Acknowledgements: Dr. Gary Simons, Will Reiman, and Hugh Paterson influenced my thinking on the nature of endangered resources and the Archives’ plans to pursue grant funding. Patricia Kelley has been a strong advocate for archiving among both SIL’s active and retired staff, and her advocacy efforts are reflected in hundreds of resources now preserved in the archives. Carolyn Orr and Karen Vollrath have modeled SIL’s core value of ‘service to all’ by sharing data and experiences with the archives and the world. Andrew Roberts was my 2011 pioneering intern who nimbly adapted as the project evolved. Leah Doty and Cindy Tung expanded their horizons in 2012—diving into the foreign domain of archiving, and processed an amazing volume of material in short period of time.
- Many archival programs are preserving linguistic & cultural resources produced by contemporary researchers.
- What about materials produced during past work in linguistics and related fields that document endangered languages and cultures?
- Do institutions have a responsibility to preserve the data collected by their staff in the pre-digital age?
## SIL’s history of language documentation

- **78 years of language development activity**
- **Early years characterized by language description publications**
- **1947 - A ‘Corporate Bibliography’ began tracking and preserving formal publications**
- **2000 - Establishment of the Language & Culture Archives with expanded role to preserve primary resources**
- **2013 - Debut of new website to provide access to the Archives Catalog and resources**
Resource Endangerment: SIL’s Challenge

- Language development projects in over 2,590 languages, past and present
- Approx. 750 of these projects are now inactive
- 1,052 retired staff living
- 2,381 active staff with language development related assignments
- First generation has already passed (Kenneth Pike)
The 4 languages are Napo Lowland Quechua, Tena Lowland Quichua, Northern Pastaza Quichua, and Southern Pastaza Quechua.

- Carolyn Orr -

- Has published both in and about 4 Quichua/Quechua languages of Ecuador and Peru since joining SIL in 1950
- Prior to her retirement in the late 1990’s, the archives had 50 formal publications representing the breadth of her work in descriptive linguistics, literacy, and translation
A catalog of resources authored or compiled by Carolyn can be found at http://bit.ly/15gfe5H

In addition to these items, literacy materials (e.g., primers, readers, etc...) are posted on www.sil.org/resources/language-culture-archives by language without public attribution to Carolyn who may have contributed in someway (author, editor, compiler, translator, etc...) to most of these items in the 4 languages listed in slide 6.
‘Relatives came’ by Zaida Papa
Available at
http://www.sil.org/resources/archives/49687
Questions of data ownership can vary greatly by institution, but the predominant practice in academia gives deference to researchers. SIL is an NGO that derives many of its intellectual property rights policies from the academic rather than corporate world.

Resource Endangerment: Threat Assessment

- Ownership – materials are generally perceived as the personal property of the individual researcher
- Past Institutional Policy – institutions did not always encourage or require archiving; they were/are focused on contemporary research programs that have funding
- Usefulness/Good Intentions – researchers retain stewardship of the primary data beyond retirement with intentions to use it
Resource Endangerment: Threat Assessment

- Estate Planning – many researchers omit data preservation and disposition from estate planning
- Heirs or Executors – do not realize or appreciate the value of the data
• He first approached one of our field offices. Since the tapes were in the local area of the college, the college library seemed the natural repository.
• He actually feared that the collection would be discarded if he didn’t take action, unfortunately, he waited too long to begin the process and his fears realized.
• 12 out of 100+ tapes managed to escape the purge though details on how this happened are unknown

Resource Endangerment: Nightmare Story

• Staff member of a small U.S. college compiled over 100 field recordings while spending a sabbatical in the 1970’s visiting several SIL field teams
• In 2012, he expressed interest in seeing these recordings archived; negotiations with the college were underway when...
• His health deteriorated to the point that he could no longer live independently & make his wishes known
• His children, unaware of the negotiations and the value of the recordings, discarded the collection
In such cases, we have ‘transplanted’ the magnetic tape to a new case before digitization

Resource Endangerment: Conservation

- Due to the nature of fieldwork, many resources originate and are stored for significant periods in environments unfriendly to preservation (i.e., Heat, Humidity, and Pests)
- For example, many cassette tapes in SIL’s collections lack adequate tape head pads because they were eaten by insects
Resource Endangerment: Metadata

- Lack of Knowledge Management—some researchers have not adequately documented the metadata necessary to identify the resource and its context
- Content may be so unique that researchers may be the only ones who can identify the language if no contextual clues are provided
- Archivists or other colleagues have no expertise in individual research programs
One such item description is found at http://www.sil.org/resources/archives/51171 - note that the language community(s) represented in this recording is listed as ‘undetermined’.

