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# **Mediating language documentation**

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## **1. Deconstructing ‘access’<sup>1</sup>**

As a discipline, archiving is often presented in terms of the competing goals of preservation and access (Green 2003). The former goal – preservation – is the more readily understood of the two: materials must be stored in a way that minimizes degradation over time. For print documents this involves tasks such as ensuring proper environmental conditions and monitoring acid content in paper. In the digital realm there is the added challenge of ensuring that not only will the digital bits survive, but also that they will be interpretable in the future. These challenges have been met through the development of open standards and an emphasis on the notion of PORTABILITY, namely, the ability for digital language resources to retain their integrity across varied computing environments and over time (Bird and Simons 2003). We are now well aware that a Microsoft Word document is much less portable than a plain text document. We understand the distinction between presentation formats, which have utility for making resources accessible, and archival or preservation formats, which may be less accessible but are more robust (see Johnson 2005, Austin 2006). In sum, we have made a lot of progress in the preservation of (digital) language documentation.

The issue of access remains less well understood. In the analogue realm, access is often implicitly defined in negative terms as the enemy of preservation because more access for current users can damage the physical integrity of the object and thus reduce access for future users (Schreibman et al. 2004). To a large extent digitization has eliminated this dichotomy: access to a digital copy in no way degrades preservation of the digital object. Within the digital realm it is tempting to think that once we have solved the preservation problem the issue of access will also be solved. The fallacy in

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<sup>1</sup> An early version of this paper was presented at the first inNET conference ‘Best practices in digital language archiving of language and music data’ held at University of Cologne, 6-7 September 2012. I am grateful to the conference participants for valuable feedback. The paper is also greatly improved thanks to comments from the editors and two anonymous reviewers. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grants No. OPP-0957136, OPP-1003481, OPP-1003160.

this thinking is that the theoretical possibility of access is not the same as access in practice. That is, providing access to materials does not necessarily ensure that those materials will be used. In the terms of Nathan (2013), access does not necessarily entail accessibility, where accessibility implies that a resource is actually usable by someone accessing it.

One could argue that this disconnect between access and usage need not concern an archive. After all, one of the primary missions of an archive is to ensure that materials are available to future generations, not just those with an interest today. We have seen examples of archived materials which, though not immediately useful to language communities, have later become useful through changing community circumstances (Dobrin and Holton, to appear). Yet, to dismiss the issue of usage by arguing that materials may eventually become useful is to ignore the great need for immediately useful language materials. Endangered language documentation is not merely a record of languages which will pass away; it also has great potential to contribute to language maintenance and revitalization efforts. In this context the gap between access and use becomes more significant. If language documentation is being made accessible to communities but not being used, then access alone is not sufficient. Archives must strive for something more than providing access.

Bridging the gap between access and usage requires that archive resources be *MEDIATED* so that they become not only accessible to user communities but also *relevant*. The concept of mediation as discussed here is in some ways similar to what Nathan (2006) describes as mobilization. However, unlike mobilization, mediation does not require that archive resources be transformed but only that they be presented in a way that they become more relevant. While mobilization involves the creation of derivative products, mediation can be as simple as enriching metadata descriptions with relevant fields or highlighting particularly useful resources within large collections. In particular, mediation requires that the archive knows and works closely with its user community.

## **2. A changing relationship between archive and community**

Within Alaska the relationship between language archive and language community has changed dramatically over the past decade. In part this change is due to changes in the languages themselves. Of the twenty Alaska Native languages spoken at the beginning of the 21st century only Central Yup'ik and Siberian Yupik are still spoken by a significant portion of the community (Krauss 2007). The last speaker of Eyak passed away in 2008, and the last fluent speaker of Holikachuk died in 2012 (ICTMN Staff 2012).

As speakers age and languages cease to be spoken the role of previously recorded material changes. Where once these materials complemented the knowledge of living Native speakers, documentation often now serves as the only remaining record of these languages. Even for languages which are still spoken, knowledge of certain esoteric domains such as astronomy or botany, or of particular speech genres, may in some cases be found only in the archive. This changing linguistic landscape has led many communities to seek out archives and even to create their own archives – a point to which I return in Section 3 below. But another reason for the change in the relationship between archive and community has to do with changes to language archives themselves.

