SICSS Melbourne 2026

Program · 22 June – 3 July 2026

Venue Quick Reference

- **Week 1 (22–26 Jun):** RMIT Building 8 — Megaflex 3, 445 Swanston St (Mon–Wed); RMIT Activator (Thu–Fri)
- **Week 2 (29 Jun–3 Jul):** Deakin Downtown — 550 Bourke St, Melbourne
- **Social:** Sat 27 Jun — Dights Falls Cultural Tour, 10:00–12:00

Week 1 — Foundations, Methods & Theory · 22–26 June 2026

Day 1 Monday, 22 June 2026

Introduction to Computational Social Science

RMIT Building 8 — Megaflex 3

09:30–10:30 Arrivals & Morning Tea

10:30–11:00 | In-person

Welcome & Introduction to SICSS Melbourne

Organisers: Bogdan Mamaev, Kateryna Kasianenko

11:00–12:30 | In-person | Keynote Dialogue

What is Computational Social Science and Why It Matters in Australia?

Speakers: Daniel Angus, Olga Boichak, Svetha Venkatesh

Explore the foundational principles of Computational Social Science (CSS) and its growth within the Australian context.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Explain what CSS is.
> - Identify its value in HASS and interdisciplinary research.
> - Discuss opportunities for research in CSS across disciplines.

12:30–13:30 Lunch

13:30–14:30 | In-person

TBC

Speakers: TBC

14:30–15:15 Break

15:15–16:30 | Hybrid | Keynote

Bias in Computational Social Science

Speakers: Ahrabhi Kathirgamalingam

Learn about common sources of bias in digital media data, and those that stem from data collection strategies, computational methods, and research designs.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Identify methodological bias.
> - Recognise inherent limitations of CSS methods.
> - Evaluate possible risks and opportunities of a chosen method.

Social Event — Trivia Night | Oxford Scholar · ~17:30

Day 2 Tuesday, 23 June 2026

Working with Data: Ethics and Practices

RMIT Building 8 — Megaflex 3

09:00–10:30 | In-person | Panel

Ethics in Computational Social Science

Speakers: Dominique Carlon, Ehsan Dehghan, Olga Boichak

Discussion on ethics, legislation, terms of service, consent, and human research ethics committee requirements.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Make sense of HREC requirements.
> - Develop an ethical data collection strategy.
> - Understand the necessary steps to ensure compliance with FAIR and CARE principles.

10:30–11:00 Morning Tea

11:00–12:30 | In-person | Workshop

Data Donations and Participant-Centric Research

Speakers: Kellie Vella, Lauren Hayden, Michael Esteban

Approaches to data donation, including data download packages and screen capture using mobile phones and browser extensions.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Design data donation studies.
> - Collect digital trace data ethically.
> - Manage participants effectively.

12:30–13:30 Lunch

13:30–14:30 | In-person

Demystifying Publishing in Computational Social Science

Speakers: Olga Boichak, Kateryna Kasianenko

14:30–15:00 Break

15:00–16:00 | In-person

Nectar Research Cloud

Speakers: ARDC

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - What is Nectar Research Cloud and why you may want to use it.
> - How to access it.

Day 3 Wednesday, 24 June 2026

Data Collection and Working Across Disciplines

RMIT Building 8 — Megaflex 3

09:00–10:30 | In-person | Panel

Does Computational Social Science Lack Theory?

Speakers: Ehsan Dehghan

Engages critiques of CSS and examines what researchers can take from them when designing their own projects.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Justify methodological choices using a theoretical framework.
> - Critically examine the use of CSS in theory building.
> - Analyse the broader implications of computational methods.

10:30–11:00 Morning Tea

11:00–12:30 | In-person | Talk

The AIReD platform for Australia-wide Social Media Discovery and Usage

Speakers: Richard Sinnott

Demonstrates the Australian Internet Research Dashboard (AIReD) and how researchers can access and use the platform for social media research.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Describe the scope and capabilities of API-based platforms using AIReD as an example.
> - Discover datasets relevant to specific social media research questions.
> - Identify appropriate use cases and considerations for using AIReD data in social science research.

