Archives and audiences: Toward making endangered language documentations people can read, use, understand, and admire

ANTHONY C. WOODBURY

_____

_____

EL Publishing

For more EL Publishing articles and services:

Website: http://www.elpublishing.org
Terms of use: http://www.elpublishing.org/terms
Submissions: http://www.elpublishing.org/submissions

Archives and audiences: Toward making endangered language documentations people can read, use, understand, and admire

Anthony C. Woodbury

University of Texas at Austin

1. Introduction[1]

Language documentation leads to the accumulation of linguistic records in vast quantity. In just over a decade, archives established by two major funders of endangered language documentation, the DoBeS archive at the Max Planck Institute in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, and the Endangered Language Archive (ELAR) of the Hans Rausing Endangered Language Project at SOAS in London, have archived 10.5 terabytes and 8 terabytes, respectively, of text, sound, video and photographs. And at the University of Texas at Austin, our digital Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) has archived 1.9 terabytes, with another 2 terabytes waiting to be processed. Likewise, the analogue archive of the Alaska Native Language Center, in the space of two decades (1960-1980), collected all then-extant documents and recordings in and on Alaska's 20 indigenous languages, amounting to about 5,000 distinct items (Krauss and McGary 1980), which has now grown to 15,000 items according to Holton (2012: 105).[2]

Digital archives of language documentation have, of course, much in common with traditional ones. In archives of both kinds, as Conathan (2011) describes, records are assembled into corpora. These corpora can be collections of records taken from various sources that are related to a given theme; or they can be *archival fonds*, i.e., records emanating from a single project or group or individual. Potential records are appraised, and if selected, they are accessioned, arranged and described by means of metadata, guides and finding aids of various kinds, which make them accessible. This is best

---

[2] See www.mpi.nl/resources/data/dobes for DoBeS; www.elar-archive.org for ELAR; www.ailla.utexas.org for AILLA; and www.uaf.edu/anla/ for the Alaska Native Languages Archive.

done with the widest possible range of user interests in mind, for the present and future.

Still, digital archives are different. Materials that are 'born digital' can be accessioned relatively easily. Digital archives have huge capacities, so that for text and audio (but not yet video), space is barely a problem. Digital archives can be searched quickly, in many more ways than traditional archives can. They are available instantly, any time, anywhere, and do not require a (perhaps long) trip to a particular place for a visit. And they can be reproduced easily. These differences all have impacts on how archives are conceived, and on what we ask of them.

One such impact, perhaps an indirect one, is that documenters, funders, and archivists have increasingly viewed digital language archives as a means for primary dissemination, that is, they see archiving as a kind of enhanced, permanent publication. Documenters now often carry out projects whose primary *goal* is the creation of an accessible language documentary corpus, which they then ask archivists to preserve and (in most cases)[3] make widely available. They may do this whether or not the corpus reaches print or publication in a more traditional form. In effect archives are becoming a means for communicating results to a wide range of audiences. And this in turn may affect how archives work with more traditional corpora whose creators (or assemblers) assign to themselves a less explicitly authorial role.

In this paper I want to make some suggestions for how language documenters can properly pursue this view of their work. I want to explore how documenters might produce documentations that people can read, use, understand and admire: documentations that genuinely address their audiences (Section 3). I also want to explore how archives can accommodate such efforts (Section 4). And I want to explore what audiences themselves can contribute, so that the efforts do not grow in a vacuum (Section 5). First, however, let us attempt an initial characterization of documentary audiences.

---

[3] Document creators or donors may also archive materials that they wish to preserve but keep under controlled access; the need for effective solutions is made more urgent by the potential accessibility of digital archives.

2. Who are (or could be) the audiences?

I have argued (Woodbury 2011) that at their best, language documenters want their material, however conceived and assembled, to engage diverse audiences:

- community members interested in family, neighbors, community identity, verbal art, education, reclamation, or nostalgia
- scientists interested in philology, ethnohistory, human ecology, language typology, or linguistic theory
- humanists interested in linguistic expression and its products
- general publics with any of these interests, and more.