Alaska is unique within the United States in having a state-funded institution dedicated to supporting Native languages. The Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) was founded in 1972 at the University of Alaska by state legislation. Its five-fold mission did not explicitly mention language archiving, but it did call on ANLC to ‘provide for the development and dissemination of Alaska Native literature’ (Krauss 1974). This mission was interpreted broadly by ANLC’s founder, Michael Krauss, and, as a result, by 2000 the collection had grown to more than 15,000 items, including originals or copies of nearly everything written in or about Alaska’s Native languages, as well as significant collections of materials on related languages spoken in neighboring Russia and Canada. This collection, renamed the Alaska Native Language Archive (ANLA) in 2009, represents the most comprehensive body of Native language documentation in the United States, if not the world.

The ANLA provides an important case study in access to language documentation. As an institution, ANLA has always been an ‘open’ archive. The doors are open not only during normal business hours but also late into the evening for visitors by arrangement. Visitors are able to directly access materials and no archivist intervenes. The stacks are open for browsing. The most obvious barrier to access has been physical: for most of its life ANLA has been a brick-and-mortar archive located in a state where road access is extremely limited and air travel can be both expensive and time-consuming. For example, travel from the village of Shageluk (population 84) to Fairbanks involves three separate flights: the first by light aircraft to the hub community of Aniak (population 512), stopping twice en route, then a flight by propeller aircraft to Anchorage, followed finally by a jet flight to Fairbanks. The duration of this trip, provided there are no delays due to weather, is at least seven hours, and the cost (in early 2013) is roughly \$1000 return. However, Shageluk is located just over 600 km west of Fairbanks and is relatively accessible in Alaskan terms; travel from more remote communities can be significantly more time-consuming and expensive. So, while ANLA is nominally open, the actual price of admission can be quite steep.

Physical location is not the only barrier to access. At least part of the barrier is psychological; community members have not always viewed themselves as the target audience for ANLA. In the past, accessing the archive has required not only traveling to Fairbanks but also braving the halls of academia which surround the archive. As recently as the late 20th century visitors to ANLA were greeted by dusty stacks of faded, torn paper folders. Where philologists saw treasure, many visitors saw a dustbin. These differing experiences of the archive were reflected during the 2002 meeting of the Athabaskan Languages Conference in Fairbanks. This meeting drew nearly 200 participants, primarily indigenous people from across Alaska, Canada, and the lower 48 United States, but only the academic linguists managed to find their way across campus to the archive. There they crammed in, sitting on the floor or crouching in the doorway, eager to devour the odd record of an elusive phoneme or transient paradigm (Figure 1).

*Figure 1: Linguists accessing archival materials at ANLA, June 2002*



Indigenous peoples and non-linguists were not explicitly excluded, but nor were they offered an easy point of entry into the archive. Though technically open to the public, the archive was not easily discoverable by visitors. Online searches brought only passing references to the archive in a description of the Alaska Native Language Center, and searching the university library catalogue found no reference to the archive whatsoever.

A finding aid to the Indian (i.e., non-Inuit) languages was compiled in the late 1970s (Krauss and McGary 1980). This well-annotated bibliography contains extensive descriptions of approximately one third of the manuscripts in the collection at that time; however, it has not been widely circulated. OCLC WorldCat shows 84 holdings in member institutions, only one of which (University of Leiden) is outside North America, and circulation within Alaska has been even more limited. In particular, no cross-walk exists between the bibliographical catalogue and the university library catalogue. Given that a university library usually serves as a point of entry for users seeking access to university resources, the annotated bibliography was essentially hidden from public view. This may reflect the fact that it had been originally constructed less as a tool for resource discovery and more as a philological commentary on the archive resources, to be used by those who had already discovered the archive. In particular, it was designed for linguists.

Over the past decade ANLA has taken steps to make its resources discoverable and accessible to users, especially heritage language communities within Alaska. In 2000 ANLA became a founding member of the Open Language Archives Community (OLAC) and began simple efforts to create an electronic catalogue database and to expose that database through OLAC protocols. Efforts then extended into digitization with the creation of the Dena'ina Qenaga language archive for the Dena'ina Athabaskan language. These efforts have continued more recently with two on-going projects funded by the US National Science Foundation which will result in the digitization of the entire ANLA collection.

One of the immediate impacts of increased digital access has been a concomitant increase in physical access. Over the calendar year 2012 ANLA received 158 patron visits, most of these by members of heritage language communities. This high proportion of community users as compared to outside researchers is probably typical of regional-oriented language archives (see Austin 2011). While it is difficult to compare the number directly to previous years, since tracking of patron visits began only in 2011, anecdotal evidence suggests an order of magnitude increase over the past decade. Why this sudden interest in ANLA materials? One reason is surely the increased online access. While it may seem counter-intuitive that increased online access leads to increased physical access, an increased online presence (which enables increased online access) generates greater awareness and thus results

in more physical traffic. Increasingly, visitors are coming to ANLA to work with resources which they initially discovered online.