12:30–13:30 Lunch

13:30–15:00 | In-person | Workshop

Collecting and Analysing Data Download Packages

Speakers: Kellie Vella, Lauren Hayden, Michael Esteban

Introduces data download packages as an ethical and participant-centred approach to accessing digital trace data.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Evaluate the advantages and best use cases of data donation in CSS.
> - Design protocols for data donation.
> - Explore donated datasets.

15:00–15:30 Break

15:30–17:00 | In-person | Workshop

Working with Text Using Computational Techniques

Speakers: Kim Doyle, Daniel Russo-Batterham

The web is full of text data relevant to social science research, but collecting and analysing it has traditionally required serious programming skills. This hands-on session shows how modern large language models lower that barrier. Participants will learn to use LLM-powered tools to scrape and extract text from real websites, then see how the same approach can be used for typical textual analysis tasks, such as sentiment analysis. Participants will leave with tools and resources to apply in their own research.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Use LLM-powered tools to scrape and extract text from websites.
> - Apply LLM-assisted approaches to textual analysis tasks such as sentiment analysis.
> - Evaluate the suitability and limitations of LLM-based text collection and analysis methods.

Day 4 | Thursday, 25 June 2026

Tools and Approaches to Data Analysis

RMIT Activator

09:00–10:30 | In-person | Workshop

Screen Capture for Data Collection

Speakers: Dan Tran, Daniel Angus

Using the AIO Mobile Screen Capture tools as an example, we will discuss when and how to collect and analyse images, text and other data from users' screens.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Design data donation studies that involve screen capture.
> - Use screen capture safely and effectively as a source of participant data.
> - Understand the analytical steps involved in processing screen capture data.

10:30–11:00 Morning Tea

11:00–12:30 | In-person | Workshop

Using LLMs to Create Data Analysis Pipelines for Text-as-Data Research

Speakers: Seraphine F. Maerz

Learn about the use of LLMs for text-as-data research and put LLMs into practice using the Quallmer R package.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Integrate LLMs into research.
> - Deploy LLMs for analysis.
> - Analyse LLM output and suitability.

12:30–13:30 Lunch

13:30–14:30 | In-person | Workshop

RAG 101

Speakers: Futoon Abushaqra, Sachin Pathiyan Cherumanal

Introduction to Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) and how RAG systems combine information retrieval with large language models.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Understand the basic concept of a RAG system.
> - Recognise how RAG integrates retrieval and generation to improve LLM outputs.
> - Identify potential applications of RAG in research workflows.
> - Be aware of the main benefits and limitations of using RAG systems.

14:30–14:45 Break

14:45–16:15 | In-person | Workshop

Image Analysis for Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Speakers: Kunal Chand, Lauren Hayden

Large-scale image analysis using computational techniques, including the Image Machine and 2D UMAP for clustering and visualising image similarities.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Apply large-scale image analysis techniques.
> - Identify and visualise data patterns.
> - Integrate image analysis in research.

Day 5 Friday, 26 June 2026

Disciplines, Careers, and Industry

RMIT Activator

09:00–10:30 | In-person | Panel

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration: Bringing Social Science and Computational Analysis Together

Speakers: Oleg Zendel, Johanne Trippas, Hiruni Kegalle, Oliver Eklund

What it means to be part of an interdisciplinary team and how to make sure that such collaboration works well.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Manage relationships with colleagues from different academic backgrounds.
> - Identify personal goals when working in a team with competing priorities.
> - Plan and structure interdisciplinary research projects.

10:30–11:00 Morning Tea

11:00–12:30 | In-person | Panel

Working With and In the Industry

Speakers: Laura Gartry, Ariel Kuperman, Indigo Holcombe-James

Laura Gartry and Ariel Kuperman discuss how newsrooms can collaborate with data scientists and AI specialists to develop responsible, editorially grounded uses of AI. Drawing on applied experience, the session explores practical collaboration models that align technical capability with journalistic goals, and the challenge for public-service media of balancing (mis)trust in AI with the principles of trust and accuracy that are fundamental to good journalism, using localised news as an illustrative context. Drawing on her experience as Head of Research at ACMI—Australia's national museum of screen culture, Indigo Holcombe-James reflects on how qualitative research is conducted in a cultural context. Working primarily through ethnographic methods mixed with statistics, she discusses the boundary between academic methods and applied, audience-centred practice.