Language documentation can be so multi-purpose because it has discourse, that is, records of naturally occurring speech of *any* kind, at its core, even if it also includes such linguist-specific products as paradigms, word lists, and recorded elicitation sessions. A particularly helpful stance is that of Holton (2012), recognizing that even in the short term, archives made by linguists 'aren't just for linguists'. This implies that in selecting material and building archives, we should try to imagine the widest range of possible audiences. As Conathan (2011: 238) puts it, '[o]ver time, the importance of records may change and records may be put to unanticipated uses.'

The way we conceive of audiences widens further when we take a broad view of how a corpus (or the documentation project from which it comes) might be *theorized* (see Woodbury 2011: 161); that is, how the corpus might be said to cohere or 'add up'. There are various possibilities:

- a so-called Noah's Archive, a one-time sampling of the uses of a language for a grammar, dictionary, or thumbnail linguistic ethnography
- a more specific collection, such as the addition of something new, such as conversational data, to an existing corpus for a language lacking such conversational materials (cf. the Aleut conversational corpus recorded by Alice Taff – see elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/taff2006aleut)
- a database of insect names, with pictures and scientific identifications
- a collection of songs, with text and musical transcription, such as is described for Iwaija *Jurtbirrk* songs in Barwick et al. (2007)
- a set of videotaped and transcribed experiments designed to answer a specific set of questions, as described in San Roque et al. 2012.

These and untold other corpus theorizations engage still further audiences.

Finally, the ever-changing form of digital records can create new audiences, as Nathan (2010) and Thieberger (2012) have discussed. For example, the *Jurtbirrk* songs just mentioned also appeared as a CD with the appealing title *Jurtbirrk Love Songs of Northwestern Arnhem Land* (Barwick et al. 2005).

It is still not clear, however, that we are engaging our audiences as fully as we could be. Austin (2011) surveys audience use of several archives mainly to gauge who the audiences are, and concludes that regional archives have especially engaged communities while academic project-linked archives like DoBeS have more academic followings. I cannot help noting that counts of visits or visitors, where available, are often not as high as we might wish.[4]

It may be that our audiences need more help 'getting in'. Even when metadata for individual resources and the collection as a whole are relatively detailed, there can be a feeling that one is lost in a thicket. To me this is unfortunate, because as both a documenter and an archivist, I feel our material is compelling and that it could interest and intrigue many more people.

3. Proposals for language documenters

A simple *book model* can provide an initial analogy for language documenters interested in shaping how their documentary corpus goes forth to potential audiences via digital archives. Books of transcribed, translated (and sometimes analyzed) texts, which are part of the so-called Boasian trilogy, are the most prominent example. More heterodox is a genre of publication we might call a volume of *language materials* (a term which sometimes appears in the title, e.g., McDonald and Wurm 1979). Knut Bergsland's (1959) published compendium of material on Atkan and Attuan Aleut can serve as an outstanding example. It contains an introduction providing context for the work, as well as commentaries, annotations, analyses, translations, exegeses, and footnotes for individual texts from his own field work as well as other sources. Beyond this, Bergsland creates an organization and flow through his material by inching along the Aleutian Chain from east to west via elaborate presentations of proper tribal, geographical, and personal names (55 dense

---

[4] 200 distinct visits per year for the Alaska Native Language Archive; 1,200 unique visitors in 2010 for the DoBeS archive; 460 registered users and 1,000 annual downloads at ELAR; and 3,937 registered users at AILLA. [*Editors' note*: these figures are from 2010 and thus now somewhat out of date.]

double-column pages supplemented with maps and photos) before turning to texts and translations, again moving from east to west and presenting materials from a two century period ending with his own field work (73 more pages). What might have been a random collection of materials is woven into a coherent form with a strong trajectory.

Some key ingredients of Bergsland-type framing have also been mentioned in recent writing on language documentation. Let me review them.

Himmelmann (2006: 21) usefully distinguishes between an apparatus for the documentary corpus as a whole, and an apparatus for individual sessions. Whole corpus apparatus would include general metadata as well as what he calls 'general access resources' such as an introduction, statements of overall corpus conventions and, optionally, general descriptive analyses such as grammars or ethnographies. Session apparatus would include individual session metadata as well as annotation and other ancillary materials.

