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Knowing the Humanities in Australia

In Australia there are conflicting and inconsistent views about how the humanities sector is operating and even what it really looks like. The last sustained survey of the humanities was conducted over a decade ago at a time when transformative corporatising, globalising and privatising processes were re-shaping the higher education landscape. From the vantage of 2010, only twelve years later, this earlier survey exercise is both prescient and passé, its overview of the academic workforce, constituent disciplines and institutional configurations largely artifactual now. This paper will reflect on the job of (episodically) knowing the humanities through a discussion of the findings of a current survey project, the Humanities in Australia Today, which has sought to form a clearer picture of a complex and differentiated sector. Just who are the humanities, how are the disciplines operating now, and what does an academic career look like for the next generation of humanities scholars?