The increase in visits to ANLA and the increasing use of ANLA materials also reflect a changing archive user community, and this change parallels the changing linguistic landscape. In the span of a single generation the centre of gravity of Native language teaching efforts has shifted from semi-fluent speakers to non-fluent second-language learners. Where in the past language teachers and learners could draw on resources within their own communities, today's teachers and learners increasingly seek information from outside sources such as archives. Few Alaska Native languages have fluent speakers younger than the age of 60, and many of these remaining speakers have migrated to cities for easier access to geriatric care. The resulting decrease in language knowledge resources available within local communities lends greater importance to archives as repositories of linguistic knowledge.

At the same time there has been a renaissance in language revitalization efforts across Alaska. When ANLC was founded in 1972, part of its legislated mission was to 'train Alaska Native language speakers to work as teachers and aides in bilingual classrooms to teach and support Alaska's twenty indigenous languages' (Krauss 1974). This legislation put the onus of language revitalization on the state-funded school system, the very system which had been used to suppress the languages in the first place (see Dauenhauer 1980). The myth that state-funded schools would somehow save the languages was repeated regularly through the last decades of the 20th century. With only one model of revitalization, and only one stated goal, namely full fluency, there was little room left for grass roots efforts such as those focused on personal language learning and language appreciation. This naturally led to a mood of despondency and a feeling that educational institutions had failed to deliver on language revitalization. In spite of repeated platitudes, the inevitability of significant language loss in Alaska was palpable at the end of the 20th century (Krauss 1995).

This mood began to change with a shift to community-based language programs in the late 1990s (Dementi-Leonard and Gilmore 1999). These programs recognized the relevance of archival resources to revitalization efforts, whether the resources were held by the communities or housed in archival institutions. Since no Alaska Native languages had yet gone silent, archival resources did not play the essential role they do in *Breath of Life* programs popularized for sleeping languages.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, speakers and

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<sup>2</sup> Though Eyak is sometimes cited as the first Alaska Native language to go silent in modern times, the last speaker of Tsetsaut passed away in the 1930s.

language activists recognized that archival resources recorded a state of language and traditional knowledge which was fast slipping away. Calls for access to archival resources, especially audio recordings, became a recurring theme at public meetings in Alaska. Dena'ina elder Andrew Balluta expressed the sentiment well, demonstrating a hope that archival recordings could become teaching tools.

You know, all these recordings ... if we don't get it out and learn about it, where are we going to learn from? These are old recordings. We want to get it out and teach our younger children what the elder people are talking about. (Dena'ina Language Workshop, Alaska Native Heritage Center, December 2004)

In time, archives came to be seen not as part of the institutions which had failed to deliver language revitalization but rather as resources for locally-designed and led revitalization projects. Such was the resurgence of interest in language archives that Gaul and Holton (2005) were prompted to write:

Communities can come to see archives as their own language reservoir, holding resources that can help to build and develop language and culture in creative and dynamic ways that will be sustainable in a rapidly changing world.

It was in the context of this changing linguistic landscape that ANLA redoubled its focus on digitization and providing digital access to this 'language reservoir'. With more than 17,000 digital files now available online, ANLA is in a position to reflect on how we might facilitate not just better access to those materials but also enhanced usage of them.

### 3. Mediation

Once the initial technical hurdles are overcome, providing digital access to language resources is relatively easy. For materials which are not culturally sensitive, online dissemination can allow anyone with an internet connection<sup>3</sup> ready access via the ANLA website.<sup>4</sup> Where internet access or cultural sensitivity is an issue, materials can be distributed within communities on

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to deny the very real issues of digital access. However, physical and intellectual barriers to digital access in rural Alaska have decreased dramatically over the past decade, and ANLA staff routinely assist users to overcome access barriers.

<sup>4</sup> The ANLA website is at [www.uaf.edu/anla](http://www.uaf.edu/anla).

portable hard drives.<sup>5</sup> ANLA regularly fulfils requests for large volumes of material (i.e., several terabytes), such as ‘all materials relating to the Ahtna language’, by transferring the materials via hard drive. However, answering such requests with a ‘data dump’ often fails to address real needs, and it is not entirely clear how much use these hard drives filled with language data are receiving. They may simply fulfil the same role as a massive bilingual print dictionary: occupying a coffee table as a symbolic reservoir of linguistic knowledge but rarely used. The problem is that when users are presented with large amounts of data it can be difficult to identify which are the most important or valuable resources. And even when the desired resources can be identified, they may not be presented in a useful form.