Nathan (2010) and Austin (2013) add to this a notion of *meta-documentation*, 'the documentation of your data itself, and the conditions (linguistic, social, physical, technical, historical, biographical) under which it was produced' (Nathan 2010). Likewise, Conathan (2011) emphasizes the importance of creating (what we might call meta-documentary) context within archives themselves by using original order and provenance as key principles for assembling and organizing archives.

A final distinction, which is also implicit in the book analogy, is raised by Nathan and Austin (2004) under the rubric of *thin* and *thick metadata*. The metaphor is borrowed from Clifford Geertz's vision of ethnography, where the former is metadata meant to help find items, while the latter is rich, context laden, and (potentially) shades into annotation (see also Evans and Sasse 2007; Woodbury 2007 for further exploration). Surely we would expect narrative elaboration in a book, not merely a basket of tags.

Let us consider now some specific proposals that draw and expand upon the book model.

3.1. Documenters themselves should make a guide to their documentary corpus

Traditional archives describe their materials with a variety of tools, including 'catalogue records, finding aids, inventories, [and] subject guides' (Conathan

2011: 245).[5] Holton (this volume) refers to this as *mediating* the corpus. My proposal, then, is for documenters to take an active, authorial role in this process, just as they would as authors of a book; that is, to take on the mediation of their own corpus.[6] Typically, documenters are asked by archives to organize resources hierarchically into 'bundles' or 'sessions' pertaining to recorded speech events, elicitation sessions, or research protocols, and at times to group these into larger, superordinate categories. They are also expected to create metadata based on this hierarchical organization. Sometimes, there is a short prose description of the collection. What is missing, and what I think of as having special importance, is a longer prose statement that introduces the collection, gives background, and indicates how it might be used. At a minimum it would introduce and link to items (or sets of items) of content in the collection. It would also contain, or link to, the normal elements of a book introduction, such as:

- a description of conventions
- ethnographic, geographic, and sociolinguistic setting
- thumbnail guides to grammar and lexicon
- a survey of research, of bibliography, and of extant documentation and
- meta-documentation, i.e., information on the circumstances of the archived material's creation (about which there is more below).

Beyond the minimum, it would narrate a path (or multiple paths, fitting the interests of different types of audiences) through the material, much as Bergsland did for his Aleut material. It could also receive a boost by referring

---

[5] For example, the National Anthropological Archives of the U.S. National Museum of Natural History lists on its website (www.nmnh.si.edu/naa/guides.htm) guides for sets of collections as well as finding aids for individual collections. The latter contain both prose introductions to a collection, including a biography when the collection is the papers of one individual, and hierarchically organized inventories and catalogues of materials, sometimes with descriptions.

[6] In traditional archives, this work is normally undertaken by archivists. Certainly at our AILLA archive, and I suspect in other digital language archives, there are not enough resources for archives to do this work. It is therefore all the more important for documenters to jump into the breach. In addition, documenters will have a much more intimate knowledge of the structure and content of their materials than an archivist can have.

to, and including within the archive, other finished products such as a written ethnography or grammar, and, if appropriate, materials from other sources (again, just as Bergsland did).

3.2. Include meta-documentation: describe the design of activities or projects from which the corpus arose; offer a theorization of the corpus (or several, from different perspectives); and describe the appraisal process in assembling the corpus

For a corpus that arises from a language documentation project it is important to describe the design of the project (the participants and stakeholders and their goals and roles in the project) and to discuss how the corpus may be theorized, i.e., said to cohere (see Woodbury 2011: 161). Here are some suggestions:

- if the corpus arose from a single research project, thoughtfully describe the research, its purpose, design, methods, and expected contributions (and include any before-the-fact research proposals, such as grant applications, or after-the-fact project reports)
- if it arose over the course of many projects, describe the evolution or trajectory of the work
- if it arose in community contexts, or as a joint activity among participants with different or only partially intersecting goals, try to document alternative views of the project's theorization and intentions: for one participant a corpus could be 'intonation data' while for another, that same corpus could be 'stories by old people'.

