex and much less direct effects upon society (Bate, 2011; Flecha et al., 2015; Levitt et al., 2010; Mattsson et al., 2024). Secondly, the sheer diversity of A&H research may be under-appreciated; archaeology is very different from philosophy and the same can be said about languages, performing arts and anthropology (Bakhshi et al., 2008). Thirdly, many areas of A&H research have transformed over recent years – not least through digitalisation, the use of Large Language Models and close engagement with societal challenges (migration, climate change, inequality and discrimination) (Keraudren, 2017). Fourthly, and despite such factors, there is often a sense that the external perception of A&H remains relatively fixed, portraying this area as unrelated to economic demands in particular (Oancea, 2024; Olmos-Peñuela, 2015). Fifthly, and despite the differences across the research field, it is often argued that A&H research is inherently challenging to conventional patterns of thought (Saratsi et al., 2019). This can make the definition of impact very problematic. It also suggests that there are different models of impact in operation: 'Impact simply does not mean the same thing across institutions, geographies, and research cultures.' (Pedersen et al., 2020).

Taking these factors together, it is clear that the relationship between A&H research and societal impact raises larger questions about the changing nature of this research field and its underlying sense of purpose. This can be seen as a call for the field to communicate more broadly and effectively – and also to engage with a wider range of stakeholders. Beyond that and partly stimulated by the sense of 'crisis', the issue of societal impact has provoked a more reflective discussion concerning the role of A&H research in the modern world. As suggested above, this discussion often combines criticism of conventional approaches to impact with a wish to find new purposes and new significance for this broad field. In that manner, societal impact might be a stimulus to developing A&H research in innovative directions. In addressing external challenges and demands, A&H research is also exploring new possibilities, ideas and ways of working.

As can be gathered from this short discussion, the relationship between societal impact and A&H research opens up a number of questions. Is impact the most appropriate concept? What changes are taking place within A&H research – and how might they help address the impact question? These questions lead us to the issue of research evaluation. How is impact to be assessed and valued in this context?

---

## 3.0 Research assessment in the Arts and Humanities: challenges and ways forward

Evaluating research quality in the Arts and Humanities remains a complex and contested endeavour. Unlike the natural and technical sciences where citation-based metrics and standardised indicators are more widely accepted, such approaches are often misaligned with the epistemological foundations, publication practices, and research outputs characteristic of A&H disciplines. Reale et al. (2018) argue that dominant research evaluation frameworks fail to accommodate the diversity and interpretive depth of A&H scholarship, thereby marginalising it within performance-based evaluation systems. This chapter reviews literature on these challenges as well as the emerging tendencies and new approaches in research assessment in the A&H.

### 3.1 Challenges to research assessment in the Arts and Humanities

The predominance of bibliometric measures remains a central issue to research assessment in the A&H. Though prevalent in natural sciences and engineering, these measures frequently yield inadequate or misleading results in A&H due to the predominance of monographs, non-English publications, and regionally grounded scholarship (CHASS, 2005; Mutz et al., 2013; van den Akker, 2016). Moreover, these approaches tend to prioritise easily quantifiable outputs, sidelining the nuanced, iterative, and often long-term processes through which research quality is developed and recognised in A&H (Romary & Edmond, 2019).

” *I'm not sure you get more impact from a paper read by 10 people and maybe quoted by 5, than if you do something that affects the entire educational sector in Denmark. ... It has a massive impact that just hasn't matched the ideas of impact that came from the natural sciences.* (Interviewee #17)

Despite these prevalent issues, critics point to the increasing institutional pressure on humanities scholars to quantify their research performance, often in ways that distort or devalue their work (Ochsner et al., 2016). Bibliometric indicators—such as citation counts, journal impact factors, and output volumes—rarely reflect the core criteria of excellence in A&H disciplines and fail to capture the qualitative dimensions of scholarly work, such as argument quality, narrative coherence, or theoretical contribution. Many scholars have resisted these metrics, arguing that they promote uniformity, undervalue originality, and misrepresent field-specific standards of quality (Archambault et al., 2006; Beiner et al., 2020; Benneworth 2015a; Hicks, 2004; Janinovic et al., 2020; Nederhof, 2006; Vučković et al., 2023).

Moreover, citations and metrics can produce what are known as negative steering effects on knowledge production, e.g. scholars adapt their behaviour not to advance knowledge, but to optimise performance against evaluation criteria. This may include favouring publication in high-impact journals over more field-relevant outlets, prioritising easily citable topics, or focusing on productivity over depth (Hammarfelt, 2017; Hose, 2009). Such pressures can restrict academic freedom, hinder long-term and exploratory research, and reinforce conservative research agendas.

The absence of a shared definition of 'good research' further complicates evaluation practices across A&H. The wide methodological and epistemological variety within and between disciplines, ranging from philological analysis to artistic research, renders uniform criteria both impractical and potentially exclusionary. This is in contrast to the natural sciences that often rely on criteria such as reproducibility, hypothesis testing, and standardised peer review – all of which are difficult to transfer to A&H fields where the core values are originality of interpretation, conceptual clarity, and contextual depth (Eisner, 2006; Green, 2006; Hammarfelt, 2017; Herbert & Kaube, 2008). This challenge was captured in one of our interviews with a researcher from the humanities: *'I remember once writing an application, and it was rejected because we had not formulated a hypothesis. But that's simply not something one does in humanities research, so it was completely absurd that the evaluators—who must have been utterly misguided—claimed to be missing a hypothesis. I recall being quite shocked about it for a long time'* (Interviewee #20). As such, existing assessment models are often perceived as inappropriate in terms of appreciating scholarly contributions within these fields.

A related issue is the disciplinary heterogeneity that characterises A&H: *'There is a big difference in the objects and methods of study. In terms of humanities evaluation, the indicators in some fields, for example psychology, are closer to the indicators of STEM, and other humanities subfields are completely different from STEM'* (Interviewee #28). The A&H encompass a wide range of research topics, methods, paradigms and traditions, including historical analysis, literary criticism, philosophical argumentation, creative practices, ethnography, and more. However, field-appropriate indicators that reflect this diversity are often lacking, which remains a central challenge. Many evaluation systems rely on an input-output logic borrowed from the natural sciences, where measurable resources (e.g., funding, personnel) are expected to produce identifiable outputs (e.g., citations, patents). This model fails to reflect the iterative, cumulative, and often intangible processes of knowledge production in A&H. This research frequently develops over extended timeframes and through complex intellectual dialogues with scholarly and public audiences. As Ochsner et al. (2016) argue, current indicators are ill-equipped to assess these processes and risk undervaluing core aspects of humanities scholarship. The epistemological plurality of the A&H resists reduction to a single evaluative framework and calls instead for nuanced, discipline-sensitive approaches (Herbert & Kaube, 2008; Lewandowska et al., 2024; Müller, 2024; Müller et al., 2024; Ochsner et al., 2017). As was aptly described by one interviewee: *'the main critique from humanities scholars remains that such evaluations oversimplify research value by prioritising what is immediately visible or quantifiable, rather than long-term influence'* (Interviewee #19).

Peer review remains the dominant and most accepted form of research evaluation in the humanities (CHASS, 2005). It is valued for its ability to account for disciplinary norms, intellectual depth, and methodological rigour. Nonetheless, some scholars argue that carefully integrated quantitative indicators, when developed in collaboration with A&H researchers, could play a complementary role in increasing transparency and comparability (Hammarfelt, 2017). This perspective emphasises the importance of developing evaluation tools that are co-designed with the academic communities they are intended to serve (Ochsner et al., 2016).

Another key issue is the diversity of publication cultures within the A&H. In disciplines such as history, philosophy, and literary studies, monographs and edited volumes are the primary vehicles for knowledge dissemination. Other fields, like linguistics and psychology, may rely more heavily on journal articles (Bod, 2013). However, most standardised evaluation tools – such as citation counts, journal rankings, and impact factors – are tailored to journal-based publication systems. These tools systematically undervalue books, book chapters, critical editions, and other scholarly formats that are central to the A&H (Fisher et al., 2000; Ochsner et al., 2016). Artistic research and practice-based outputs, including performances, exhibitions, and digital media,



are often excluded altogether, despite their relevance to both academic and societal debates: *'If you are producing a product, like singing, painting, etc., this is difficult to measure'* (Interviewee #2).

Moreover, language and cultural specificity play a crucial role. A significant proportion of humanities research is conducted in national or regional languages to engage with specific cultural and historical contexts. However, international bibliometric databases such as Web of Science and Scopus prioritise English-language journal articles, leading to the systematic exclusion or underrepresentation of high-quality research produced in other languages and formats (Heikkilä & Niiniluoto, 2017; Kenyon, 2014). This skews evaluation outcomes, disadvantaging scholars working in non-Anglophone traditions or those addressing locally relevant topics.

A further challenge relates to the recognition of emerging research outputs associated with Digital Humanities and Open Science. These include digital archives, data repositories, interactive platforms, and other infrastructural contributions that often fall outside the scope of traditional evaluation frameworks. Despite their growing importance in knowledge production and dissemination, such outputs are frequently undervalued or overlooked in research assessments (ALLEA, 2023). The Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH) emphasises the importance of acknowledging infrastructural work and scholarly participation in Open Science practices. While some initiatives, such as the UK REF2029 have begun to recognise the need for more inclusive evaluation approaches, and organisations like CoARA<sup>4</sup> promote the assessment of a broader spectrum of outputs, implementation remains uneven. As these developments continue to reshape research practices in the humanities, there is a pressing need for evaluation systems to evolve accordingly. In the assessments of the EU's Framework Programmes, societal impact is one of three key criteria. However, there appears to be significant cross-country variation in the ability to articulate societal impact in the Social Sciences and Humanities (de Jong & Muhonen, 2020).

Finally, a complication stems from the comparatively weak organisational structures within the Arts and Humanities (van den Akker, 2016). The A&H are often perceived as a loose collection of independent scholars working in isolation, lacking the cohesive disciplinary frameworks, advocacy networks, and institutional infrastructures that are more common in the natural sciences and some areas of the social sciences (Bakhshi et al., 2008; van den Akker, 2016). This fragmentation is reinforced by the sheer variety of sub-disciplines, research traditions, and methodological approaches across the A&H, making unified representation and coordinated policy engagement particularly difficult. This variety of A&H disciplines was also encountered in this review. See Appendix II for the variety found in the literature considered here. However, this characterisation does not apply uniformly. Certain fields, such as archaeology, linguistics, and digital humanities, have developed more structured organisational forms, including laboratories, shared infrastructure, and large-scale data collections. These subfields are sometimes better positioned to engage with traditional research assessment frameworks due to their methodological proximity to empirical or computational sciences. Nevertheless, for the broader landscape of A&H, the lack of disciplinary cohesion and structured advocacy remains a key barrier to developing and implementing tailored, field-appropriate evaluation frameworks.

### 3.2 Beyond Metrics: Rethinking research evaluation in the Arts and Humanities

In response to growing calls for accountability and transparency in publicly funded research, several countries and academic organisations have begun revising their evaluation policies to better reflect disciplinary differences. Inspired by such developments, newer evaluation policies increasingly recognise a wider range

---

<sup>4</sup> Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA): <https://coara.eu/>

of scholarly contributions and promote more holistic, transparent, and qualitative assessment practices (ALLEA, 2023). In countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, and Finland, new initiatives have emerged to promote more context-sensitive and discipline-appropriate models (Muhonen, 2022). ALLEA highlights the need to adapt research assessment frameworks to evolving forms of scholarly communication and production. Organisations such as CoARA also advocate reforms that respect disciplinary diversity while ensuring robust evaluation standards. This debate increasingly emphasises the need to recognise diverse research practices and impacts, moving beyond narrow metrics toward more inclusive evaluation systems (EASSH, 2024). Similarly, recent declarations and principles such as the Leiden Manifesto (Hicks et al., 2015), the Hong Kong Principles (Moher et al., 2020) and DORA (2012), have reinforced the importance of moving beyond simplistic, output-driven metrics. These frameworks argue for evaluation practices that emphasise research quality, integrity, and relevance over formal indicators like citation counts and journal rankings.

An increasing number of scholars also advocate for more context-sensitive, and participatory models of research assessment. Hammarfelt (2017), Muhonen et al. (2020), Ochsner et al. (2014; 2016), and Spaapen and van Drooge (2011) stress the importance of co-designing evaluation frameworks with humanities researchers to ensure that assessment criteria reflect field-specific values and research practices. These scholars argue that assessment should move away from universalised, metric-based systems and toward flexible

“*In evaluation, we are forced into certain paradigms – here, one must be able to put something concrete on the table, which can be organised into charts and bullet points. I have not succeeded in finding an alternative, but my thought is that the forms of evaluation must be expanded. One must consider: how do we measure what humanities research does? How do we measure the development of our understandings and ways of thinking? The problem is that we do not have a language for this.* (Interviewee #5)

models that recognise disciplinary diversity, epistemic plurality, and the varied pathways through which knowledge is produced and disseminated.

At the foundation of these efforts is a call for greater conceptual clarity around what constitutes research quality. Without such clarity, evaluation exercises risk becoming inconsistent, biased, or overly reliant on narrow proxies of performance (Ochsner et al., 2016). As LERU (2012) notes, well-defined and field-specific criteria not only improve evaluation processes but also foster shared understandings of scholarly excellence within and across disciplines.

Hug and colleagues (2013) made efforts to identify both broader and more field-specific criteria for research quality (see also Ochsner et al., 2012). In a survey study targeting

scholars in English Literature, German Literature and Art History, they identified 19 criteria for quality assessment of which 11 were deemed appropriate by scholars across the three disciplines. Five of these are commonly used in evaluation schemes (scholarly exchange, impact on research community, innovation/originality, rigour, and connection to other research), but 6 criteria were either new or rarely used in quality assessment: fostering cultural memory, scholarship/erudition, openness to ideas and persons, passion/enthusiasm, connection between research and teaching/scholarship of teaching, and vision of future research (Hug et al., 2013, p. 373). As such there is a need to bridge the gap between what evaluators and scholars consider quality.