12:30–13:30 Lunch

13:30–15:00 | In-person | Workshop

Career Success

Speakers: Johanne Trippas

Strategies for project planning, timeline management, supervisor communication, milestone navigation, and building a strong research profile.

15:00–15:15 Break

15:15–16:15 | In-person | Workshop

Grant Writing in Computational Social Science

Speakers: Daniel Angus

Practical strategies for positioning interdisciplinary work so it resonates with reviewers and builds a coherent funding trajectory over time.

27/06 Saturday Social Event | Dights Falls Cultural Tour · 10:00–12:00

Week 2 — Collaborative Research Projects · 29 June – 3 July 2026

Days 6–9 Mon 29 June – Thu 2 July 2026

Collaborative Research Projects

Deakin Downtown — 550 Bourke St, Melbourne

Morning Sessions — Advanced Workshops

Tue 30 Jun · 10:00 | In-person | Talk

Music Score Analysis through Natural Language Interfaces

Speaker: Daniel Russo-Batterham

A natural language interface for analysing music scores encoded in the MEI format, making computational analysis accessible to researchers without programming expertise.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Understand how MEI encodes the physical properties of structured XML data.
> - Explain how MCP-based architectures connect natural language queries to analytical tools.
> - Identify appropriate visualisation and notation tools for exploring patterns in encoded music collections.
> - Reflect on the design considerations involved in building computational tools for non-technical domain researchers.

Tue 30 Jun · 15:00–16:00 | In-person | Workshop

Gems in the Slop: Breaking and Creating with GenAI

Speaker: Daniel Binns

What happens when you stop trying to fix the errors? This session invites participants to rethink generative AI not as a tool to be optimised, but as a material to be broken — and to ask what those breaks reveal. Drawing on glitch aesthetics, media materialism, and prompt experimentation, we'll treat AI error not as failure but as data: a window into the underlying structures, associations, and assumptions baked into large language models. Through live demos and hands-on exercises, participants will design their own prompt rituals and use the resulting glitches, hallucinations, and semantic collapses to build richer understandings of how these systems actually work. We'll also consider what it means to translate research into creative form — and what generative AI makes possible (and impossible) in that process.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Understand how and why LLMs produce errors, hallucinations, and unexpected outputs.
> - Use glitchy and degraded outputs as analytical data about model behaviour.
> - Design prompt experiments that generate productive instability.
> - Explore creative research translation through generative tools.

Wed 1 Jul · 09:00 | In-person | Workshop

Validation in Computational Social Science

Speakers: Matteo Vergani

Rigorous validation techniques essential for producing trustworthy CSS research outputs.

> **Learning Outcomes**
> - Find validation techniques to assess the robustness of research design and results.
> - Mitigate common validity threats in CSS research designs.
> - Produce transparent, reproducible research.

Mid-Morning & Afternoon — Teamwork & Project Development

Ongoing across Days 6–9 | In-person

Collaborative Research Project Work

Support: Drop-in experts, organisers, and mentors

Participants work in formed groups on collaborative research projects with technical assistance, theoretical guidance, and feedback throughout each day.

Day 10 Friday, 3 July 2026

Project Presentations & Closing

Deakin Downtown — 550 Bourke St, Melbourne

Morning & Afternoon | In-person

Group Presentations, Final Feedback & Closing

Participants present preliminary findings, methodologies, and proposed solutions from their collaborative week-long projects, followed by final feedback, networking, and closing remarks.

The Australian Internet Observatory is a co-investment partnership with RMIT University, QUT, University of Queensland, University of Melbourne, Swinburne University, Deakin University and the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) through the HASS and Indigenous Research Data Commons. The ARDC is enabled by the Australian Government's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS).