A national study on teaching the history of nursing in Australia (2007-8) has deepened understanding about how history is viewed by nurse academics and reveals some interesting tensions and possibilities. Academics generally valued history learning and recognized its contribution toward: critical thinking skills, understanding interpersonal dynamics and rituals of practice, raised awareness in the profession’s developments, engendering pride and professional identity and the belief that one holds personal power for the future. All of these benefits are likely to contribute to nursing’s capacity to contribute to Australian health care, yet the benefits of history learning within the curriculum are either difficult to plainly communicate or easy to ignore. The study reported that industry, students and other academics have a preference for technical knowledge. The liberal educational insights into humanistic, empowering and transformative actions so important to contemporary health care are frequently under-valued. This undervaluing is evidenced in: the ready reaction from universities to acquiesce to stakeholder demands for more training in technical skills; the shrinking space for history learning; the critical shortage of academic experts in Australian nursing history; and the absence of a scholarly community to enable development, review and dissemination of teaching resources. A number of possibilities are identified: 1) History advocates within nursing and midwifery need to persuasively convey their messages about history’s value; 2) Academics engaged in history teaching would benefit from guidelines and resources that provide accurate information and creative teaching and learning strategies; 3) There is strong support for the establishment of a clearinghouse providing information on, or links to, primary and secondary sources; and 4) Further research on best practice in history teaching is needed.