Despite the above-mentioned efforts and advances, implementation remains uneven. Arts and Humanities researchers often find themselves evaluated using frameworks designed for other disciplines, with limited room for discipline-sensitive judgment. While peer review continues to play a central role, it is embedded in broader systems that may not always align with the values and knowledge practices of A&H. Technological

changes, institutional constraints, and diverging stakeholder expectations continue to shape this evolving landscape. Still, the growing recognition of these issues has prompted greater critical reflection within the scholarly community, and fostered momentum toward developing evaluation systems that better reflect the richness and diversity of A&H research.

*'I believe a new evaluation practice is emerging. If we don't take action, the publication system is in the process of undermining itself and its own value. There are many problems: much of what gets published cannot be reproduced; salami-slicing; peer reviews are increasingly done by PhD students. The system is broken. We need to shift our focus from citations to impact. At some point, people will realise that we cannot put all our eggs in this basket. We must come up with something different.'* (Interviewee #16)

## 4.0 Unpacking the value of Arts and Humanities research

As stated in the previous chapters, the literature demonstrates widespread recognition of the value and impact of Arts and Humanities research both within academic circles and in broader society, but also a need to be better at articulating value and how it is created. This chapter examines different types of value generated by A&H research and discusses different factors affecting value creation processes. Drawing on the discussion above, particularly criticisms and negative perceptions of the term 'impact', we have chosen, for the remainder of this report, to utilise the terms 'value' and 'value creation'. Exceptions will naturally occur where impact is used as a specific term, such as 'impact pathways', or when referencing literature where the term 'impact' is used. Moreover, the chapter focuses on specific case studies and examples that showcase the varied applications and far-reaching influence of A&H research across different domains, essentially demonstrating the significance of this research.

“*In the project we did try to open up these languages and understanding of impacts very quickly. We actually changed the focus from impact to value because the term itself carries so much weight and negative connotations. ... The term impact becomes linked to causalities, to very narrow understandings of societies.* (Interviewee #29)

### 4.1 Types of value

The contributions of Arts and Humanities research are articulated and conceptualised in diverse ways across the literature. A recurring theme is that A&H research plays a vital role in shaping, challenging, and expanding our understanding of human cultural values, thus essentially trying to answer a broad spectrum of questions about human experience (Belfiore, 2015; Benneworth et al., 2014; Bérubé, 2003; Saratsi et al., 2019; Small, 2013). Offering new knowledge and perspectives on such fundamental questions creates different

“*There are two kinds of value: the value of gaining insight, and the value that arises in the relationship between those who hold knowledge and those who have a need.* (Interviewee #16)

types of value depending on the specific context and nature of the research. The following section reviews work on the types of value created through A&H research.

Holm and colleagues (2015) argue that research can have 'a value in and of itself' and 'should be pursued for its own sake', simply because the pursuit of knowledge and appreciation of the rich human culture, history and ideas is inherently worthwhile and does not require external goals (p. 12). Examples of *intrinsic value* are numerous and include, for instance, cases of literary or arts research that may be appreciated in

themselves. To illustrate, Levitt et al. (2010) highlight the literary scholar Nicholas Boyle whose extensive research on Goethe has been significant to the field of German literature and philosophy by offering new insights on Goethe's works in relation to contemporary philosophical movements. The publication of three volumes on Goethe has made his research accessible to an audience outside academia, 'leading to a growth in knowledge and understanding of Goethe's life and works' (Levitt et al., 2010, p. 58). A related example is

the digitalisation of rare manuscripts from the English Medieval and Early Modern period, making them available to scholars and the general public (Levitt et al., 2010). Besides the obvious scientific impacts of making such sources available to other scholars and developing methods and protocols for digitalisation, such projects have the potential to influence public knowledge as it contributes to a deeper public engagement with the past.

” *The disciplines within A&H deal with a wide range of subjects, but there are some common themes: how things acquire meaning and how we have attributed meaning across time and space—how does this happen, and what does it mean for our identity and our understanding of who we are as groups and societies?*

*For example, looking at the current global situation, some argue that we need more weapons. But we must also consider what Europe stands for—what are Europe's narratives? Without these narratives, there is no Europe. It is these stories that bind us together and give us identity.* (Interviewee #16)

*Social value* is created when Arts and Humanities ‘help create tolerance and understanding between citizens, thereby leading to social cohesion. They aid decision-making, especially on the complex ethical issues that confront society as a whole. In addition, they can benefit society by challenging established positions’ (Holm et al., 2015, p. 12). As a consequence, social value includes a wide variety of value domains, such as habits of life, welfare, employment, and social cohesion.

The public's understanding of history, identity, and cultural practices can be profoundly influenced by arts and humanities research. A&H research plays a vital role in creating *cultural value* by documenting, analysing, and advocating for the protection of cultural heritage. Researchers in these fields often collaborate with local communities, governments, and organisations to recognise and value cultural diversity.

Within the field of Language Studies, the research concerning Icelandic Sign Language, is also believed to have impacted the sign language community positively in terms of becoming more confident and publicly accepted (Sigurðarson, 2020). Similarly, the value of language research can be identified in a Swedish context. Mattsson et al. (2024) argues that language practices in the Swedish public sector have been continuously influenced by linguistic scholars over several decades as a result of long-lasting ties between individual linguists and public institutions. Importantly, it is noted that value in this case did not result from single research projects but was a result of ‘an entire social philosophy of language that made its way from common-sense, ideas, through scholarship, to a more specific social norm’ (p. 221).

The *economic value* of Arts and Humanities research is not always straightforward when compared to cases of patenting in the STEM disciplines, but it clearly contributes to the commercial sector, fostering partnerships that create mutual benefits. In particular, the development of new cultural products, enhanced marketability, and the growth of industries tied to A&H research demonstrate the potential for economic value creation. To illustrate, Benneworth et al. (2022) present an example from Spanish music research where the recovery and revitalisation of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century classical music not only contributed to historical knowledge but also supported the commercial success of musical ensembles and performers. A similar case describes a research group within theatre studies, who approached analysis of Spanish Baroque plays from a new angle allowing for new interpretations, performances and staging. The research results were picked up and employed by Spain's National Classical Theatre Company (Benneworth et al., 2022). Gascoigne and Metcalfe (2005) highlight a university-based, Australian consultancy service in applied historical research, which supports community development projects and heritage assessments.

A&H research can thus often be associated with economic value creation in the cultural and creative industries. Another example is the collaborative research project *Creativity Research in the East Midlands*, which involved university actors as well as industry and public stakeholders. One of the main tasks was to map the music and digital industry in the region in order to provide a basis for the development of a support and growth setup for the industry (Mooney, 2009). Ultimately, the project ended up contributing to regional policy development and helped 'Nottingham to explore the possibility of repositioning itself as a cultural centre in the region' (Mooney, 2009, p. 94).

The value of Arts and Humanities research may also be understood in terms of its combination with other disciplines (Holm et al., 2015). Many A&H scholars take part in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects that combine the expertise and practices of different fields to examine complex problems. In a survey of European social science and humanities research, Pohoryles and Schadauer (2009) found that only 20 % of researchers engaged solely in their own discipline, while 30 % took part in interdisciplinary research within SSH and 20 % engaged in interdisciplinary research involving both social science/humanities and the natural sciences. As such, A&H researchers' engagement across disciplines is likely also widespread.

Interdisciplinary research is also seen as necessary to address global societal problems (Giménez-Toledo et al., 2024). For instance, the European Commission has promoted trans- and interdisciplinary research in the Framework Programme aiming to find solutions to the great societal and technological challenges of our time (Keraudren, 2017). Also, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council argue that A&H research plays a significant role in the innovation system, as it provides ethical, cultural, and interpretive frameworks that complement scientific advances (Bakshi et al., 2008). The Council supports a great deal of multi- and interdisciplinary research which also 'increasingly challenges the "lone scholar" view' which is a persistent image of the Arts and Humanities scholar (Bakshi et al., 2008, p. 19).

Several interviewees noted that A&H researchers also create value by addressing contemporary global issues such as war and climate change, although this is not always acknowledged by policy makers and funders.

*'And I think it's completely undervalued when I try to make this argument to Novo Nordisk Foundation or to Dansk Industri and I tell them that our biggest challenge today in the 21st century is not technology, it's psychology. They all look at me like I'm crazy or that, you know, they don't get it. .... How could these mental models and mental heuristics be so important to the workings and the security of our society? It's completely undervalued.'* (Interviewee #25)

*'people have a lot of difficulties understanding that what motivates Putin is not money and technology. It's identity and history, and his view on culture. What motivates Trump basically, in the end of the day, is about psychology and it's about his ability to mobilise big parts of the population in a... psychological capture which cannot be explained from either economics or from technology or from STEM.'* (Interviewee #25)

*'There are many things — such as AI, the climate, and Trump — that suggest the existing world order is being challenged. This creates a foundation for new ways of doing and thinking. There may be a call for the humanities as a form of knowledge that engages with what it means to be human, and how we relate to others and the world around us. Many aspects of today's world call for what is characteristic of humanities research'* (Interviewee #5)

An additional example of how A&H creates value across disciplines is presented by Bertilsson (2022), who illustrates how humanities research, particularly in the area of societal behaviour in crisis scenarios, influenced Swedish defence planning by offering valuable insights into how the population might respond in large-scale emergencies. Accordingly, the project illustrated how humanities researchers ‘produce insights that make human conduct amenable for political programming and intervention’ (Bertilsson, 2022, p. 243).

Arts and Humanities’ contributions to inter- and transdisciplinary research were also strongly emphasised in the interviews. In particular, it was noted that *while STEM has identified the complex problems of climate change and seeks to develop technological solutions, people tend to forget that this problem exists because of human actions and behaviour. Thus, solutions must take the human experience into account if new policies or technologies are to be successfully adopted by the population* (Interviewee #20). As such, A&H perspectives are essential to recognise the cultural and contextual dimensions that are often overlooked in STEM research.

A&H research can create *critical and norm-challenging value* through new interpretations or meaning or, alternatively, it can create value by contesting or challenging held norms or beliefs (Bate, 2011; Saratsi et al., 2019; Small, 2013).

A&H research can create *indirect value*, which may take time and be based on a body of research as opposed to a single work. It can thus encompass any of the other types of value and also be seen as a value creation pathway:

‘Research, therefore, affects policy not so much through immediate and direct impact on the design of public policies, but rather mainly through what Weiss (1977, p. 535) calls its “enlightenment” function: “the major effect of research on policy may be the gradual sedimentation of insights, theories, concepts, and ways of looking at the world”. This kind of diffuse and undirected input of insight from research into the policy sphere can gradually result in profound shifts in thinking and perceptions around social problems and their solutions, ultimately determining new and significant policy developments’ (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, p. 138).

Interviewees provided a number of examples of these different types of value from A&H research, which further help to make value creation more tangible. Table 4.1 shows examples provided by interviewees for each of the types of public value.

**Table 4.1 Examples of value of A&H identified through interviews**

Type of value	Examples
<b>Intrinsic value</b> A&H produces knowledge that is valuable in itself. For example, understandings of history, language, culture, ethics.	<p>Humanities disciplines have great value in and of themselves in terms of cultural and historical understandings of the context we find ourselves in. (Interviewee #8)</p> <p>The humanities are trying to shed light on different aspects of what it means to be human. (Interviewee #25)</p> <p>Humanities scholars produce, curate, and preserve essential knowledge from history, culture, the arts, and social life — and make it accessible to the public. Without these fields, we would soon forget key figures like Blicher or Grundtvig, and we would lack the concepts and</p>

	language needed to understand cultural developments and address contemporary political challenges. (Interviewee #26)
<b>Social value</b>  Contributions to tolerance, ethics, societal debates, and societal cohesion.	<p>Humanities and Arts research on language and language revitalisation plays a role in language policy, language planning, and creating a sense of community amongst minorities. (Interviewee #9)</p> <p>The knowledge coming out of A&amp;H is crucial for things such as trust and social relations which make society function. (Interviewee #27)</p> <p>A lot of the concepts with which the humanities are occupied are central to modern liberal democracy and the problems currently facing the world. This includes issues like responsibility, trust, accountability, and critical thinking. (Interviewee #15)</p> <p>Publicly funded humanities research, specifically from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in the US, has had a direct impact on U.S. law and society. The NEH funded a program about the history of the American family, which resulted (amongst other things) in two books about the history of marriage. These books ended up being cited in a U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalised same-sex marriage. (Interviewee #27)</p>
<b>Cultural value</b>  A&H research contributes to shaping national and collective identities, e.g. through history, art and language.	<p>A&amp;H research contributes to the maintenance of cities, specifically tourist attractions such as historical villages, monuments, and local produce. (Interviewee #2)</p> <p>A&amp;H has a lot to do with design, architecture, culture, food, etc. This is a big part of who we are and how we live. (Interviewee #2)</p> <p>Having art museums is important, not just because it is nice to look at art, but because they make us talk about things that we would not otherwise talk about. It is a place to meet other people and have an outlook into a world that you cannot find elsewhere. Humanities is about understanding and articulating the value of things, such as art museums. It is not 'simply' about looking back in time and contemplating history from an office. (Interviewee #11)</p> <p>Humanities scholars help us understand why theatre matters to society and why it is still sought after. They help develop understandings of value. (Interviewee #11)</p> <p>Studying humour, for example by looking at April Fool's throughout history, shows us how the boundaries of humour are negotiated over time. The tradition reveals something fundamental about human nature and serves as a stable reference point in an ever-changing world, while also being shaped by mediatization and democratic debate. (Interviewee #12)</p>
<b>Economic value</b>	A&H contributes to the creation of theatre productions, which in turn can be very beneficial for local economies. A recent example of this



For example, via cultural industries, theatre productions, music research and design.	<p>has been the production of Jeppe Pål Bjerget, which has been completely sold out in both Copenhagen and Aarhus. (Interviewee #11)</p> <p>24% of those working on start-ups at The Kitchen are from ARTS at Aarhus University. (Interviewee #16)</p> <p>George Lucas' <i>Star Wars</i> was inspired by <i>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</i> (1949), which is a comparative study of myths, legends, and religious stories from different cultures around the world. It was written by Joseph Campbell, an American professor in mythology. (Interviewee #27)</p>
<p><b>Interdisciplinary value</b></p> <p>A&amp;H perspectives are important in solving complex problems such as climate, health and technology (also in collaboration with STEM).</p>	<p>Humanities research in ethics is critical in, for example, the implementation of policies and the use of new technologies. (Interviewee #7)</p> <p>STEM disciplines, such as medicine, health, climate, and technology, benefit greatly from Humanities perspectives. (Interviewee #8)</p> <p>Center for Digital Teknologiforståelse at Aarhus University has contributed to the development of a new elective subject in primary schools on digital technology understanding. This was achieved in close collaboration with various stakeholders and aims to prepare young people for life in a digital society. (Interviewee #16)</p> <p>Humanities research can contribute greatly to the success of technical solutions to the climate crisis by offering an understanding of how people understand the climate crisis, if they are likely to accept specific technological solutions, where such solutions should be implemented, and what it takes to get people to change their behaviour. (Interviewee #20)</p> <p>Digital humanities is a cross between STEM and humanities. It can, amongst other things, be used to improve data measurement and management. It is not just the digitalisation of artefacts; it is about learning to work with international infrastructures. (Interviewee #28)</p>
<p><b>Critical and norm-challenging value</b></p> <p>The humanities create value by asking questions, challenging norms and creating new understandings.</p>	<p>Historical research into how societies have been organised in the past not only deepens our understanding of history but also prompts reflections on the present and possible directions for the future. Historical insight carries a critical perspective on contemporary structures and opens up alternative ways of organising society. (Interviewee #12)</p> <p>Historical and cultural studies give us the understanding necessary to make sense of current events, such as what is happening in the US or the war in Ukraine. (Interviewee #11)</p> <p>Discussions around the woke movement and identity politics stem from a humanistic tradition focused on intersectional theory, racialisation, and minority cultures. Without the humanities, these debates wouldn't exist. (Interviewee #26)</p>
<b>Long-term and indirect value</b>	<p>Archaeology researchers at Aarhus University have made a citizen science app for amateur archaeologists with metal detectors, intended to</p>

<p>The effects of humanities research often appear over time and in interaction with societal developments.</p>	<p>help museums with classification. The act of going out with a metal detector has turned out to be very beneficial for veterans with PTSD. (Interviewee #16)</p> <p>Recreational Fear Lab at Aarhus University started out doing research in horror films. It has now found that watching sufficiently scary movies can have a positive effect on people suffering from anxiety. (Interviewee #16)</p> <p>The Arts often explore emerging societal tensions before they become mainstream issues. This includes gender identity discussions and political conflicts that have long been addressed in artistic circles before becoming widely debated in society. (Interviewee #19)</p>
---	--

#### 4.2 Value and A&H disciplines

To develop meaningful concepts and frameworks for capturing the value and impact of A&H research, it is essential to deepen our understanding of the field's epistemological character. The interviewees offered various reflections on this. Firstly, some noted that the category of A&H is somewhat reducing, since it gives the impression of a homogenous field. This is far from the case; A&H consist of numerous epistemic communities, each with their own distinct features in terms of purpose, values, methods, etc. Furthermore, A&H cannot be considered a fixed category, since the disciplines within A&H are constantly evolving.

*'All epistemic communities have their own focus, value, methods, etc. We make a general distinction between A&H and STEM, but A&H are very different fields that cannot be grouped together.'* (Interviewee #28)

*'It's difficult to use the category 'humanities' in a meaningful way. It encompasses many very different things. I would rather talk about the value of the various ongoing projects and disciplines, which are precisely so diverse.'* (Interviewee #16)

*'It is difficult to draw boundaries around H&A. What do they entail? How do they work? Do old delineations of these fields still apply? Fields and disciplines are evolving, and this in many cases can influence their value and how they create value.'* (Interviewee #7)

While recognising these issues of demarcation, the interviewees still identified some common traits across A&H disciplines. Generally, A&H were described as inherently diverse, interpretive and context dependent. Rather than providing fixed answers or linear progressions of knowledge, A&H research is concerned with asking foundational questions about meaning, identity, culture, and human experience. Many emphasise that A&H disciplines operate through a multiplicity of perspectives and methodological pluralism, often engaging in critical reflection rather than solution-driven research. The disciplines are characterised by hermetic approaches, theoretical complexity, and an openness to ambiguity, which stands in contrast to what are portrayed as the more cumulative and standardised methods seen in STEM that often seek definitive answers and singular truths. A&H research is also seen as deeply intertwined with society—both reflecting and shaping cultural, historical, and social understanding.

*'The disciplines at A&H deal with many different topics, but there are some common areas: how do things gain meaning, and how have we attributed meaning across time and space –*

*how does this happen, and what does it mean for our identity and our understanding of who we are as groups and as a society?’ (Interviewee #16)*

*‘Our part of the scientific system is less cumulative. It is more of a hermeneutic circle.’ (Interviewee #16)*

*‘So, what we’re doing is we are trying to shed light on different aspects of what it means to be human. And some of those aspects correspond to or contest ideological notions prevalent in political discourse about what it would mean to be human or run a society. So, humanities is sort of entangled in societal discourse and in a certain sense, an ideology from the beginning, because we’re investigating what it means to be human, and there simply are so many competing, overlapping perspectives on that, that there will be no easy ride. There can be no easy ride. This is not technology trends 1.0. This is not knowledge exchange and transfer.’ (Interviewee #25)*

*‘STEM researchers are more apt to argue that their research is the truth, that they know the truth. Humanities researchers are more humble and do not see this as possible, due to complexity and context’ (Interviewee #19)*

*‘STEM is perhaps more characterised as in a line of progress. where humanities is complete chaos. Ups and downs and different perspectives at the same time.’ (Interviewee #19)*

Despite these many distinctions between STEM and A&H, interviewees also argued that the perceived gap between these fields is exaggerated. Both fields engage in forms of basic and applied research, contribute to society through teaching, communication, and public engagement, and increasingly draw on interdisciplinary approaches.

*‘While social sciences and humanities often distinguish themselves from STEM fields, the discussion suggests they share more similarities than typically acknowledged’ (Interviewee #19)*

*‘All researchers are interested in enabling people to do things better. This applies just as much to biomedicine as it does to historical research.’ (Interviewee #12)*

*‘The differences between humanities and STEM are not so significant anymore. There has been an internal evolution of humanities methods and approaches. Some of this has been necessary for survival, while in other cases a natural evolution. Archaeology, for example, the technical part of their research is more and more complex... Very interdisciplinary’ (Interviewee #7)*

*‘STEM is not all that different from the A&H. For instance, while patenting does occur in engineering fields, it is extremely rare in the humanities. However, even within STEM, patenting is one of the least common forms of societal interaction. Only a small fraction of researchers engage in it. The most widespread forms of engagement across all fields—STEM and A&H alike—are dissemination, teaching, and science communication. So, the common perception that STEM is fundamentally different may be misleading.’ (Interviewee #27)*

### 4.3 Pathways to impact

While Arts and Humanities research evidently contributes to society in various ways, it can be difficult to map the direct pathway from research to value, as value creation processes are often highly complex. Rather than following a single path, value creation can take many forms – some direct and tangible, others diffuse and long.

As we explore in this section, the literature identifies several ways in which A&H research generates value. First, while value is often created through the development and application of new knowledge, A&H research can also be inherently valuable—for instance, through artistic performances—or serve as a catalyst for change by challenging prevailing norms and practices. Second, knowledge transfer and interaction in A&H are typically broader, more varied, and more deeply integrated into the value creation process than in STEM. These dynamics, which merit attention in their own right, are examined in greater detail in chapter 5. Third, as the literature indicates, value creation processes can be viewed either from the perspective of research and dissemination or from the perspective of how stakeholders utilise research. In some cases, external stakeholders draw on A&H knowledge for purposes far removed from the original intent – e.g. when external actors tap into the pools of knowledge created through A&H research, illustrating the field's adaptability and reach. In this section, we summarise the main impact pathways that have been proposed in the literature.

In an earlier review, Pedersen et al. (2020) examine a number of approaches to mapping value creation. Although many of these do not specifically address the Arts and Humanities, the findings of this review are still very relevant here. Pedersen et al. (2020)'s general impression is that value creation processes are often characterised as non-linear, complex and embedded in specific contexts. In addition, they are based on different mixes of data, methods and measures; and with a diverse range of focuses on outputs and activities, on the process itself, ecosystems and linkages and connections.

Arguably the most commonly perceived pathway is *knowledge-driven value creation*, in which value is obtained through the further development or use of research outputs in other contexts (Bakhshi et al., 2008; Bate, 2011; Benneworth, 2015b; Holm, 2015; Weiss, 1979). According to Weiss (1979), this 'knowledge-driven' understanding of value creation is rooted in the natural sciences and suggests that 'the sheer fact that knowledge exists presses it toward development and use' (p. 427). Alternatively, research objectives can be defined and agreed upon by both researchers and external stakeholders working towards solutions to a specific problem or societal goal. Weiss (1979) refers to this as the *problem-solving* model.

This pathway to impact is illustrated in Vacher's (2022) work with architecture firms, where anthropological expertise helped shape the design of student housing based on a deeper understanding of student life, leading to better user-centred designs. Similarly, Tjørring and Nielsen (2022) presents a number of case studies from applied anthropology, in which they show how industry partnerships can lead to the development of new products and services. By offering anthropological insights into consumer behaviour, researchers contributed to innovative design processes that had commercial value.

Interaction and co-creation can play a central role in value creation processes. Based on a comparative analysis of 60 examples within the social sciences and humanities, Muhonen et al. (2020) describe different forms of interaction between researchers and users, along with interplay between research and society on a broader scale. In particular, they identify four ways through which research impacts society: interactive dissemination, co-creation, reacting to societal change, and driving societal change. In *interactive dissemination*,

tion, stakeholders become aware of research through a variety of potential dissemination channels. This corresponds to the most standard understanding of value creation, where researchers disseminate their research results, with potential feedback loops from stakeholders. *Co-creation* encompasses 'repeated points of contact (productive interactions) between scientific and societal partners mediating wider changes' (Muhonen et al., 2020, p. 39), where interaction can be in the form of collaboration, public engagement, consultancy, and researcher mobility. Examples include processes where researchers and stakeholders work together to further develop research and create value, or where researchers disseminate their research to stakeholders, who then further develop it for use. Stakeholders can both influence value creation at a later stage, or during initial phases of research by formulating problems or challenges to be addressed. *Reacting to societal change* involves reactions of researchers to societal themes, while in *driving societal change*, researchers shift their research for the purpose of influencing societal change.

Goal-oriented research can, according to Aiello et al. (2021), be significant in terms of achieving social impact. Based on in-depth analysis of six social science and humanities research projects, the authors identified six different strategies that contribute to achieving social impact: 1) articulation of social impact objectives in the initial research phase, 2) stakeholder involvement throughout the project period, 3) utilisation of existing networks for creating collaborations, 4) coordination of research and stakeholder activities, 5) dissemination activities stimulating public debate, 6) achieving political impact as a pathway towards social impact (Aiello et al., 2021). The authors argue that employing such strategies can be a way of enhancing value creation in humanities and social science.

Benneworth (2015c) and Benneworth et al. (2016) develop a model of upscaling that broadens and re-frames the processes that are typically associated with value creation within STEM areas. The model has four phases: co-creation of knowledge within projects; users taking knowledge into use; dissemination and exploitation via networks; and value creation through empowerment and creation of 'societal capacities' (Benneworth et al., 2016).

Arts and Humanities research can in many cases be seen as an *instrument*, where value is generated through indirect influence on other activities, which can be in terms of interpretation and creating meaning or, alternatively, it can create value by contesting or challenging norms and beliefs (Saratsi et al., 2019; Small, 2013). Value creation can for example lie in pushing the boundaries of public and academic knowledge, thus gradually shaping how different issues are understood. Nutley et al. (2007) argue that this takes place when 'research changes ways of thinking, alerting policy makers and practitioners to an issue and when it plays a more "consciousness-raising role"' (Nutley et al., 2007 in Meagher et al., 2008, p. 6). Researchers' own articulations of intended contributions reflect many of the same types of value creation in the Arts and Humanities, including contestation, interpretation and more direct influence of new knowledge (Hellström, 2022).

*'In fact, I don't know any historians who've ever taken a patent out on any product, but we can do other things.' "I know many historians who've changed the discourse of how we think about certain aspects of the world by writing a book that was favourably approved of by the wider society, in media, et cetera.'* (Interviewee #19)

An example is the work of the Norwegian scholar Arne Næss, whose philosophical contributions to environmentalism helped lay the groundwork for the Green Political Movement (Benneworth, 2015b). The movement's increasing influence on political ideology in the European Union and among member states shows

the political potency of humanities-based ideas in shaping not only public opinion but also institutional approaches to ecological issues.