This ‘data dump’ approach represents a missed opportunity. The very people who are sending out these hard drives filled with data often have valuable knowledge about the quality of the various resources contained on those hard drives (see also Garrett’s contribution to this volume which presents an alternative view). That is, they have a sense of which are the ‘best’ recordings or the ‘most useful’ teaching tools. Of course, this knowledge is by nature largely subjective, and it may focus on qualities which are less important to users. For example, an archivist might recommend a recording based on its audio fidelity while a user may be more interested in the social standing of the person recorded. But whatever the basis of this subjectivity, distributing thousands of files as a single data dump gives the impression that all of the files are equally relevant, when in fact they are not.

We need to provide ways to mediate access and enrich the user experience by identifying relevant content. To that end ANLA has recently initiated an effort to create featured collections. This approach brings us back to the early days of bibliographic catalogues and finding aids which sought not only to identify resources but also to provide evaluations of them. The first of these featured collections to be created was the *Lucier Collection*. ANLA holds a vast collection of nearly 1000 audio recordings documenting the Inupiaq language. However, most of these recordings are relatively mundane and procedural. They include tapes of government meetings and hearings, as well as instructional recordings from Inupiaq language classes using grammar-translation pedagogy. Buried within all of these tapes are some real gems, but sorting through this vast collection is not for the faint of heart.

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<sup>5</sup> Restrictions on access to culturally sensitive materials are handled through deposit agreements worked out in consultation with user communities (see Garrett and Conathan 2009).

Drawing on their knowledge of the history of language documentation in Alaska, ANLA staff were able to identify recordings made by researcher Charles Lucier as a particularly important resource. Lucier graduated from the University of Alaska in 1949 and spent the winter of 1950-51 studying Eskimo culture in the Kotzebue area of Northwestern Alaska. During this time he made audio recordings of extraordinary quality, as speakers recalled stories and songs from across the region. Lucier's materials document a stage of the language which no longer exists, and include songs which are no longer remembered by present-day elders. Collecting the Lucier recordings together as a featured collection provides users interested in Inupiaq language with a quick window into one of the best examples of Inupiaq language documentation available. Users are of course free to explore other resources relating to Inupiaq, but in identifying the Lucier sources as a featured collection we enrich the resource with our own knowledge of what is (or what we believe to be) valuable in the ANLA collection.

It could be argued that archivists should avoid such subjectivity. In this view the identification and evaluation of resources is an act of interpretation and analysis, and exegesis should be undertaken by the researcher, not the archivist. To the contrary, I would argue that such a view is disingenuous. Language archivists are curators of linguistic documentation and are often best-placed to evaluate the resources in their care. To *not* share this judgement deprives users of important information. In other words, archivists shape the linguistic record just as much by what they do not say as by what they do say. They serve no-one by keeping their professional opinions to themselves. That said, archivists should not be the only mediators of archive resources; while they often have specialist knowledge of their collections, their knowledge is by no means exclusive. In many cases language communities themselves or language specialists are in a better position to mediate language resources (see also Linn, this volume).

Mediation of language resources undertaken by members of the language communities themselves rather than the archive can be referred to as BOTTOM-UP MEDIATION. Bottom-up mediation involves engaging with user communities to enrich materials that will be useful to them. One area in which bottom-up mediation can be particularly productive is in metadata description (see Linn, this volume, and Garret, this volume, for example). Many ANLA resources still have only cursory metadata, and this is particularly true for legacy audio recordings for which information beyond what is found on the tape label is difficult to gather. In many cases labels indicate only the date or speaker name. In other cases the only information is some kind of vague numbering system, e.g., 'tape 2'. Gathering additional metadata requires listening to the tape itself. Where the tape is entirely in Native language this also requires language experts. This may be done better by regional entities with closer connections to speakers. For example, consider the improvements

to metadata descriptions undertaken by the Sealaska Heritage Institute<sup>6</sup> shown in Table 1. SHI is the non-profit arm of an Alaska Native corporation and is located in Juneau, the heart of Tlingit speaking country, some 1000 km by air from Fairbanks and ANLA.

*Table 1.  
Improvements to metadata for an item in the SHI collection (Jones 2013)*

Before

Item 408: Oral Literature Collection, Tape 343, Side B. Robert Zuboff and Susie James, July 27, 1972, migrated from reel to CD. Length 60:14.

After

Item 408: Oral Literature Collection, Tape 343, Side B. Robert Zuboff (Kak'weidí clan, Kaakáakw Hít) and Susie James (Chookaneidi clan, T'akdeintaan yádi), July 27, 1972; interviewed by Nora Marks Dauenhauer, migrated from reel to CD. Length 60:14. Content by DK: story of how the Sea Otter came to be is told, 0:4:15; raven sounds are given by Zuboff, and their meaning/use, 4:16-11:10; Zuboff tells a story about a man who became an invisible man (tlékanáa) (13:24); 11:11-13:24; story of a man named Naawan that bit the tongue off a raven, 13:25-16:09; general conversation and questions about Tlingit phrases, 16:10-19:57; story of a man named Gáneix, 19:58-21:40; discussion about language and storytelling, mention of the Salmon Boy story, 21:41-24:12; Zuboff tells the story about the Woman that Raised the Wood Worm, attributes the story's people, 24:13-27:34; Susie and Nora talk, Susie speaks about the Man Who Commanded the Tides (Yookis'kooeik) and his sister and raven. She then tells the story of bringing in the house that was way out on the ocean and how raven got the octopus tentacle to bring in the house. She then talks about the type of resources that were in the house but not in detail. She mentions the whale, cod etc. She then goes back to the man who commanded the tide and rescued his mother by placing her in the skin of a black duck, 27:35 to the end of the recording. Notes on file.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.sealaskaheritage.org/collection](http://www.sealaskaheritage.org/collection)

By working with fluent speakers of Tlingit, SHI was able to greatly expand the metadata description (the enriched descriptions amount to more than ten times the character count of the originals). Beyond the useful addition of time codes, the nature of the enriched description is instructive. Notice the identification of clan names associated with the speakers. Knowledge of clans is extremely relevant in Tlingit culture and is something that any Tlingit user of the material would want to know. Notice also the inclusion of Tlingit translations of story titles and characters, as well as the focus on animal names. All of these are culturally relevant metadata which could not have been created through a top-down approach. Having metadata enriched by Tlingit speakers themselves allows users to more readily discover and identify relevant resources.

Another example of bottom-up mediation can be found in the *Dena'ina Lifeways* project. The goal of this project was to promote awareness of key Dena'ina language audio recordings housed at ANLA. Working together with a Native-owned radio station, Dena'ina language learners selected 26 stories from the archive which represent a broad range of speakers, genre, and dialects. The recorded narratives were edited and accompanying transcripts and translations were checked for accuracy. The narratives were supplemented with photos and other artwork specifically created for the project. Finally, a short introduction contextualizing each narrative was composed and recorded in English to precede the Dena'ina story. The resulting production aired as a series of radio broadcasts with an accompanying website.<sup>7</sup> The advantage of this collection over one created in a top-down manner is that users themselves have been able to identify just what information is relevant. Addition of contextualizing introductions as created by the *Dena'ina Lifeways* project could not have been done without community input, and linking of stories and photos requires not only access to relevant photo collections but also knowledge of just which photos are relevant to which story.

A third example of bottom-up mediation can be found in the work of Liana Wallace, a First Alaskans Institute intern who worked at ANLA during summer 2012. Ms Wallace is a Tlingit speaker who has been researching

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<sup>7</sup> As of March 2013 the *Dena'ina Lifeways* website ([www.denainalifeways.org/](http://www.denainalifeways.org/)) had been hacked. The Internet Archive contains a snapshot of the home page but not the actual content pages. Unfortunately, none of the content other than the original recordings and transcripts have been archived at ANLA. This experience demonstrates the fragility of web-based projects and supports the aphorism that a website is not an archive; that is, descriptive materials housed on websites should be separately archived as well. [Editors' note: as of June 2013 the website has been restored and has significant Denai'ina content.]