For any corpus, it is a valuable part of the meta-documentation to describe the appraisal process, i.e., the criteria according to which materials were selected for inclusion. For example, in archiving a recorded narrative along with a transcription and translation, one might describe why one chose to include (or exclude) rough drafts of the translation, or an audio or video recording that documents the process of transcription and translation (cf. Woodbury 2007). Describing the appraisal process is especially important if the corpus includes a collection of materials arising in widely separate contexts (e.g., an assembly of discovered manuscripts or audio recordings), since it also provides a basic theorization for the collection.

These elements of meta-documentation could be part of the guide (Section 3.1), or the guide could link to other discussions along these lines among the 'general access resources'.

3.3. Think of your documentary corpus as belonging to a genre

Books are normally classified by genre, overtly or tacitly. The same can hold of documentations or documentary collections. For linguist-documenters, the long-practiced *texts* genre in the Boasian grammar-dictionary-texts trilogy may seem the default, barely needing discussion beyond indicating that the texts inform grammatical and lexical discovery. Nevertheless it is worth laying out even such basic assumptions, as part of a corpus theorization.

New and different genres continue to emerge as language documentation evolves and as new audiences for it are considered. This is clear from a quick inspection of collections in AILLA, which includes, for example:

- Amith and Castillo García (Ongoing) – a collection of about 100 mostly folktale narratives by several speakers of Mixtec, and as such easily fitting the genre of storybook or folklore collection
- Bohnemeyer (Ongoing) – a set of 15 video-recorded spatial reference experiments performed by Yucatec Maya speakers that is to be part of a much larger set of experiments performed across 13 Mesoamerican languages (Bohnemeyer 2007-), fitting at minimum an experimental corpus genre, but perhaps more generally, comprises a data-accountable version of a scientific monograph
- Sherzer (Ongoing) – a collection that spans decades of audio recordings, texts, books, articles and images encompassing 'wordlists, narratives, poetry, sketches, books, chants, songs, oratory, permissions, photographs, ethnographies, descriptions, articles, conversations, commentaries, greetings/leave-takings, educational materials, meetings, instructions, ceremonies, and elicitation.' As such it amounts to an extended, eclectic ethnography of speaking.

It is particularly important for documenters (or compilers) not only to leverage the 'branding value' of familiar genres when their material fits, but also to create, define, and give substance to new genres that may be special to language documentary collections, always with a view toward communicating with potential audiences (cf. Csató and Nathan 2003:74).

3.4. Write narratives, logs, and journals

Writing narratives about the production of a corpus, during its production or after the fact, puts the material into a clear real-world context, and can aid greatly in its interpretation. This can take the form of an overall narration of the project by one person, whether involved in the project or not, indicating

participants and establishing the sequence and course of the work as well as its goals and its real or perceived setbacks. For example, our Chatino Language Documentation Project generated a series of frank, group-autobiographical annual reports, as well as a narration of our sometimes winding path into complex tonal systems (Cruz and Woodbury, Submitted).

Likewise, narrations can be associated with particular resources. In the Chatino project, we encouraged each other to write 'journals' into our daily metadata summaries which now occur as (somewhat unwieldy, but unquestionably 'thick') entries in an AILLA metadata field titled 'description'. This one by Hilaria Cruz, for example, runs to three paragraphs:

> The information in this resource documents the ceremony of the changing of the local traditional authorities in San Juan Quiahije. This ceremony began at night on December 31, 2009 and culminated at noon on January 1, 2010.
>
> These events take place at the city hall in San Juan which is located in the main square of town. Some of these recording[s] document prayers conducted by the authorities and their families at the church and several other spiritual points in San Juan such as the local cemetery. There are recording[s] of community guards, *ne74 skan4*, and other community members, *nten14 kchin1* at the porch of the city hall in San Juan. There is a conversation inside the city hall with higher ranking authorities, a conversation with higher ranking authorities about the ritual places where they place the candles when they go pray, and the last prayer by two head elders conducted in the main altar of city hall. They are Wenceslao Cruz Cortés and Evencio Cruz Apolonio. Evencio was the head judge and Wenceslao the head elder. This is the last post that Wenceslao will ever serve at city hall. Wenceslao will now transition to be part of the Consejo of Elders in the community. They both served their post for a year. Wenceslao and the other authorities pray at the Catholic church. There are prayers inside the church, a recording outside the city hall, a recording of us preparing to record the ceremony of the changing of the authorities, ambient noise, and recordings outside the city hall.
>
> The actual ceremony of the changing of the authorities, including a speech by Wenceslao, is found along with a conversation between head elders and former authorities, and a recording of the inauguration of new authorities. Finally there is a conversation between elders and lower ranking authorities. The elder Eligio Vásquez asked them to speak. (H. Cruz et al. 2009).