In other cases, research and its utilisation may be very much separate from each other. In these cases, impact pathways can be seen from the perspective of their utilisation, illustrating that value creation often unfolds in much less predictable ways or over long periods of time. For instance, research may be cherry-picked by political actors to support specific agendas (Weiss, 1979). One illustrative example of such pathways to impact is the Irish philosopher Pettit whose ideas on republicanism entered the broader public and political debate, when they were picked up by the Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero (Benneworth, 2015b). According to

Benneworth, Pettit's ideas had direct societal influence as these were incorporated into extensive political reforms in the 2000s. Another example from a Spanish context describes how philosophical research on barbarism was actively used to provoke public reflection and debate on road accidents in Spain. Results were widely disseminated, and various stakeholders were involved. Ultimately, insights from the project informed 'new legislative proposals for road education, accident prevention and punitive responses' (Benneworth et al., 2022, p. 54).

“ *We need funding regimes that support free research. Some projects don't work, but we can't know in advance what will end up being a treatment intervention for people with PTSD. You have to trust the processes. It's important that we have a broad research readiness because we don't know what kind of knowledge we will need in the future. That's why it's important to have a lot on the shelves.* (Interviewee #16)

The element of unpredictability was also emphasised by the interviewees. In some cases, completely unanticipated impacts and opportunities may occur in the course of a research project or even after its termination. *For instance, a citizen science app was developed by researchers at Aarhus University to assist the categorisation of archaeological findings located by amateur archaeologists with metal detectors* (Interviewee #16). *It turned out that the activity connected to this app had therapeutic potential for veterans suffering from PTSD. Similarly, a project which focused on recreational fear in connection to horror led to unexpected findings of recreational fear's potentially regulatory effects on anxiety and mental health* (Interviewee #10).

Possibly the most influential of the models in Weiss (1979) is the *enlightenment model* (see also Belfiore &

“ *... quite a lot of impact happens not because of one unique event. It happens because something is repeated. So as a researcher in any field, I guess, and I again, I'm not sure the arts and humanities are that different, but something starts to happen when you work together with them. Users or stakeholders or on certain problems over a fairly long period of time. Impact is rarely something that comes out of one project. It's something that comes out based on repeated interaction and in a bigger network and so on.* (Interviewee #27)

Bennett, 2010), which refers to the (indirect) effects of bodies of research that influence thinking or perspectives: 'Here it is not the findings of a single study nor even of a body of related studies that directly affect policy. Rather it is the concepts and theoretical perspectives that social science research has engendered that permeate the policy-making process.' (Weiss, 1979, p. 429). This pathway to impact is similarly emphasised in an interview study by Castro-Martínez et al. (2008), who finds that the most frequent type of knowledge being transferred with the social sciences and humanities is 'specific or general knowledge accumulated over many years of research and experience' (Castro-Martínez et al., 2008, p. 628).

An example of this cumulative impact is found by Mattsson et al. (2024), who argue that language practices in the Swedish pub-

lic sector have been continuously influenced by linguistic scholars over several decades as a result of long-lasting ties between individual linguists and public institutions, 'an entire social philosophy of language that made its way from common-sense, ideas, through scholarship, to a more specific social norm' (p. 221).

Table 4.2 provides a summary of key aspects concerning impact pathways. While each of these can be seen as a model for value creation, they are not mutually exclusive. Value creation processes for A&H research can in many cases comprise more than one of these models. For example, interactive value creation is likely an element of many value creation processes. The next section delves more deeply into the many ways in which knowledge transfer takes place within the Arts and Humanities.

**Table 4.2 Types of value creation for Arts and Humanities research**

Value creation	Description	Examples
Intrinsic value creation	Value in and of itself, without further development or use in other contexts	Museum exhibition, a novel, artistic performance, music.
Knowledge driven value creation	Value in its further development or application	Anthropological insights used to describe consumer behaviour, knowledge used to create user-centred designs, adoption of theory or findings in policy or other application.
Societally driven value creation	Driven by a specific problem, commercial opportunity or societal challenge	Commercialisation of research results, missions-oriented research. A&H research reacts to societal challenges or drives societal change.
Value creation through interaction	Engagement and interaction with other actors a central factor in value creation.	Interactive dissemination, stakeholders become aware of research through a variety of potential dissemination channels. Co-creation encompasses collaboration, public engagement, expertise, and mobility, and typically repeated interactions between researchers and users.
Indirect value creation	Value through indirect influence on other research, commercial or societal activities. Can lead to change in perceptions or substance of activities.	New interpretations or understandings of other approaches, challenge or contest current wisdom.
Enlightenment model	Focus on utilisation. Users tap into pool of knowledge, often leading to unintended application of earlier research.	Research finds unintended use after many years. Insight from research area needed to help understand current issue.



## 5.0 Knowledge transfer and interaction in the Arts and Humanities

Value creation in the Arts and Humanities depends to a large degree on researchers' efforts to disseminate their research and to engage with other actors. A number of the papers reviewed here focus on knowledge transfer activities and forms of interaction with other actors. The following section will take a slightly more systematic approach than the previous chapters to look closer at this literature, delving into the specific studies and their findings concerning the Arts and Humanities.

Within the Arts and Humanities, knowledge transfer (KT) can also be described as making 'theoretical knowledge usable', 'raising consciousness about topics', 'working on the borders of different spheres of society' and 'transferring knowledge from science to practice' (Wutti & Hayden, 2017, p. 91). There is also wide recognition that the activities that fall under this heading can involve much more than the transfer of knowledge, often with two-way knowledge exchange between researchers and other actors (Hayter et al., 2020) that can also involve the further development of research, its use and thus also its impact. When focusing on formal knowledge transfer channels and commercial application, some studies have found limited engagement by A&H researchers (Castro-Martínez et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2011). However, Hughes et al. (2011) argue that this reflects an overly narrow perception of KT activities. They argue that if the definition of KT activities were expanded to include the many people-based, problem-solving and community driven KT activities that are more applicable to A&H research, then one would find that A&H academics are in fact highly engaged in KT activities.

Taking all this into account, this section will first review work on knowledge transfer channels in general and thereafter focus on the role of interactions and public engagement. A general finding from the literature is that knowledge transfer in the A&H is broad both in terms of the channels used to share their work or engage with society, and in the types of stakeholders that they interact with. Furthermore, given the different ways in which A&H research, or A&H researchers, create public value, it is often difficult to distinguish knowledge transfer, engagement and value creation. In addition, these interactions are not just a part of research and development activities (as they often would be for STEM fields) but they are also often where value creation takes place.

### 5.1 Knowledge transfer channels

Hayden et al. (2018) argue that the term 'knowledge transfer' is not used consistently as different scientific disciplines and non-academic communities interpret the term differently. They go on to emphasise the importance of being aware that KT may be used to describe several different activities, such as 'knowledge dissemination', 'research utilization', 'knowledge management', 'knowledge mobilization', 'knowledge translation and transfer' or 'knowledge integration' (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 240). Others define KT activities as entailing services and communication (Gascoigne & Metcalfe, 2005; Holm et al., 2015).

In a questionnaire among university researchers in Austria, Hayden et al. (2018) asked respondents to define university KT, or to provide keywords related to KT. The definitions of KT were grouped into nine categories:



science-to-public/science communication; science-to-science; education and teaching; exchange and mutual communication; knowledge transfer to economy and industry; knowledge transfer to people outside of academic environments; moral obligations; and knowledge transfer to politicians and stakeholders. Of these nine, researchers from Arts and Humanities fields were most likely to describe KT as science-to-professionals, education and teaching, exchange and mutual communication, and knowledge transfer to politicians and stakeholders. Hence, these findings further emphasise not only the breadth of the term knowledge transfer, but also the many different channels in play, as well as the variety of end-users of academic research.

In addition to these nine types of KT, several of the studies considered in this review (Cunningham et al., 2024; Gascoigne & Metcalfe, 2005; Giménez-Toledo et al., 2024; Holm et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2011; Olmos-Peñuela et al., 2014) identify and describe different channels of KT within A&H, the outcomes of this KT, as well as different end users of A&H research. An overview of these channels can be found in table 5.1, and a few of them will be discussed in further detail below.

**Table 5.1 Types of Knowledge Transfer channels**

Source	KT channels
Cunningham et al. (2024)	Consultancy; Contract research; Training; Joint research projects; Personnel mobility; Cooperative networks; Publications; Books written for general audience
Gascoigne & Metcalfe (2005)	Consulting; Education and training; Contract research; Production; Publications; Exhibitions; Event management; Advocacy, governance; Performances
Giménez-Toledo et al. (2024)	Transfer through researcher training; Transfer generating economic value; Transfer of own knowledge through activities with other institutions; Transfer generating social value
Holm et al. (2015)	Teaching; Publishing; Broadcasting; Lecturing; Engaging with communities; Putting knowledge into practice in public institutions, medical care, schools, business; Advising on policy
Hughes et al. (2011)	People-based activities; Problem-solving activities; Community-based activities; Commercialisation activities
Olmos-Peñuela et al. (2014)	Consultancy; Contract research; Joint research; Training; Personnel mobility
Wutti & Hayden (2017)	Cooperation with the media; Cooperation and work with society/the public; Transfer with practice; Teaching

In the literature, publications were often described as a manner in which to reach out to people outside the universities. This kind of publication was described by some respondents as 'popular science' (Hayden et al., 2018, p. 249). Similarly, other literature found that academic researchers utilise publications as a means of

engaging with non-academic organisations or industry to facilitate KT (Cunningham et al., 2024). Furthermore, books written for a general audience can be a valuable instrument for disseminating knowledge and therefore considered an academic entrepreneurship activity.

Giménez-Toledo et al. (2024) find that compared to STEM, social sciences and A&H disciplines produce a more varied proportion of publications and dissemination activities. They find that the most frequent types of dissemination materials across a variety of social sciences and A&H disciplines are scholarly books and articles aimed at non-academic audiences, followed by reports and guidelines. The prevalence of scholarly books and articles oriented to non-academic audiences is particularly high in art, history, archaeology, philology, linguistics, and literature, where they represent more than half of the dissemination outputs.

In terms of activities, Castro-Martínez et al. (2010) conducted an interview study with social science and humanities researchers at the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) in which they found that research groups in the humanities engaged mostly in consultancy activities, while working with research contracts is more common in the social sciences. Through focus groups and questionnaire submissions, Gascoigne and Metcalfe (2005) set out to explore how A&H and social science researchers in Australia were engaging in commercial activities. They found that consultancies existed across a range of A&H and social science disciplines, including history, archaeology, editing and publishing, philosophy, social science, information services and IT. Much of this consultancy work was with government, more specifically regarding heritage, tourism, information services, health, publication management, developing strategies/plans, film making and training.

Cunningham et al. (2024) found that research groups with a high degree of multidisciplinary are more inclined to engage in contract research. However, when Castro-Martínez et al. (2010) asked interviewees for a list of organisations with which they collaborated, the lists they received were much longer than the list of organisations with which they had officially contracted work or established formal collaborative agreements. Hence, there appears to be at least some research collaborations in A&H that are not registered in any formal manner. As noted by one interviewee, the difference between formal and informal interactions may be more blurred in the Arts and Humanities: *'Maybe humanities researchers have a hard time distinguishing what is impact and what is just a partnership or a network. In the technical sciences, there are contracts and formalisation procedures and so on. In humanities, it's more about the partnership or network or alliance or whatever'* (Interviewee #29).

Lastly, according to the literature, utilising different types of media, such as social or news media, as a means of KT is popular among A&H researchers. As for publications and reports, this can convey knowledge relevant to non-academic users (Castro-Martínez et al., 2010). According to Holm et al. (2015), social media, such as Twitter, YouTube, blogs, LinkedIn, academia.edu and Facebook, are increasingly used by individual A&H academics. The use of such social media for A&H researchers' academic work provides a fast and more personal way to engage with user communities and build support for particular research (Holm et al., 2015).

Types of KT channels utilised tend to vary across disciplines (Giménez-Toledo et al., 2024). In art, history, and archaeology, media and computer applications are the most frequent dissemination channels. This could include documentary films about history and art, scientific expeditions or archaeological excavations. In philology, linguistics, and literature, virtual libraries and other virtual resources are more common than in other social science and A&H fields. These include online and interactive catalogues of literature, online dictionaries of different languages or specific terms such as thesauri and other multilingual resources.

The literature review revealed several factors affecting KT. These include factors impacting whether researchers engage in KT at all, as well as the effect of disciplines on the kinds of KT activities that are carried out, along with societal awareness of A&H research (Rudd, 2015). Medium-sized groups (4-10 members) are big enough that they can allow researchers to engage in both research and KT activities with socio-economic environments (Castro-Martínez et al., 2008), including engagement in consultancy and contract research (Olmos-Peñuela et al., 2014). The likelihood of research groups participating in these two activities increases with the number of full-time researchers in a group. In particular, multidisciplinary research groups have been found to be more likely to engage in contract research, as opposed to other kinds of KT channels (Olmos-Peñuela et al., 2014). Researchers being open to new ideas, methods and technologies positively affects the level of reflection on and motivation to engage with social and economic usefulness of research (Castro-Martínez et al., 2008). Hence, being motivated to conduct socially and economically useful research, as well as reflecting on this, positively impacts KT, such as engagement in consultancy activities, contract research, training, and personnel mobility (Olmos-Peñuela et al., 2014).

### 5.1.1 Productive Interactions

Collaboration as a channel for KT is by far the most frequently discussed across the literature considered in this report. In a meta-ethnographic study conducted by Dewaele et al. (2021), one of the considered articles (Molas-Gallart & Tang, 2011) found that collaboration could be understood as the capacity-building of worldviews of those involved in a collaboration, as well as a space in which unusual and innovative things might happen and where distortion is allowed.

