Corpus Management 101: Creating archive-ready language documentation

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Who should archive?
- Speakers, linguists, anthropologists, …
- Anyone who wants the language documentation materials that they produce to survive and remain useful for generations to come.
- In other words: YOU.

Where should you archive?
Definitions and distinctions:
- **Archive**: a trusted repository created and maintained by an institution with a demonstrated commitment to permanence and the long-term preservation of archived resources.
- **Language documentation corpus**: the collection of documentary materials created by researchers and native speakers.

What should you archive - I
- **Recordings, both audio & video**:
  - public events: ceremonies, oratory, dances…
  - narratives: historical, traditional, myths, personal, children's stories, …
  - instructions: how to build a house, how to weave a mat, how to catch a fish, …
  - literature: oral or written - any creative work
  - conversations: anything that's not too personal

What should you archive - II
- **Secondary (derived) materials**:
  - transcriptions, translations, & annotations of recordings
  - field notes, elicitation lists, orthographies
  - datasets, databases, spreadsheets
  - sketches, e.g. grammar, ethnography
  - Photographs
  - Otherwise unpublished or out-of-print articles

What you should archive - III
- **Teaching and learning materials**:
  - primers – children’s readers
  - calendars, posters, etc.
  - illustrated dictionaries, encyclopedia
  - curriculum designs
  - anything that other people might find inspiring and useful in their own programs.
What you should NOT archive

- Anything that could cause injury, arrest, or embarrassment to the speakers, e.g.:
  - Pamela Munro's interviews with Zapotecs in L.A. about entering the U.S. illegally.
  - Gossip that hasn’t aged enough (ancient gossip becomes history & narrative)
- Sacred works with highly restricted uses.

When should you archive?

- As soon as you get back from the field:
  - to prevent accidental damage or loss;
  - to get back handy presentation formats;
  - to build your CV even before you are ready to publish results.
- Restrict access to works in progress.
- Add transcriptions, annotations, etc. later.

Why should you archive? I

- to preserve recordings of endangered/minority languages for future generations.
- to facilitate the re-use of materials for:
  - language maintenance & revitalization programs;
  - typological, historical, comparative studies;
  - any kind of linguistic, anthropological, psychological, etc. study that you yourself won’t do.

Why should you archive? II

- to foster development of both oral and written literatures for endangered languages.
- to make known what documentation there is for which languages.
- to build your CV and get credit for all your hard work.

Archiving is a form of publishing

- Even if the resources are restricted, the metadata is public.
- Get credit for fieldwork in the early stages: list Archived Resources on your CV.
- Cite data from archived resources.
- Give speakers proper credit for their work and their creations.

Citing archived resources

How to build an archive-ready corpus I

- Rule #1: Label everything you produce with RUTHLESS CONSISTENCY. If I don’t know what it is, I can’t archive it.
- Rule #2: Get in touch with your friendly local archive and ask them to help you.
- Rule #3: Test your system before you leave: equipment, catalog method, labels.

How to build an archive-ready corpus II

- Define a policy concerning IPR and develop a consistent practice for obtaining consent, e.g., forms and/or recorded statements.
- Always get permission for everything:
  - recording
  - archiving
  - excerpting, publishing, etc.
- Learn how to talk to your consultants about IPR.

Labelling I: recordings

- Audio - record a “header” with basic information, in a contact language – English, Spanish...
  - Your name, speakers’ names
  - Date & place
  - Name of the language
  - Brief statement of genre and/or title of work.
- Video - go Hollywood: use a clapboard with basic info written on it.

Labelling II: media and files

- Decide on the fundamental organizing theme for your labelling system:
  - media, e.g. CDs, notebooks
  - consultants’ names or initials
  - languages/dialects
  - linguists’ names or initials
  - genres, e.g. wordlists, narratives, …

Labelling III: related items

Language documentation materials typically come in related sets, or bundles:
- recording of a narrative + interlinear text + revised translation + commentary
- interview + photographs
- recorded elicitation session + field notes

Labelling IV: types of relations

- derivation: a transcription is derived from a recording
- series: a long recording that spans several media (cds only hold 700 mb)
- part-whole: video & audio recordings made simultaneously of the same event
- association: (fuzzy) photographs of the narrator of a recording, commentaries
Corpus catalog/Metadata I

Catalog information for digital resources is called metadata.

Metadata supports:
- keeping related items together
- protection of sensitive materials
- searching for the thing you want
- use of resources by many people
- proper citation of archived resources

Metadata II: Minimum info

- Creators’ full names: you and the speakers.
- Language: be specific.
- Date of creation: YYYY-MM-DD.
- Place of creation: be specific.
- Access restrictions, and any special instructions concerning future uses.
- Genre keyword, e.g. narrative.

Metadata III: Additional info

- Project info: name, director, sponsor, etc.
- Participants’ roles (e.g. narrator), demographic data, contact info
- Resource info: provenance, formats, etc.
- Content info: descriptions of context in which created, content – the more detail here, the better for the long term.
- References: relevant publications

Metadata IV

Two recommended (interoperable) schemas. Choose either as your base and extend to suit your needs.

- OLAC – Open Language Archives Community – http://www.language-archives.org
Corpus management tools

- IMDI Browser & IMDI Data entry.
- AILLA’s Shoebox 2.0 & 5.0 templates.
- Any database or spreadsheet or Word template that you create.
- A looseleaf binder with a standard (xeroxable) form.

Useful websites

- DELAMAN: http://www.delaman.org/
- IMDI: http://www.mpi.nl/ISLE
- OLAC: http://www.language_archives.org
- EMELD: http://emeld.org
- AILLA: http://www.ailla.utexas.org/
- Write to me: ailla@ailla.utexas.org