For collaborative projects, such narratives give insight into the assumptions and perspectives of individual contributors, and degrees of interpretive context not attainable by most typical 'short-answer' metadata. Resource (or resource-bundle) specific narrations can serve, in miniature, the same role the 'guide' does for the whole collection.

4. Proposals for Archivists

If the book model suggests how language documenters might communicate with their audiences, perhaps an *art museum model* can offer suggestions to archivists.[7] Art museums are like archives in that they are charged with curating their holdings. Particular audiences may enjoy increased access to certain holdings, but general audiences encounter them in exhibitions, arranged around familiar kinds of themes (e.g. 'paintings by Cassatt', 'New York abstract expressionism', 'Munch's relationship to photography', or even just 'our nicest stuff') and introduced in general terms section by section or room by room, and in particular terms next to each item. Artists' letters or notes, studio photographs, critical discussions and so on may also appear in the exhibition or as part of an analytic exhibition catalogue. Exhibitions may also include materials from other archives, obtaining material 'on loan' in order to contribute to their theme.

With this in mind, here are some further proposals for archivists.

4.1. Make collections accessible and resources discoverable

Most digital language archives are already browsable by depositor, language, and collection (see Trilsbeek and König, this volume, and Nathan, this volume). This is a first step that facilitates proposals made above for documenters. But for many such archives (our AILLA archive included), basic finding aids are not always available. Ideally, alongside basic metadata, each collection will have a guide (as described in Section 3.1) which provides a structured overview.

---

[7] I owe this analogy to Heidi Johnson, who has long discussed the possibility of creating special collection 'exhibitions' in AILLA; it applies very well to the National Anthropological Archives website with its online exhibitions: www.nmnh.si.edu/naa/exhibits.htm

4.2. Ensure that collections are well described, including meta-documentation that indicates the theorization for the collection

Traditionally, this is simply what archivists do. But in the present context, where resources are spread thin and documenters are invited to describe their own collections, archivists can act as overseers of the work, seeing to it that documenters provide adequate description and helping them where possible.

In cases where documenter input is impossible (e.g., where a documenter is no longer alive), the archive can still compose a general guide and even a theorization of the collection from the archivist's standpoint. Often, it is possible to use other existing materials such as notes, diaries, or publications to reconstruct a basic narrative about the creation of the materials.

4.3. Consider the role of 'guest language archivist'.

Just as museums have guest curators, it is possible to invite deposits from people who are not language documenters in the usual sense, but who have access to records worthy of collecting and archiving and who wish to serve as guest archivists. An analogy from the world of books would be a philological edition of documents, such as Goddard and Bragdon's (1988) compendious 2-volume, *Native Writing in Massachusett*. It contains a preface which includes:

- meta-documentation about their project
- an introduction giving the context of the documents and a discussion of their import from different disciplinary perspectives
- an edition of the documents, including photographs of them, transliterations, translations, and philological discussion,
- a grammar and word index based on the material.

4.4. Consider holding exhibitions

A distinction is rightly drawn between preservation and presentation (Good 2011, Holton 2011). Nevertheless, archives can find ways to preserve archival integrity while creating standalone, outreach exhibitions of fixed duration. Such exhibitions could provide many benefits:

- giving prominence to the work of particular projects, documenters or archivists
- manifesting the archive's commitment to outreach

- providing get-it-in-final-shape-or-else! deadlines to counteract the tendency for archives always to be 'under construction'
- functioning as experiments in identifying and attracting audiences, welcoming them, and addressing their interests.

Furthermore, a suitable framework might enable cross-archival curation on the art museum model, e.g. an archive could hold an exhibition on a particular language or theme that draws not only from its own holdings, but also from other archives, or from ephemeral sources such as websites or social media outlets.

At the same time, this proposal raises challenges for the archivist.[8] These include that of deciding what collections to feature, as well as being aware of cultural sensitivities associated with diverse materials when they are assembled this way in a public context.