Collaborations in academia can also become what is referred to as 'productive interactions' (Spaapen & van Drooge, 2011). These are 'exchanges between researchers and stakeholders in which knowledge is produced and valued that is both scientifically robust and socially relevant. These exchanges are mediated through various "tracks", for instance, a research publication, an exhibition, a design, people or financial support. The interaction is productive when it leads to efforts by stakeholders to somehow use or apply research results or practical information or experiences.' (Spaapen & van Drooge, 2011, p. 212).

” *What I'm always stressing is that if you think about ... research processes, impact pops up [throughout] - so it's not only the end result. But people are collaborating with stakeholders during the process and undertaking some activities which influence society [and thereby create impact].* (Interviewee #6)

In their study, based on interviews with researchers in a Welsh university and stakeholders, Molas-Gallart and Tang (2011) view 'productive interactions' as helping researchers to positively frame and reinforce stakeholder collaboration (p. 224). This provides them a form of legitimacy to approach and interact with stakeholders, which is an important part of building a network and creating collaborative research opportunities. Benneworth et al. (2022) argue that in order for interactions to facilitate impact, they must be beneficial for both researchers and societal actors, involving three characteristics: working together around a shared purpose, visible progress, and realised change from both the researcher and societal perspectives.

### 5.1.2 Engagement with the public

Interviews with early career social science and humanities researchers found that these researchers saw engagement with society as an important part of their research, forming relations between research and value creation that could both be conflicting and complementary (Vanholsbeeck & Lendák-Kabók, 2020). Researchers saw the relation between research and value creation in three different ways: in opposition to

each other, separate but complementary activities, or as integrated parts of their research (Vanholsbeeck & Lendák-Kabók, 2020).

A number of scholars have addressed how pressures to justify the public value of research can influence both what researchers study and their engagement with society. Message et al. (2024) for example define 'public humanities' as 'a term that describes research that seeks to address the kinds of questions that people in the "real" world ask. It aims to benefit the universe of scholarly knowledge within and about the public sphere by promoting research practices undertaken in and with civic spaces and everyday cultures' (Message et al., 2024, p. 3).

A number of scholars have examined the role of public engagement in creating value for Arts and Humanities research (Cunningham et al., 2024; Fecher et al., 2021; Hayden et al., 2018; Holm et al., 2015; McAlpine et al., 2024; Vanholsbeeck & Lendák-Kabók, 2020). In an attempt to assess the worldwide state of the humanities, Holm et al. (2015) conducted interviews with leading humanities scholars. These interviews revealed a wide variety of manners in which humanities researchers engage with the public. Most interviewees identified the translational role of the humanities as one of educating and reaching out to the public by means of open lectures. These can be standalone events or serialised. Other examples include summer schools; workshops for teachers, journalists, and museum researchers; public performances; public readings; exhibitions of photography, film, and art; and collaborations between researchers and theatres, book and arts festivals, publishers, galleries, and cinemas. Similarly, Hayden et al. (2018) found that pathways to impact sometimes include events such as 'Lange Nacht der Forschung', which is a nationwide event in Austria that makes current scientific research visible to the public (Hayden et al., 2018). Finally, McAlpine et al. (2024) note an increasing focus on public engagement among some A&H researchers, which they term 'modern or new humanities', where modern is characterised as looking for new approaches and development, with greater focus on their relation to society and to impact (McAlpine et al., 2024).

---

## 6.0 Promoting value creation in A&H research

The tendency to prioritise research that results in direct and measurable outcomes is a significant challenge to A&H researchers when trying to obtain funding. Some interviewees noted that funding systems often fail to fit A&H research cultures, instead forcing them into defensive instrumentalism. Some argued that this undermines the intrinsic value of humanities scholarship and marginalises long-term contributions to cultural understanding, social cohesion, and public debate. It was also argued that funding bodies differ in their understanding and promotion of A&H research.

*'Focus on and money for humanities and social sciences fluctuates. The impact of these disciplines from the perspective of science policy is very limited'* (Interviewee #3)

*'Arts and Humanities is judged by a different standard. We have a tougher time, there's absolutely no doubt about that. I've talked to my colleagues at the other science driven councils. They've never really had to justify their existence, whereas Arts and Humanities is always having to justify our existence.'* (Interviewee #13)

*'There is a perception that research is increasingly being strategically shaped by the foundations, but foundations are not all the same – and researchers do not perceive them in the same way. It is specific versions of the humanities that they help define through their calls for proposals.'* (Interviewee #5)

*'It is definitely challenging for humanities researchers that many of the major funding pools—where they compete with STEM fields—place a strong emphasis on the number of publications. There is a tendency for humanities researchers to publish individually and to carry much of the responsibility and workload for each publication, whereas in fields like medicine and others, publications often involve many co-authors. If you're a professor in those fields, you simply have far more publications than you would as a professor in the humanities.'* (Interviewee #12)

This prompts questions of how the climate for A&H research has influenced the development of A&H research. There are both concerns that disciplines that are unable to demonstrate impact will decline or disappear, alongside observations that the A&H will always be in movement. Several interviewees have argued that fields and disciplines are always evolving, and this in many cases can influence their focus on societal impact and how they create value. For example, the nature of humanities research to contest means that the field will naturally move with, and in some cases prompt, changes in society.

*'I tend to believe that humanities will always be subject to an ongoing crisis. In the sense that humanities scholarship is all about contesting and studying different and often competing notions of what it means to be human. So, given the ontology of humanities, there will be substantially contested concepts within, but also beyond humanities itself.'* (Interviewee #25)

*'Politically and economically, certainly I think you can say there is a crisis because there is a lack of appreciation and that's at least a very common experience. Epistemologically, there's no crisis. This is actually fuel to the fire here that could be really good humanities research in this political crisis ... Because society changes and what humanities are called upon to do changes.'* (Interviewee #29)

*'We consider humanities as one field, but it is extremely fragmented. We consider it stable, but it is the opposite. It is impacted by everything happening in the world because of interdisciplinarity, hybridisation of fields in terms of the way they present research problems and questions.'* (Interviewee #28)

These quotes hence suggest that A&H research in its nature should evolve with the changes in the society that surrounds it, and in particular through its role in creating meaning, challenging norms and practices and continually looking forward:

*'Arts often explores emerging societal tensions before they become mainstream issues. Examples include gender identity discussions and political conflicts that have long been addressed in artistic circles before becoming widely debated in society.'* (Interviewee #19)

*'It's, you know, this being able to understand the past, to better understand the present, to be able to better act for the future.'* (Interviewee #9)

The climate for A&H research appears to vary across countries. Our review is not comprehensive in its international coverage, though the reviewed literature and interviews provide some insights on several countries, including Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Broadly speaking, these commentaries suggest that countries vary in political views of the value of A&H research, particularly in terms of how highly they prioritise economic value relative to a broader recognition of A&H research's societal importance and public value creation.

Benneworth et al. (2016) examine the cases of Norway, Ireland, and the Netherlands. In Norway, 'a central task has been to ensure that [Arts and Humanities] gets a fair share of the extra funding, probably requiring a more offensive strategy than in a country facing budget cuts' (Benneworth et al., 2016, p. 58). In Ireland, 'with the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, the research funding and landscape began to change as the government pursued a more economically targeted approach [to funding research].' (Benneworth et al., 2016, p.103). In the Netherlands, the A&H had been under pressure in earlier periods, but this appears to have changed recently with a growing 'realisation, continually reaffirmed, that the public value of research was not just in its immediate economic benefits but also in the wider contributions it made to society.' (Benneworth et al., 2016, p. 141).

A number of the interviewees have also commented on the conditions for A&H research:

*'But in Switzerland this is very very strong that there is a difference between the value for society and monetarising. to attach a value of societal value like a monetary value to research.'* (Interviewee #19)

*'In Denmark and in Sweden, I mean humanities are a kind of icing on the cake. Icing on the STEM cake. So, it's benevolent neglect that is, to humanities, strictly in [Denmark], whereas in Norway they take everything very seriously. But like in the UK or in Denmark, I would say that they are disregarded, the impact cases.'* (Interviewee #18)

As with the Arts and Humanities field itself, conceptualisations of the value of A&H research among funders and policymakers are evolving. At least in the few cases we have examined, funders can have an intermediary role in supporting A&H research and how it is viewed; on the one hand working to establish a broader understanding of A&H value creation among policymakers and on the other encouraging A&H researchers to reflect more on and better articulate how their research can create value. These two funders describe how they are addressing these challenges:

*'If the grants or the activities that we fund are seen as so distant from everyday lives that they appear to have no economic value or benefit to society then we can't justify, we can't justify it ... all of it has to be translated into a number that government recognises as an economic benefit of some kind, and it may be, you know, being able to frame.'* (Interviewee #13)

*'Cause we're arm's length from governance government, but when I look at what the government wants, they're talking about economic return on investment, so how do you justify the importance of keeping alive humanities education, right? ... So we're in the midst of trying to decide how to talk about impact. But first we have to get a sense of what people mean when they're talking about impact. ... [foundation] is developing its impact framework. I have some employees going to a summer school in May for a few days to look at innovation and impact and the role of the social sciences and humanities.'* (Interviewee #9)

*'[different foundations] are increasingly understanding the value of the humanities. ... [foundation] is no longer just funding mission-driven medical research, because this kind of research draws on other types of knowledge. They are understanding the importance of humanities in medical research. The users of medical research are just as diverse and complex as the society we live in, and therefore humanities is a crucial part of this research. ... The value of a research project is not just related to the actual project; it is also valuable in relation to the effects and uses of the project. You can't have roads if you don't pay taxes.'* (Interviewee #11)

As such, funders are also currently grappling with the political prioritisation of measurable economic outcomes, while also exploring the potential in broadening the understanding of impact and value.

While the interviewees identified some significant challenges in terms of evaluation and funding, they also proposed some ideas for how to develop research evaluation and funding schemes in a manner that aligns with and promotes A&H research. Some asked for greater willingness to fund risk-taking and curiosity-driven research that could lead to ground-breaking results. Others suggested that foundations should support A&H researchers in articulating the societal value of their work in a proposal. Others again asked for new measures of impact that better recognise and capture value created in A&H,

*'Researchers need to learn to think concretely about the value of their work: Who will you involve? How many people will be affected? How many school classes can you engage? Who will benefit from it? The answers need to be much more specific than they are now. Some foundations already ask these questions, but the requirements for what constitutes an acceptable answer are not strict enough. As it stands, almost anything can be approved.'* (Interviewee #1)

*'I think to have a design where there is room for qualitative approaches but also maybe for quantifiable measures. It doesn't have to be like the number of spectators at a public event.'*

*But maybe the diversity of communicating science might be a way of measuring impact that is both fair and respectful to the practice of arts and humanities.'* (Interviewee #22)



## 7.0 Conclusions and implications for funders

In this section, we summarise the main findings of this review and discuss ways forward in promoting value in the Arts and Humanities. This report has sought to review and synthesise work on the value of research and how value creation takes place in the A&H. We have delved into research on different aspects of value creation processes, including knowledge transfer, collaboration and interactions both with other research fields and with stakeholders, and how value creation processes have been modelled. We have also reviewed descriptions of value creation in the A&H.

In addition, 29 interviews have been conducted with scholars from a variety of perspectives. This interview material has been helpful in a number of respects. Among influential scholars that have worked with value and impact in the A&H, it has allowed them to reflect on overall work in this field and comment on recent developments. Others have participated as A&H researchers, sharing their own views and experiences in promoting the impact of their work. Yet others speak from the perspective of actors seeking to support A&H research, for example as representatives of university leadership, funding institutions or interest organisations. The interviews both validate findings from the literature review and also provide additional perspectives, which we bring out in this final section.

Summarising this material is not entirely easy – and the characteristic Arts and Humanities spirit of lively debate and discussion makes the risk of over-simplification even greater. However, we do take the following general conclusions from this very interesting body of evidence, analysis, and reflection.

In the first place, there is substantial evidence that Arts and Humanities scholars care deeply about the impact, relevance and societal value of their research. Both the literature and collected interviews contain numerous examples of A&H research ‘making a difference’ outside of academia. These examples take many forms: from long-term national identity-building to specific contributions to current political and social discussions. We have found substantial evidence in both our literature search and our interviews that impact – broadly understood – is a serious and sustained matter of concern across the A&H.

At the same time, many A&H researchers are critical of the term ‘impact’, considering it to have strongly economic and instrumentalist connotations and to restrict its assessment to one specific model of knowledge transfer. For this reason, we have also used ‘value’ as a term throughout this report. The broader language of ‘value creation’ aligns well with the basic drive within A&H research to create a better society and to address the intellectual, social, aesthetic and philosophical foundations to this – and not only impact on the economy. As was especially apparent in our interviews; some A&H researchers adopt a more pragmatic approach to this discussion: choosing to employ the language of impact while remaining critical of narrow assumptions and implications and arguing for a broader understanding of the impact notion. Others have been more fundamental in their criticism. Either way, there is broad agreement that existing evaluation frameworks often misalign with the epistemologies and practices of the A&H.

Further developing the previous points, we have been struck both by the heterogeneity of A&H research (ranging from archaeology to the performing arts) and the multi-faceted ways in which impact and value

are generated. Whilst many A&H scholars make a contrast here with STEM research, it is possible that a similar range of impact pathways, impact outcomes, and value creation can be found across all disciplines. Regardless, one important conclusion from this study is that impact and value creation occur in many different, often non-linear, ways, and that this diversity should be more widely acknowledged. These can be termed 'impact pathways', and are important in understanding, and also articulating, how A&H research matters. Among these is what can be termed a 'knowledge-driven' pathway which corresponds well with how value creation is typically modelled within STEM fields: research results are further developed, potentially through interaction with various stakeholders, creating value through their use in different contexts. A&H research can also have intrinsic value in and of itself, without any further development. Examples are a museum exhibit, a literary work or an arts performance. Additional pathways are more indirect and are less about the further development of the A&H research itself and more about how it can influence other research or other areas. In some cases, A&H research can challenge current practices and beliefs or help to interpret them. In other cases, indirect impacts can be transformative, leading to substantive changes. An additional pathway is the enlightenment model. A&H research creates a foundation or pool of knowledge that can be tapped into, in some cases in ways that are unexpected or after lengthy periods of time.