Resource Endangerment: Metadata

- In the absence of the researcher, piecing together useful resource descriptions is exponentially more difficult
- We recently received an ethnomusicologist's collection of 100 recordings, however she is no longer capable of describing her own data.
- The result will be a collection of recordings with metadata that is barely adequate
Rescuing Endangered Resources

- Insufficient Archives staff to dedicate any of them to gathering & describing ‘endangered’ collections full-time
- First priority is to support routine archiving by active staff to avoid increasing backlog and to prevent resource endangerment
- Strategy: provide staff with tools to ‘self-archive’ resources into an institutional repository (Nordmoe, 2011)

Will Reiman has coined an acronym CLEAR -- Collecting Legacy Ethnographic Archival Resources.

Rescuing Endangered Resources

Developing a collection ‘rescue’ service

- Assumptions
  - Retired language workers possess unique knowledge about their research data
  - Many retirees lack the technological skills required to ‘self-archive’
  - Students of linguistics, anthropology, and other language related fields would benefit from time spent with veteran field workers
  - Students have the time, interest, flexibility, and technical skills ideal for resource and data collection
Rescuing Endangered Resources

- **Process**
  - Market data collection service to staff (particularly retired)
  - Interview researchers /resource owners
  - Describe each resource with our RAMP tool
  - Digitize each resource (whole or partial)
  - Package the descriptions with digital copies or samples
  - Upload each package into the institutional repository

- **Implementation**
  - 2011: one paid internship lasting eleven weeks
  - 2012: two volunteer internships lasting ten weeks
Rescuing Endangered Resources

- **Results**
  - 2011: 156 texts and 74 audio tapes representing 9 languages
  - 2012: 762 individual resources representing 10 languages
    - Audio texts collected in Peru, including the only known recording of the now-extinct Panobo language
    - Field notebooks and one scrapbook related to the Lotud language of Malaysia
    - 82 slides documenting the Jebero of Peru
    - 147 manuscripts of cultural stories from the Central Subanen community of the Philippines
Family data includes head of household, spouse, marriage date, some kinship charts or information, and names, genders, and birth dates of children.

A description of one of the journals may be found at http://www.sil.org/resources/archives/49047
In SIL, the classification ‘support staff’ is defined as staff with roles in administration, training & education, transportation, medicine, information technology, publishing, and library/archives. Field staff in such roles often ‘document’ their encounters with language speakers and minority cultures. While most do not ‘document’ languages with an eye towards research or conservation, they do so in surprising ways with talents and perspectives different from an academic.
Many items in 2011 were stabilized but not digitized. In 2012, more material was digitized or ‘born-digital’, yet some still remains to be done.

The volunteer internship program handled all the recruiting and logistical aspects, leaving the archives to handle only the management of the specific tasks. However, the interns were also required to spend approximately 8 hours a week engaged in activities outside the archives.

The paid intern in 2011 possessed BA in History with interests in public history and archiving. While having no formal education in linguistics, he did have a personal interest in the field as a possible direction for graduate studies. In contrast, the 2012 volunteers were each majoring in linguistics, but neither had previous experience or interest in archiving.
We share a campus with the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics but would gladly consider interns from other programs.

- **Future Plans**
  - A volunteer internship for 2013
  - Pursue grant funding for expansion of this model
    - Hire a program manager
    - Partner with academic programs
    - Graduate research assistants
    - Beyond the local area (Dallas, TX)
    - On-site digitization equipment
    - Add a formal oral history program
    - Active field personnel as well as retirees (field visits)
Contact

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Be Nice to Archivists image from
http://www.zazzle.com/be_nice_to_archivists_sticker-217305967026347798