4.5. See that collections and exhibitions get reviewed

Finally, like museums and book publishers, archives can take an active interest in getting themselves, their individual collections, or their exhibitions reviewed by interested audiences. This can mean traditional academic review (see below) but it can also include review in popular media, community media, newsletters, and blogs. This would not only provide publicity and outreach, but also feedback on how to address a broader range of audiences.

5. Proposals for audiences

If there is a fruitful model for the contribution that audiences can make, surely it is that of the *critic*. Because our audiences are diverse (see Section 2), we should think of critics of many kinds, not only academic. Nevertheless, it is expedient first to sketch specific proposals for academic and other documentation producers and archivists in their own roles as critical audiences, in the hope of encouraging critics from other audiences as well.

---

[8] I thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper for pointing these out.

5.1. Journal editors can commission reviews of language documentations and may offer criteria or guidelines for the reviews

Journals do not normally solicit reviews of archived language collections, but there is no reason they could not. They might also be encouraged to give guidelines for such reviews. For example, they might ask for:

- a basic description of the collection
- a statement of its scope, purpose, and theorization (how it 'hangs together')
- evaluation of the collection's theorization (how clearly it 'hangs together')
- an evaluation of how clearly the collection is contextualized
- an assessment of its technical attributes (design, systematicity, clarity of data management, and adequacy of transcription, translation, and annotation)
- the relationship and importance of the documentation *vis-à-vis* related documentation and scholarship
- an assessment of likely audiences, and how well their needs are addressed, including those of audiences far in the future
- mention of how the reviewer is situated with respect to the collection and audience, e.g. stating the reviewer's own interests in the material and whether s/he is a native speaker of the language(s) represented.

5.2. Documenters or archivists (or anyone) at-large can volunteer to write reviews, letting review criteria emerge from the task at hand.

Theorizations and intended audiences of documentary collections can be quite different, and that might call for different review approaches. The best review practices may emerge over time, once the review genre(s) become more widespread. Moreover, reviews might be submitted not only to linguistic journals but also to journals in other disciplines, depending on the focus of the corpus.

Whether academic review criteria are stipulated or emergent, they play two very important roles. First, they lead to the establishment of authentic quality standards, evaluative criteria, and expectations, providing conventions for both the documentation discipline and the genre(s) of its reviews. Second, the set of standards, criteria and conventions, and of course the reviews

themselves, become a means for recognizing and rewarding good work. Once such standards are established, it will become easier to explain to university tenure committees that alongside publications, one of the key achievements we look for in seeking tenure for a documentary linguist is a well-reviewed documentary corpus in a highly-regarded archive (this would then operationalize the recognition by the Linguistic Society of America of corpus creation as research, for example).

5.3. Other documentation users can likewise establish criteria and perspectives for evaluating language documentary corpora

Ideally, reviews and other discussion of documentary corpora might emerge in popular contexts such as blogs, community language pages, or social media, and in contexts focused, locally or globally, on education, language activism, the arts, humanities, or the sciences. This too could help to change and improve how language documentations address audiences.

These three proposals for reviewing leave some questions wide open. When is a collection ready for review? Must the archiver or documenter first say it is ready, or is it fair game as soon as it becomes partly visible? Can reviews address sets of materials from various documenters or archives, alongside individual collections? Should academic reviewers have privileged access to restricted materials in order to arrive at an informed assessment?

An important question is whether 'the researcher will be subjected to judgement from someone who will never adequately understand the research experience and may make judgements that could be uninformed or inadequately informed ones ... [t]he review could end up superseding the worth of the collection'.[9] Indeed, any review can be ill-informed and destructive, and archival records might be especially vulnerable precisely because of their uniqueness. Nevertheless, records that are flawed or quirky in some respects may still be of unique scientific or historical importance (see, for example, Hinton's (1994) discussion of both the quirks and lasting value of the archival legacy of the linguist J. P. Harrington). But the possibility of negative reviews might make potential donors of materials have second thoughts, or present a career impediment, rather than a career reward, to young documenters, and thus endanger, rather than promote, the archiving and dissemination of language documentation.

---

[9] I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this paper who raised this question.