In comparison with other fields, knowledge transfer in the A&H is much broader both in terms of the channels used to share researchers' work or engage with society, and in the types of stakeholders that they interact with. A&H scholars often focus on communities which may be overlooked by STEM researchers, including policy makers, the voluntary and community sectors, and broader civil society. This policy and civil society engagement provides knowledge and insights, enriching public discourse and ensuring a more informed and inclusive society (Benneworth et al., 2016; Olmos-Peñuela et al., 2014). At the same time, it is often difficult to distinguish knowledge transfer, engagement and value creation. This has much to do with the different ways in which A&H research, or A&H researchers, create public value. The idea of productive interactions is particularly relevant for the A&H, because these interactions are not just a part of research and development activities (as they often would be for STEM fields) but also often where value creation takes place. This also appears to have influenced how A&H researchers view themselves as researchers. Some researchers see engagement with society as an integral part of their research and thereby also are more readily able to articulate how their research creates value.

We conclude that A&H researchers can sometimes struggle to articulate the value of their work, especially when they are asked to operate within what they see as a restricted or externally imposed, ill-fitting impact and evaluation model. The A&H are not static but continuously evolving in dialogue with societal change. Far from being reactive, A&H often anticipate and shape debates - particularly around issues such as identity, gender and ethics. The current, sometimes-negative, climate towards the Arts and Humanities might also restrict and discourage this articulation. There is some evidence that Arts and Humanities scholars are inclined to hold back from public debate in what they perceive as a harsh political climate for intellectual exchange and societal engagement. It is then very important to acknowledge, share and, as appropriate, celebrate the societal contribution of A&H research on its own terms - and not to only compare it unfavourably with the public value of STEM. There are many examples from A&H research which could be communicated and disseminated in this fashion.

This report also raises questions about the most appropriate form of impact evaluation and value assessment when considering A&H research. It follows from the insights presented here that this should be flexible and sensitive to different impact and value creation forms, different varieties of A&H research, contexts and disciplinary traditions, and the different timeframes that might be involved. Current bibliometric measures (such

as citation indices) might serve to limit the societal contribution of A&H research: as when researchers cut back on Danish language publications, including more popular books, in order to pursue publication in North American and English language academic journals and favour outlets that “count” under the current evaluation system. The need for flexibility and contextual sensitivity in evaluation should not be seen as a weakness but rather as a defining strength characterising the Arts and Humanities fields. Evaluation approaches must reflect the open, interpretative and at times critical nature of A&H research, rather than constraining it within a rigid, linear standard and one-size-fits-all framework.

Several academic organisations and policy initiatives - such as CoARA, and REF2029 - have begun to advocate for more pluralistic and inclusive approaches to research assessment. These efforts emphasise the importance of recognising a broader range of outputs, outcomes and impact pathways, such as artistic productions, digital infrastructures, social media, science communication, public engagement forums and collaborative platforms. Scholars such as Hammarfelt (2017), Muhonen et al. (2020), Ochsner et al. (2016), and Spaapen and van Drooge (2011) argue that fair and meaningful assessment requires active involvement of humanities researchers in defining quality standards and designing assessment frameworks.

These findings carry important implications. Funders play a pivotal role not just in enabling A&H research, but also in shaping the conditions under which it is recognised, evaluated, and publicly understood. We encourage funders to take an active leadership role in prioritising and promoting the public value and societal relevance of A&H research. We will present these in succinct form:

- Adopt a flexible approach to assessing the societal value of A&H research, taking into account the inherent diversity of the field and the wide variety of forms and pathways through which public value is generated.
- Recognise that the term ‘impact’ is often perceived as narrow and limiting within the A&H. The language of ‘impact’ is contested and has negative connotations for many A&H researchers. Funders are encouraged to acknowledge and adopt broader and more inclusive terminology and practices in funding calls, evaluation criteria, and strategic documents to better reflect the multifaceted nature of A&H research, to foster more constructive dialogue with the field and help bridge gaps in understanding and trust.
- Acknowledge the critical and questioning nature of much A&H research. For many researchers in the field, challenging dominant narratives, questioning assumptions, and stimulating broader societal debate are central scholarly values. While this may sometimes be perceived as disruptive, it is in fact a key strength of A&H research and should be actively recognised and supported by funders and other stakeholders.
- Promote inclusive and plural conceptions of knowledge and explicitly recognise that A&H research often engage with non-dominant epistemologies, critical perspectives, and historically marginalised voices. These contributions are essential to democratic, ethical, and culturally grounded knowledge systems and deserve sustained funding and visibility.
- Promote structural change for A&H engagement infrastructure by supporting the development of institutional knowledge exchange units or engagement hubs specifically tailored to A&H disciplines. These units can help build partnerships, track impact and value pathways, and offer support for collaboration and visibility beyond academia.
- Include A&H researchers in the design of evaluation and assessment systems and support the involvement of A&H scholars directly in the co-creation of research assessment frameworks to ensure

they reflect the epistemological and value creation logics of the field. Funders can facilitate consultative processes, working groups, or pilots in partnership with higher education institutions.

- Support communication and engagement. Consider how to facilitate both the communication of 'impact stories' and value creation cases related to A&H research and the development of communication skills. This might also include active support for A&H scholars who participate in public debate or use other avenues of engagement, dissemination and communication.
- Invest in capacity-building for articulating value in A&H research and support dedicated training programmes, workshops and other initiatives that help A&H researchers to express the broader societal, cultural, and ethical value of their work in accessible and compelling ways.
- Support longitudinal and qualitative tracking of A&H contributions and fund studies that trace the long-term societal contributions of A&H research beyond short-term metrics, such as retrospective value creation studies, ethnographic approaches to understanding how A&H work circulates in society or experimental research without requirements of demonstrating immediate utility.
- Facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations with A&H as equal partners creating calls and evaluation criteria that genuinely value the contributions of A&H in interdisciplinary projects. This includes co-leadership opportunities, dedicated budgets for A&H-led activities, and review panels that understand A&H approaches and methodologies.
- Promote A&H research publicly. Funders should not only support A&H research behind the scenes but also take an active leadership role in publicly championing its societal relevance. By highlighting how A&H addresses complex societal, cultural, and ethical issues, funders can help reshape the public narrative. A strong, visible commitment can shift perceptions and reinforce A&H's position in national research systems.

## References

### Reviewed literature

- Aiello, E., Donovan, C., Duque, E., Fabrizio, S., Flecha, R., Holm, P., Molina, A., Oliver, E. & Reale, E. (2021). Effective strategies that enhance the social impact of social sciences and humanities research. *Evidence & Policy*, 17(1), 131-146.
- ALLEA. (2023). The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity – Revised Edition 2023. Berlin. <https://doi.org/10.26356/ECOC>
- Archambault, É., Vignola-Gagne, E., Cote, G., Lariviere, V., & Gingras, Y. (2006). Benchmarking scientific output in the social sciences and humanities: The limits of existing databases. *Scientometrics*, 68(3): 329-342.
- Bakhshi, H., Schneider, P., & Walker, C. (2008). *Arts and humanities research and innovation*. United Kingdom: Arts and Humanities Research Council. Retrieved from <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/arts-and-humanities-research-and-innovation/>.
- Bate, J. (2011). *The Public value of the Humanities*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bazeley, P. (2006). Research dissemination in creative arts, humanities and the social sciences. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25(3), 307-321.
- Beiner, T., van den Besselaar, P., Jacquemin, J., Pedersen, D. B., Rafols, I., Sivertsen, G., & Zrutek, J. (2020). Statement: Evaluating the Social Sciences and Humanities in Context—a Discussion Paper. *Constitutional Law Review*, 3(55), 153-175.
- Belfiore, E. (2015). 'Impact', 'value' and 'bad economics': Making sense of the problem of value in the arts and humanities. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 14(1), 95-110.
- Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2010). Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy-Making. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14(2), 37-41.
- Benneworth, P. (2015a). Between certainty and comprehensiveness in evaluating the societal impact of humanities research. CHEPS Working Paper 02/2015.
- Benneworth, P. (2015b). Putting impact into context: The Janus face of the public value of arts and humanities research. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14(1) 3-8.
- Benneworth, P., (2015c). Tracing how arts and humanities research translates, circulates and consolidates in society. How have scholars been reacting to diverse impact and public value agendas? *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14(1), 45-60.
- Benneworth, P., Castro-Martínez, E., Olmos-Peñuela, J., & Muhonen, R. (2022). Rethinking the Role of Productive Interactions in Explaining SSH Research Societal Impacts: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Productive Science System Dynamics'. In J. M. Azagra-Caro, P. D'Este, & D. Barberá-Tomás (Eds.) *University-Industry Knowledge Interactions: People, Tensions and Impact*, pp. 45-64. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

- Benneworth, P., Gulbrandsen, M., & Hazelkorn, E. (2016). *The Impact and Future of Arts and Humanities Research*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Benneworth, P., Hazelkorn, E., & Gulbrandsen, M. (2014). *HERAVALUE Final Report.: Measuring the societal impacts of universities' research into arts and the humanities*. Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA).
- Bertilsson, F. (2022). Borderline Humanities: Culture, History, Language, and Beliefs in Swedish Defense Research. In A. Ekström & H. Ö. Gustafsson (Eds.), *The Humanities and the Modern Politics of Knowledge: The Impact and Organization of the Humanities in Sweden, 1850-2020* (pp. 231-251). Amsterdam University Press.
- Bérubé, M. (2003). The utility of the arts and humanities. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 2(1), 23-40.
- Borden, I. (2008). The value of arts and humanities research to life in the UK. *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 12(3-4), 216-222.
- Braae, N. & Brook, L. (2024). *Creating and Evaluating Impact: A Resource for Creative Arts Researchers*. New Zealand: Otago Polytechnic Press. <https://doi.org/10.34074/book.312>
- Brewer, J. (2013). *The Public Value of the Social Sciences: an interpretive essay*. Bloomsbury.
- Bulaitis, Z. H. (2017). Measuring impact in the humanities: Learning from accountability and economics in a contemporary history of cultural value. *Palgrave Communications*, 3(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-017-0002-7>
- Bulaitis, Z. H. (2020). *Value and the humanities: The neoliberal university and our Victorian inheritance*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bulaitis, Z. H. (2023). Impact, innovation, and the public humanities: evaluating the societal impact of research in the United Kingdom. In M. Ochsner, & Z. H. Bulaitis (Eds.), *Accountability in Academic Life: European Perspectives on Societal Impact Evaluation*. Edward Elgar Publishing
- Bulaitis, Z. H. (2024). Value of Public Humanities. In A. Oancea, G. Derrick, X. Xu, & N. Nuseibeh (Eds.) *Handbook of Meta-Research*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Bod, R. (2013). *A new history of the humanities: The search for principles and patterns from antiquity to the present*. Oxford University Press.
- Castro-Martínez, E., Molas-Gallart, J., & Olmos-Peñuela, J. (2010). Knowledge transfer in the social sciences and the humanities: Informal links in a public research organization. In *Atlanta Conference on Science and Innovation Policy*, Atlanta, 15-17 September 2011.
- Castro-Martínez, E., Lucio, I., Perez-Marin, M., & Criado-Boado, F. (2008). The knowledge transfer from the Humanities: possibilities and characteristics. *Arbor, Ciencia Pensamiento y Cultura*, 184(732), 619-636. <https://doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2008.i732.211>
- CHASS. (2005). *Measures of quality and impact of publicly funded research in the humanities, arts and social sciences*. CHASS Occasional Paper No. 2. [https://chass.org.au/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=239946&module\\_id=464735](https://chass.org.au/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=239946&module_id=464735)
- Collini, S. (2012). *What are Universities For?* Penguin Books.
- Cunningham, J. A., Miller, K., & Perea-Vicente, J. (2024). Academic entrepreneurship in the humanities and social sciences: a systematic literature review and research agenda. *The Journal of Technology Transfer* 49, 1880-1913.
- Davidson-Harden, A. (2013). What Is Social Sciences and Humanities Research 'Worth'? Neoliberalism and the Framing of Social Sciences and Humanities Work in Canada. *Policy Futures in Education*, 11(4), 387-400.