But I would still defend the reviewing proposals, on several grounds. Above all, if we really wish to communicate we have to be willing to receive reactions, and if we wish to communicate to wide audiences, those reactions may not always reflect our own perspectives, experience, and expertise. I think that well-intentioned people will take the uniqueness factor into account when evaluating contributions, especially in an academic context. Also, readers of reviews are likely to understand, or take with a grain of salt, the range of reactions they may encounter. Finally, when academic reviews of collections become commonplace, their established norms and standards will better situate any particular review.

6. Conclusion

At present, documentary linguists put enormous effort into collecting and archiving their work in newly created language archives. At the center of this work are records of natural speech, which, because they are at the center of human social and intellectual life, are of very wide interest. Yet despite the labor of documenters and the interest inherent in the material, the work does not appear to be reaching wide audiences. I have made specific proposals for documenters, archives, and audiences to help resolve this problem by developing more direct and explicit protocols of communication between documenters and audiences through the medium of language archives.

I urge documenters to take authorial control of their work, as they would if each archived collection were a book of language materials:

- make a guide to your own documentary corpus
- include meta-documentation: describe the design of activities or projects from which the corpus arose, offer a theorization of the corpus (or several, from different perspectives), and describe the appraisal process used to select and assemble the corpus
- write narratives, logs, and journals
- think of your corpus as belonging to a genre.

To some extent, all this means documenters taking on some of the work traditionally done by archivists. In turn, I urge archivists to assist (and if necessary prod) documenters to meet standards rooted in traditional archival practice, and to act as active promoters of communication with audiences, on the model of a museum:

- make collections accessible and resources discoverable
- ensure that collections are well described, including meta-documentation that indicates the theorization for the collection

- consider a role for a 'guest language archivist'
- consider holding exhibitions
- see that collections and exhibitions get reviewed.

Finally, I urge audiences to be active participants in the process, as critics, on the assumption that that is the only real way to complete the circle of communication:

- journal editors can commission reviews of language documentations and offer guidelines and criteria for the reviews
- documenters or archivists (or anyone) at-large can write reviews, letting review criteria emerge over time
- other documentation users can likewise establish criteria and perspectives for evaluating language documentary corpora.

These proposals create significantly new and challenging roles for documenters, archivists, and audiences. In particular, archivists are asked to pass to documenters (and community members, see Linn, this volume) such key elements of their traditional roles as assessment and archival description, all while retaining ultimate responsibility as overseers. And audiences are implored not to ignore archives but instead to figure out how to use them and to take an active interest.

I think that with these proposals in mind, or at least the goals they represent, it might be possible to begin to address a lopsided situation in documentary linguistics in which we as documenters continue to produce materials, and as archivists continue to preserve them, without making connections to the rest of the world that come anywhere close to our rhetoric of value and loss.

References

Amith, Jonathan and Rey Castillo García. Ongoing. *Mixteco language documentation project.* The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America: www.ailla.utexas.org. Media: audio, text. Access: 89% restricted. [accessed 2011-10-16]

Austin, Peter K. 2011. Who uses digital language archives? Endangered languages and cultures. Blog archive. www.paradisec.org.au/blog/2011/04/who-uses-digital-language-archives/ [accessed 2011-10-16]

Austin, Peter K. 2013. Language documentation and meta-documentation. In Mari Jones and Sarah Ogilvie (eds.) *Keeping languages alive: Documentation, pedagogy and revitalization*, 3-15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barwick, Linda, Bruce Birch and Joy Williams. 2005. *Jurtbirrk Love Songs of Northwestern Arnhem Land,* Batchelor Press, Batchelor NT. Book and CD.

Barwick, Linda, Bruce Birch and Nicholas Evans. 2007. Iwaidja *Jurtbirrk* songs: Bringing language and music together. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2007(2), 1-34.

Bergsland, Knut. 1959. Aleut dialects of Atka and Attu. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n.s. 49(3), 3-128. Philadelphia.