- de Jong, S. P., & Muhonen, R. (2020). Who benefits from ex ante societal impact evaluation in the European funding arena? A cross-country comparison of societal impact capacity in the social sciences and humanities. *Research Evaluation*, 29(1), 22-33.
- Dewaele, A., Vandael, K., Meysman, S., & Buysse, A. (2021). Understanding collaborative interactions in relation to research impact in social sciences and humanities: a meta-ethnography. *Research Evaluation*, 30(2), 179-190. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvaa033>
- Donovan, C. & Gulbrandsen, M. (2018). Introduction: Measuring the impact of arts and humanities in Europe. *Research Evaluation*, 27(4), 285-286.
- DORA. (2012). San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. <https://sfdora.org/read/>
- EASSH - European Alliance for the Social Sciences and Humanities. (2020). *FP9's ambitious aims for societal impact call for a step change in interdisciplinarity and citizen engagement*. <https://eassh.eu/Position-Papers?page=4>
- Eisner, E. (2006). Does Arts-Based Research Have a Future? Inaugural Lecture for the First European Conference on Arts-Based Research: Belfast, Northern Ireland, June 2005. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(1), 9-18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25475802>
- Esko, T., Tuunainen, J., & Miettinen, R. (2012). Social impact and forms of interaction between university research and society in Humanities and Social Sciences. *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 49(1), 17-45.
- Fecher, B., Kuper, F., Sokolovska, N., Fenton, A., Hornbostel, S., & Wagner, G. G. (2021). Understanding the societal impact of the social sciences and humanities: Remarks on roles, challenges, and expectations. *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics*, 6, 696804.
- Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. (2017). *Approaches to Assessing Impacts in the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Fisher, D., Rubenson, K., Rockwell, K., Grosjean, G. & Atkinson-Grosjean, J. (2000) *Performance Indicators and the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training: Vancouver, BC.
- Flecha, R., Soler-Gallart, M., Oliver, E., Puigvert, L., Sordé Martí, T., Schubert, A., Soòs, S., Mosoni-Fried, J., Canhilal, K., Lepori, B., Avramov, D., Holm, P., Travis, C., Scharnhorst, A., Hogenaar, A., Horik, R. V., & Donovan, C. (2015, feb. 19). *Impact-Ev. Report 3. Impact Evaluation Of Fp6 (Last Call) And Fp7 Ssh Research Projects*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZE-NODO.1041949>
- Follesdal, A. (2006). A European Research Council for the social sciences and humanities, pro and con. *European Political Science*, 5(1), 21-32.
- Gascoigne, T., & Metcalfe, J. (2005). *Commercialisation of research activities in the humanities, arts and social sciences in Australia*. Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS).
- Gibson, A. G., & Hazelkorn, E. (2017). Arts and humanities research, redefining public benefit, and research prioritization in Ireland. *Research Evaluation*, 26(3):199-210.
- Giménez-Toledo, E., Olmos-Peñuela, J., Castro-Martínez, E., & Perruchas, F. (2024). The forms of societal interaction in the social sciences, humanities and arts: Below the tip of the iceberg. *Research Evaluation*, 33, 2023, rvad016. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvad016>
- Goggin, G. (2020). The importance of humanities interfaces for research and its social futures. *Communication Research and Practice*, 4(4), 298-311.

- Golhasany, H., Hosseini, T., & Hassanzadeh, M. (2021). Challenges to Creating Impact in Humanities and Social Sciences in Iran: A Grounded Theory Analysis. *Sciences and Techniques of Information Management*, 7(2),
- Green, L. (2006). Research outputs in the creative and performing arts: "Australianising" an international debate. *Media International Australia*, 118(1), 5-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X0611800103>
- Hammarfelt, B. (2017). Four claims on research assessment and metric use in the humanities. *Bulletin of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 43(5). <https://doi.org/10.1002/bul2.2017.1720430508>
- Hayden, M. C., Petrova, M. K., & Wutti, D. (2018). Direct associations of the terminology of knowledge transfer-differences between the social sciences and humanities (SSH) and other scientific disciplines. *Trames: A Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 22(3), 239-256.
- Hayter, C. S., Rasmussen, E., & Rooksby, J. H. (2020). Beyond formal university technology transfer: innovative pathways for knowledge exchange. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 45(1), 1-8.
- Hazelkorn, E. (2015). Making an impact: New directions for arts and humanities research. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14(1), 25-44.
- Herbert, W., & Kaube, J. (2008). Der Leistungsbegriff in der Wissenschaft – ein Überblick. *Feval Journal for Research and Technology Policy Evaluation*, 43, 40-45.
- Heikkilä, T. M., & Niiniluoto, I. M. O. (2017). The value and role of humanities research: Review of the contemporary status and suggestions for future. *Nordicom-Information*, 39(1), 80-86.
- Hellström, T. (2022). Novel, original, and business as usual: Contributing in the humanities. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 21(4), 339-357.
- Hicks, D. (2004). The four literatures of social science. In H. F. Moed, W. Glänzel, & U. Schmoch (Eds.) *Handbook of Quantitative Science and Technology Research*. Springer, pp. 473-496. [https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-2755-9\\_22](https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-2755-9_22)
- Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature* 520, 429-431. <https://doi.org/10.1038/520429a>
- Holm, P., Jarrick, A., & Scott, D. (2015). *Humanities world report 2015*. Springer Nature.
- Hose, K. (2009). A critical review of research impact metrics. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(3), 123-132.
- Hug, S. E., Ochsner, M., & Daniel, H. D. (2014). A framework to explore and develop criteria for assessing research quality in the humanities. *International Journal for Education, Law and Policy*, 10(1), 55-68.
- Hug, S. E., Ochsner, M., & Daniel, H. D. (2013). Criteria for assessing research quality in the humanities: a Delphi study among scholars of English literature, German literature and art history. *Research Evaluation*, 22(5), 369-383.
- Hughes, A., Kitson, M., Probert, J., Bullock, A., & Milner, I. (2011). *Hidden Connections: Knowledge Exchange between the Arts and Humanities and the Private, Public and Third Sectors*. United Kingdom: Arts & Humanities Research Council.
- Janinovic, J., Pekovic, S., Vuckovic, D., Popovic, S., Djokovic, R., & Pejicæ Bach, M. (2020). Innovative strategies for creating and assessing research quality and societal impact in social sciences and humanities. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 18(4), 449-458.
- Kenyon, T. (2014). Defining and measuring research impact in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Arts in the Digital Age. *Knowledge Organization*, 41(3), 249-257.



- Keraudren, P. (2017). The Contribution of Social Sciences and the Humanities to Research Addressing Societal Challenges. Towards a Policy for Interdisciplinarity at European Level? In A. Tressaud (Ed.), *Progress in Science, Progress in Society*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69974-5>
- Konkiel, S. (2018). Approaches to creating 'humane' research evaluation metrics for the humanities. *Insights* 31, 201. <https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.445>
- LERU - League of European Research Universities. (2012). *Research Assessment in the Humanities and Social Sciences*.
- Levitt, R. Celia, C., Diepeveen, S., Chonaill, S. N., Rabinovich, L., & Tiessen, J. (2010). *Assessing the impact of arts and humanities research at the University of Cambridge*. RAND Europe.
- Lewandowska, K., Ochsner, M., & Kulczycki, E. (2024). Research quality criteria in the Creative Arts. *Studies in Higher Education*, 49(4), 639-653. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2248174>
- Looseley, D. (2013). Speaking of Impact: Languages and the Utility of the Humanities. In *Humanities in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Utility and Markets* (pp. 91-108). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- López-Varela Azcárate, A. (2020). The Impact of the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe and Beyond. *Cultura*, 17(2), 11-27.
- Lund, H. S. (2015). The Humanities as a Public Good and the Need for Developing Accountability Strategies. *Humanities* 2015, 4, 98-108. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h4010098>
- Mattsson, P., Perez Vico, E., & Salö, L. (2024). *Making Universities Matter: Collaboration, Engagement, Impact* (p. 232). Springer Nature.
- McAlpine, L., Gibson, A. G., Bengtsen, S. S. E., & DeLaquil, T. (2024). Valuing humanities: Rethinking the humanities-impact landscape in Denmark. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*. 23(4), 287-307.
- Meagher, L., Lyall, C., & Nutley, S. (2008). Flows of knowledge, expertise and influence: a method for assessing policy and practice impacts from social science research. *Research Evaluation*, 17(3), 163-173.
- Message, K., Bongiorno, F., & Wellington, R. (2024). Public humanities of the future: Museums, archives, universities and beyond. *Humanities Research*, 20(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.22459/HR.XX.01.2024.01>
- Millard, D. (2014). POCARIM Policy Report 5 - Societal impact in Social Science and Humanities PhD Graduates in Europe. POCARIM. Retrieved from <https://salford-repository.worktribe.com/output/1416176/pocarim-policy-report-5-societal-impact-in-social-science-and-humanities-ssh-phd-graduates-in-europe>
- Moher, D., Bouter, L., Kleinert, S., Glasziou, P., Sham, M. H., Barbour, V., Coriat, A., Foeger, N., & Dirnagl, U. (2020). The Hong Kong Principles for Assessing Researchers. *PLOS Biology*, 18(7), e3000737. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000737>
- Molas-Gallart, J., & Tang, P. (2011). Tracing 'productive interactions' to identify social impacts: an example from the social sciences. *Research evaluation*, 20(3), 219-226.
- Mooney, L. (2009). *The humanities value chain: a framework for knowledge transfer in the modern university*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nottingham]. Nottingham Theses.
- Muhonen, R., Benneworth, P., & Olmos-Peñuela, J. (2020). From productive interactions to impact pathways: Understanding the key dimensions in developing social sciences and humanities research societal impact. *Research Evaluation*, 29(1), 34-47.
- Muhonen, R. (2022). *Public value of research and the impact agenda – Tracking the elements of untold impact stories*. Proposal to the Academy of Finland.

- Mutz, R., Bornmann, L., & Daniel, H.-D. (2013). Types of research output profiles: A multilevel latent class analysis of the Austrian Science Fund's final project report data. *Research Evaluation*, 22(2), 118–133. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvs038>
- Müller, K. (2024). Responsive Research Quality Articulations of the Humanities. In P. Mattsson, E. Perez Vico, & L. Salö (Eds.), *Making Universities Matter: Collaboration, Engagement, Impact* (pp. 165–184). Springer Nature.
- Müller, K., Salö, L., & Sörlin, S. (2024). Quality from within: entry points to research quality in the humanities. *Research Evaluation*, 33, rvae029. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvae029>
- Napoli, M. (2024). Reflections on Knowledge Production in Humanities from an Academic Exchange Experience. *Knowledge* 4(2), 213–232.
- Nederhof, A. J. (2006). Bibliometric monitoring of research performance in the social sciences and humanities: A review. *Research Policy*, 35(4), 400–421.
- Nutley, S., Walter, I., & Davies, H. (2007). *Using Evidence: How Research Can Inform Public Services*. Bristol, Policy Press.
- Oancea, A. (2024). Hard to assess research impact nexuses in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. In A. Oancea, G. Derrick, X. Xu, & N. Nuseibeh (Eds.) *Handbook of Meta-Research*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Ochsner, M. (2021). Bibliometrics in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. In R. Ball (Ed.) *Handbook Bibliometrics* (pp. 117–124). De Gruyter Saur.
- Ochsner M., Hug S. E., & Daniel H. D. (2016) Humanities scholars' conceptions of research quality. In M. Ochsner, S. E. Hug, & H. D. Daniel (Eds.) *Research Assessment in the Humanities. Towards Criteria and Procedures*. Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, pp 43–69.
- Ochsner, M., Hug, S. E., & Daniel, H. D. (2012). Indicators for research quality in the humanities: opportunities and limitations. *Bibliometrie-Praxis und Forschung*, 1.
- Ochsner, M., Hug, S., & Galleron, I. (2017). The future of research assessment in the humanities: bottom-up assessment procedures. *Palgrave communications*, 3(1), 1–12.
- Ochsner, M., Hug, S. E., & Daniel, H. D. (2014). *Setting the stage for the assessment of research quality in the humanities. Consolidating the results of four empirical studies. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 17, 111–132.
- O'Mahony, J., Garga, R., Thomas, M., & Kimber, M. (2019). Valuing the humanities. *Australian Economic Review*, 52(2), 226–235.
- Olmos-Peñuela, J., Benneworth, P., & Casto-Martínez, E. (2015). Are the sciences essential and humanities elective? Disentangling competing claims for humanities' research public value. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14(1) 61–78.
- Olmos-Peñuela, J., Castro-Martínez, E., & D'Este, P. (2014). Knowledge transfer activities in social sciences and humanities: Explaining the interactions of research groups with non-academic agents. *Research Policy*, 43(4), 696–706.
- Pedersen, D. B. (2015, 27 July). Real impact is about influence, meaning and value: mapping contributions for a new impact agenda in the humanities. *LSE Blogs*. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/07/27/mapping-the-public-influence-of-the-humanities/>
- Pedersen, D. B., Grønvad, J. F., & Hvidtfeldt, R. (2020). Methods for mapping the impact of social sciences and humanities - A literature review. *Research Evaluation*, 29(1), 4–21
- Penfield, T., Baker, M. J., Scoble, R., & Wykes, M. C. (2014). Assessment, evaluations, and definitions of research impact: A review. *Research Evaluation*, 23(1), 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvt021>

- Pohoryles, R. J., & Schadauer, A. (2009). What future for the European social sciences and humanities? *Innovation – The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 22(2), 147-187.
- Reale, E., Avramov, D., Canhial, K., Donovan, C., Flecha, R., Holm, P., Larkin, C., Lepori, B., Mosoni-Fried, J., Oliver, E., Primeri, E., Puigvert, L., Scharnhorst, A., Schubert, A., Soler, M., Soòs, S., Sordé, T., Travis, C., & Van Horik, R. (2018). A review of literature on evaluating the scientific, social and political impact of social sciences and humanities research. *Research Evaluation*, 27(4), 298-308.
- Robinson-Garcia, N., van Leeuwen, T., & Rafols, I. (2016). SSH & the City. A Network Approach for Tracing the Societal Contribution of the Social Sciences and Humanities for Local Development. *Proceedings of the 21st international conference on science and technology indicators, Spain*.
- Romary, L. & Edmond, J. (2019). A Tangential View on Impact for the Arts and Humanities through the Lens of the DARIAH-ERIC. In B. Maegaard, & R. Pozzo (Eds.) *Stay Tuned To The Future - Impact of the Research Infrastructures for Social Sciences and Humanities*. Leo S. Olschki Editore.
- Rudd, M. (2015). Awareness of Humanities, Arts and Social Science (HASS) Research is related to patterns of citizens' community and cultural engagement. *Social Sciences*, 4, 313-338.
- Saratsi, E., Acott, T., Allinson, E., Edwards, D., Chris Fremantle, C., & Fish, R. (2019). Valuing arts & arts research. *Valuing nature paper*, 22. <https://valuing-nature.net/valuing-arts-and-arts-research>
- Sigurðarson, E. S. (2020). *Capacities, capabilities, and the societal impact of the humanities*. *Research Evaluation* 29(1), 71-76.
- Skov, S., & Bengtsen, S.S. (2024). Living with the impact agenda - humanities academics negotiating and resisting the impact agenda as researchers and doctoral supervisors. *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education*, 15(2), 169-184.
- Small, H. (2013). *The value of the humanities*. Oxford University Press.
- Spaapen, J., & van Drooge, L. (2011). Introducing 'productive interactions' in social impact assessment. *Research evaluation*, 20(3), 211-218.
- Tjørring, L., & Nielsen, M. (2022). Provoking dialogue: Ethnographic examples as bridge-builders in university-industry collaborations. In M. M. Skrubbeltrang, M. Nielsen, M. L. Petersen, & L. Jørring (Eds.) *Business Meets the Humanities: The Human Perspective in University-Industry Collaboration*. Routledge.
- Vacher, M. (2022). Making difference: An enquiry into what happens when an architect company acquires humanistic knowledge as a competitive business strategy. In M. M. Skrubbeltrang, M. Nielsen, M. L. Petersen, & L. Jørring (Eds.) *Business Meets the Humanities: The Human Perspective in University-Industry Collaboration*. Routledge, pp. 78-96.
- van den Akker, W. (2016). Yes we should; research assessment in the humanities. In M. Ochsner, S. E. Hug, & H.-D. Daniel (Eds.). *Research Assessment in the Humanities. Towards Criteria and Procedures*. Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, pp 23-29.
- Vanholsbeeck, M., & Lendák-Kabók, K. (2020). Research Impact as a 'Boundary Object' in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. *Word & Text: A Journal of Literary Studies & Linguistics*, 10.
- Vanholsbeeck, M., Demetriou, T., Girkontaite, A., Istenic Starcic, A., Keiski, V., Kulczycki, E., Papanastasiou, E., Pölönen, J., Proppe, H., & Vehovec, M. (2019). Senior academics as key negotiators in the implementation of impact policies in the social sciences and humanities. *Journal for Research and Technology Policy Evaluation*, 48. <https://doi.org/10.22163/fteval.2019.371>

- Vučković, D., Pekovic, S., Popović, S., & Janinovic, J. (2023). Assessing the Appraisal of Research Quality in Social Sciences and Humanities: A Case Study of the University of Montenegro. *Business Systems Research*, 14(1), 131-152. <https://doi.org/10.2478/bsrj-2023-0007>
- Weiss, C. H. (1977). Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research, *Policy Analysis*, 3(4), 531-545. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/research-policys-sake-enlightenment-function/docview/1297976535/se-2>
- Weiss, C. H. (1979). The Many Meanings of Research Utilization. *Public Administration Review*, 39(5), 426-431. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3109916>
- Westerlund, H., & Barrett, M. (2022). Narrating arts education research impact in and through research policy: affordances and constraints for professional transformation. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 123(2), 97-109.
- Wutti, D., & Hayden, M. C. (2017). Knowledge transfer in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) – Definition, motivators, obstacles, and visions. *Colloquium: New Philologies*, 2(1), 87-101. <https://doi.org/10.23963/cnp.2017.2.1.7>
-

## Appendix I: Methodology

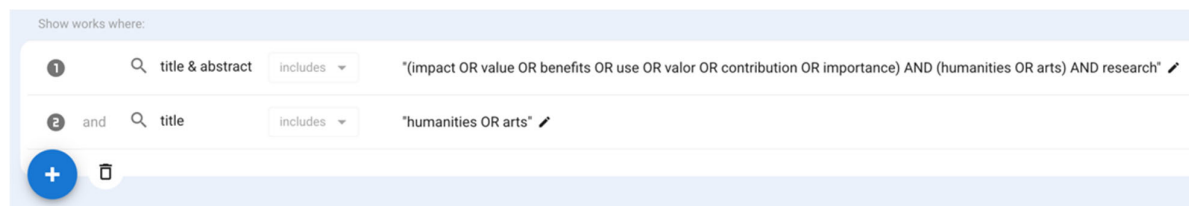
### Systematic search

The literature search was undertaken in OpenAlex, a database containing a bibliographic catalogue of various types of scientific publications. The choice of database was based on the impressions emerging from the initial desk research, which revealed relevant grey literature and books in addition to peer reviewed articles. Relative to other relevant publication databases, OpenAlex has a broader scope in terms of publication types and includes more grey literature, books and book chapters.

The search string consists of three elements (see figure I.1). Firstly, the concept of impact/value; secondly, the specification of field, in this case the humanities and arts; and thirdly, research. The search string was developed based on a series of trials. Initially, literature included in the project proposal was screened for vocabulary used to describe value and impact. This resulted in over 50 different words and phrases, such as valorisation, engagement, influence, etc. A combination of these were used in a series of trial searches before the search string below was chosen. Initially, the number of included terms describing value was much lower, however, upon including more of these terms, the resulting literature continued to remain relevant for our review, therefore, the seven terms were included.

When the search string included below was only applied to title and abstract, OpenAlex identified 82.160 results, where some of those identified as most relevant by the database were not relevant for our review. Upon adding the title search string, that number came down to 11.020 seemingly more relevant results, and therefore, we decided to include that additional filter in our search.

**Figure I.1 Search string in OpenAlex**



Upon refining the search string, the search results were exported from OpenAlex and uploaded to Covidence. This process automatically removed 3.972 duplicates, and seven were manually removed. This resulted in 7.041 records for screening.

### Screening process

The screening process was conducted in Covidence. Covidence is a software that supports a systematic screening process divided into 3 phases: 1) title and abstract screening, 2) full-text review and 3) extraction. The two first screening phases are based on an agreement principle, i.e. agreement from two reviewers is

required to include/exclude a publication. In cases of conflict between two reviewers, a third reviewer must make the final decision. The extraction phase includes the building of an extraction form in which each publication is described according to defined categories and tags supporting the following analysis.

The screening process in this review consisted of three steps and was based on the following exclusion criteria:

- Can't find publication (no DOI and unable to locate through internet search)
- Bibliometric study (not related to impact)
- No impact focus
- Practice focus, not research
- Education focus, not research
- Other

As suggested by the description of the exclusion criteria relating to 'Bibliometric study', some of these analyses were relevant for our study. However, bibliometric studies intended to analyse citation patterns were excluded from this review. 'No impact focus' excluded studies that were focused on humanities or arts research, but not on the value or impact of this research. An example of this could be a study into attitudes and issues relating to online collaboration in the humanities. 'Practice focus' refers to literature focused on the practice of humanities and arts research and researchers in terms of things such as methodological approaches and data management. 'Education focus' was focused on humanities and arts education, both within their own fields but also in relation to the inclusion of humanities or arts subjects or methods in STEM fields (e.g. medicine). Lastly, 'Other' refers to studies excluded for reasons other than the ones discussed above but were deemed to be outside the scope of this review.

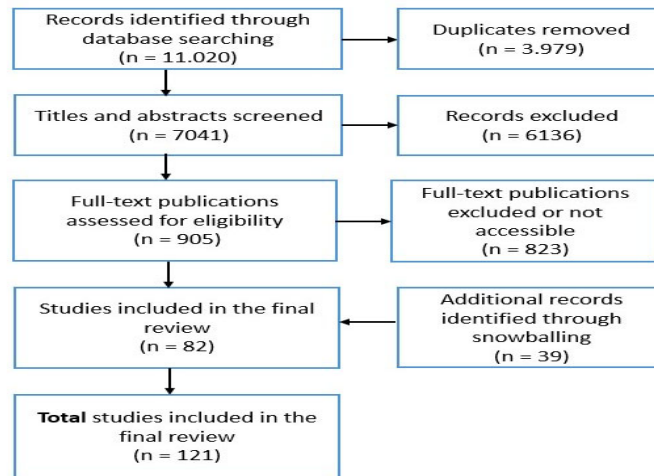
### **Snowballing**

In addition to the systematic search, a hand-held search was performed using the snowballing method to identify any additional references that were relevant. Publications identified during this search phase were evaluated against the exclusion criteria and included publications were categorized according to the 6 areas of interest. An additional 39 publications were included in the final review after this search phase.

Figure I.2 below summarises the screening process and the resulting literature, including the literature added through snowballing.

---

Figure I.2 Screening process



## Interviews

29 semi-structured interviews were conducted to qualify and nuance the findings of the literature review.

All interviews were conducted during the period February-May 2025. The group of interview respondents included experts on the impact of research in the arts and humanities (these were mainly identified via the included literature) and researchers from different arts and humanities fields. Respondents from Denmark and abroad were interviewed.

The interviews concerned i) the perceptions of the impact of A&H research in comparison with STEM fields, ii) the perceptions of how A&H research is valorised by different stakeholders (e.g. government and industry), iii) ideas for how evaluation and funding can be utilised or designed to promote A&H research. This interview material was used to validate and enrich findings from the reviewed literature, to seek experts' reflections on overall work and recent developments in this field, and researchers' own views and experiences in promoting the impact of their work. Furthermore, the interviews contributed with illustrative examples of how A&H research create societal impact.

## Appendix II: Disciplines covered in literature

**Table II.1 Specific disciplines covered in literature**

Discipline	References
Archaeology	Aiello et al. (2021), Bate (2011)
Anthropology	Tjørring & Nielsen (2022), Vacher (2022)
Architecture	Borden (2008), Bate (2011)
Architecture and Design	CHASS (2005)
Cinematic	Braae & Brook (2024)
Creative Arts	Braae & Brook (2024), Green, L. (2006), Bate (2011)
Culture	CHASS (2005)
Education	Aiello et al. (2021), Eisner (2006), Esko et al. (2012)
History	Benneworth (2015c), Braae & Brook (2024), CHASS (2005), Bate (2011)
Art History	Hug et al. (2013), Ochsner, Hug & Daniel (2012), Ochsner, Hug & Daniel (2014)
Linguistics	Esko et al. (2012), Bate (2011), Looseley (2013)
Literature	Hug et al. (2013), Bate (2011), Ochsner, Hug & Daniel (2012), Ochsner, Hug & Daniel (2014)
Museology	Bulaitis (2017), Bate (2011)
Music	CHASS (2005)
Philosophy	Benneworth (2015c)
Religion	Bate (2011)
Theatre	Braae & Brook (2024)
Urban studies	Esko et al. (2012)



## Appendix III: Informant overview

**Table III.1 Informants<sup>5</sup>**

Respondent	Title	Institution
Andreas Roepstorff	Professor, Center Director	Aarhus Universitet, Aarhus Institute for Advanced Studies
Björn Hammarfelt	Professor	University of Borås, Swedish School of Library and Information Science
Bo Poulsen	Professor, Council vice-chair (Humanities Research Council)	Ålborg Universitet, Department of Politics and Society, Independent Research Fund Denmark
Britta Timm Knudsen	Professor	Aarhus Universitet, Institute for Communication and Culture
Caroline Nyvang	Senior Researcher	Royal Danish Library
Christian Lund	Special Adviser	The Research Council of Norway
David Budtz Pedersen	Professor Centre Director	Ålborg Universitet, Science Communication and Impact Studies, FRONTIER Center for Advanced Social Science and Humanities
Eleonora Belfiore	Prof of Space, Place & Creative Economies; Deputy Director	Coventry University, Centre for Creative Economies
Ellen Hazelkorn	Professor emeritus	Technological University Dublin, Faculty of Arts. Former Director, Higher Education Policy Research Unit
Emanuela Reale	Associate senior of the Research Institute on Sustainable Economic Growth – IRCrES CNR, director until 2023.	Italian National Research Council, President of the European Forum for Studies on Research and Innovation Policies-EU-SPR
Eva Skafte Jensen	Senior Researcher	The Danish Language Council
Gabi Lombardo	Managing Director	European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities

<sup>5</sup> The table lists the 28 (out of in all 29) informants that agreed to be named in the report.

Jordi Molas-Gallart	Research Professor	Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), and Director of INGENIO (CSIC-UPV), a joint research centre of CSIC and the Polytechnic University of Valencia.
Lone Koefoed Hansen	Associate Professor Council Chair (Humanities Research Council)	Aarhus Universitet, Institute for Communication and Culture, Independent Research Fund Denmark
Magnus Gulbrandsen	Professor	University of Oslo, Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture
Maja Horst	Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Science in Society.	Aarhus Universitet, Faculty of Arts
Marie-Elisabeth Pihl	Visiting researcher	Syddansk Universitet, Department of Culture and Language
Mathias Clasen	Associate professor and director of Recreational Fear Lab	Aarhus Universitet, Department of English,
Mats Benner	Professor	Lund University, School of Economics and Management,
Michael Ochsner	Senior Researcher	Swiss Foundation for Research in Social Sciences (FORS), University of Lausanne, Member of European Network for Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and Humanities
Pernille Almlund	Associate Professor	Roskilde Universitet, Department of Communication and Arts
Reetta Muhonen	Senior research fellow	Tampere University, Higher Education Studies The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies
Signe Skov	Special Consultant, Ph.d., Researcher and academic developer	Københavns Universitet, Education. Tidligere Ph.d.-skoleleder.
Sverker Sörlin	Professor	Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
Sylvie Lamoureux	Vice President	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada)
Søren Bengtzen	Associate Professor	Aarhus Universitet, Danish School of Education (DPU)
Tessa DeLaquil	Postdoc	Aarhus Universitet, Danish School of Education (DPU)
Vincent Hendricks	Professor	Københavns Universitet, Department of Communication