Bohnemeyer, Juergen. 2007-. *Spatial language and cognition in Mesoamerica.* www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jb77/Mesospace.htm [accessed 2011-10-16]

Bohnemeyer, Juergen. Ongoing. *Mesospace collection*. The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America: www.ailla.utexas.org. Media: video. Access: 100% restricted. [accessed 2011-10-16]

Conathan, Lisa. 2001. Archiving and language documentation. In Peter K. Austin and Julia Sallabank (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, 235-254. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cruz, Emiliana and Anthony C. Woodbury. Submitted. Finding a way into a family of tone languages: The story and methods of the Chatino Language Documentation Project. In Steven Bird and Larry Hyman (eds) *Language Documentation and Conservation, Special Issue: How to study a tone language.*

Cruz, Hilaria (researcher), Wenceslao Cruz Cortés (speaker) and Evencio Cruz Apolonio (speaker). 2009. The Change of Authorities. *Chatino language documentation project collection*. The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America: www.ailla.utexas.org. Media: audio, video, image. Access: public. Resource: CTP006R016. [accessed 2011-10-16]

Csató Éva and David Nathan 2003. Multimedia and the documentation of endangered languages. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description,* Vol. 1, 73-84. London: SOAS.

Evans, Nicholas and Hans-Jürgen Sasse. 2007. Searching for meaning in the Library of Babel: Field semantics and problems of digital archiving. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description,* Vol. 4, 58-99. London: SOAS.

Gippert, Jost, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann and Ulrike Mosel. (eds.) 2006. *Essentials of language documentation.* Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Goddard, Ives and Kathleen Bragdon. 1988. *Native writings in Massachusett. Parts 1 and 2.* Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society.

Good, Jeff. 2011. Data and language documentation. In Peter K. Austin and Julia Sallabank (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, 212-234. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus P. 2006. Language documentation: What is it and what is it good for? In Gippert, Jost, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann and Ulrike Mosel (eds.) *Essentials of language documentation*, 1-30. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Hinton, Leanne. 1994. *Flutes of Fire*: *Essay on California Indian Languages*. Berkeley: Heyday Books.

Holton, Gary. 2011. The role of information technology in supporting minority and endangered languages. In Peter K. Austin and Julia Sallabank (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, 371-399. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holton, Gary. 2012. Language archives: They're not just for linguists any more. In Frank Seifart, Geoffrey Haig, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, Dagmar Jung, Anna Margetts and Paul Trilsbeek (eds.) *Potentials of Language Documentation: Methods, Analyses, and Utilization*, 105-110. *Language Documentation and Conservation Special Publication No 3.*

Krauss, Michael E. and Mary Jane McGary. 1980. Alaska Native Languages: A bibliographical catalogue, Part One: Indian languages. *Alaska Native Language Center Research Papers 3.*

McDonald, Maryalyce and Stephen A. Wurm. 1979. Basic materials in Wankumara (Galali): grammar, sentences, and vocabulary. *Pacific Linguistics Publications*, B65. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

Nathan, David and Peter K. Austin. 2004. Reconceiving metadata: Language documentation through thick and thin. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description*, Vol. 2, 179-187. London: SOAS.

Nathan, David. 2010. Archives 2.0 for endangered languages: from disk space to MySpace. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing,* Volume 4(1-2), 111-124.

San Roque, Lila, Lauren Gawne, Darja Hoenigman, Julia Colleen Miller, Alan Rumsey, Stef Spronck, Alice Carroll and Nicholas Evans. 2012. Getting the story straight: Language fieldwork using a narrative problem-solving task. *Language Documentation and Conservation*, 6, 135-174.

Sherzer, Joel. Ongoing. *Kuna collection.* The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America: www.ailla.utexas.org. Media: audio, text, image. Access: 0% restricted. [accessed 2011-10-16]

Thieberger, Nicholas. 2012. Using language documentation data in a broader context. In Frank Seifart, Geoffrey Haig, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, Dagmar Jung, Anna Margetts and Paul Trilsbeek (eds.) *Potentials of Language Documentation: Methods, Analyses, and Utilization*, 129-134. Language *Documentation and Conservation Special Publication No 3.*

Woodbury, Anthony C. 2007. On thick translation in language documentation. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description*, Vol. 4, 120-135. London: SOAS.

Woodbury, Anthony C. 2011. Language documentation. In Peter K. Austin and Julia Sallabank (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, 159-186. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.