Tlingit language and culture for many years. She was able to draw on her broader knowledge of Tlingit resources to develop an indigenous taxonomy for Tlingit music recordings housed at ANLA, recognizing from the outset that individual songs were connected to particular clans. Drawing on genealogical information housed at ANLA and elsewhere, she was able to identify ANLA recordings containing songs and to link those songs with their traditional owner. This research required her to move beyond the borders of ANLA, seeking census records and song transcripts from other sources, including the Alaska and Polar Regions collection at University of Alaska Fairbanks. It was often the case that recordings of songs were housed at ANLA, while music transcripts were housed within the Alaska and Polar Regions collection. Ms Wallace's work not only highlighted the relevance of music recordings housed at ANLA, which is something ANLA staff could easily overlook, but it also recognized that culturally significant collections may span across multiple archival repositories. Indigenous mediation of archival resources encourages that broader view.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the distinction between top-down and bottom-up mediation of archival materials is not always so clear. Consider the case of the Eyak dictionary. Although the last speaker of Eyak passed away in 2008, the language was extensively documented in the 1960s by linguist Michael Krauss, resulting in a large body of archival documentation. Moreover, Eyak materials were among the first documents to be digitized at ANLA. Digitization was undertaken in 2002 by the Eyak Preservation Council, and digital versions of all materials were distributed to the community. Among the digital resources is a massive, linguistically dense manuscript dictionary (Krauss 1970). This is a fabulous and valuable resource for those interested in Eyak language, but it is far from accessible, even as a PDF document resulting from the application of optical character recognition.. The document uses many *ad hoc* special characters which defy optical character recognition, and searching is limited to full-text uncategorised searches. An excerpt from the scanned dictionary is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Excerpt from scanned Eyak Dictionary

qəq<sup>1</sup>

qəq<sup>1</sup> (noun, unclassified) 'loon, goodweather duck, weatherbird' LM, "smaller than yehs, has a different cry" L, 24.1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 18, 26, 26, 27, 28, 28, 36, 40, 46, 50, 51, 51, 53, 54a, 55, 57, 62, 70, 76, 77, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 93, 96, 96A, Galushia Nelson kəq 'loon' BSdL 539, qəqwəlahyu· 'loon-people' 24.2, 10A, qəqwəlah-yu·qe?‡ 24.5, 5A, qəqwəlahqe?‡ 'loon-people--woman' 24.17A, qəqyəquhyu· 'loon-young' 24.73A, qəqkəna·?d 'loon-coat' 24.40A, qəqəlih 'loon-arm' 24.51A. This bird is probably 'Holboell's red-necked grebe (*Colymba griseogena holboelli*)', or, less likely, the 'American horned grebe (*Podiceps auritus cornutus*)' rather than a loon. The qəq was not to be eaten, because a man once turned into one. Joseph Grinnell ("Birds of the Kotzebue Sound Region, Alaska", Pacific Coast Avif. 1, 1900), says that "Although the [Kotzebue] natives eat loons and gulls as readily as ducks and geese, of the grebes they say, 'no good cow-cow, all same dog,'" and Ivan N. Gabrielson writes (Gabrielson and Lincoln, The Birds of Alaska, 1959, p.67) that "Gabrielson has never had an opportunity to try Eskimos on this bird,<sup>but</sup> he has seen them eat

As interest in Eyak language revitalization has increased, there has been greater interest in gaining better access to the dictionary resources. In 2009 ANLA was approached by the Eyak Preservation Council and the Eyak Language Project to discuss ways to recreate these reference materials in a more accessible form. From these discussions was born a new project to create an Eyak dictionary database, drawing on lexical information in the existing 1970 dictionary manuscript and several other sources. The new Eyak dictionary employs the modern practical orthography as opposed to the IPA symbols used in Krauss 1970 (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Excerpt from new Eyak Dictionary, corresponding to Fig. 2.*

### **q’Aq’<sup>1</sup>**

**q’Aq’** (*n. unclass.*) *LM*, loon, goodweather duck, weatherbird, *L* "smaller than yehs, has a different cry": 24.1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 18, 26, 26, 27, 28, 36, 40, 46, 50, 51, 51, 53, 54a, 55, 57, 62, 70, 76, 77, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 93, 96, 964, *Galushia Nelson* \*\*\* (!) 'loon' *BSdL* 539, **q’Aq’wAlahyu:** loon-people 24.2, 10A, **q’Aq’wAlahyu:qe’L** 24.5, 5A, **q’Aq’wAlahqe’L** loon-people-woman 24.174, **q’Aq’yAquhyu:** loon-young 24.73A, **q’Aq’kAna:’d** loon-coat 24.40A, **q’Aq’ch’Alih** loon-arm 24.51A. *This bird is probably 'Holboell's red-necked grebe (Columba grisegena holboelli)', or, less likely, the 'American horned grebe (Podiceps auritus cornutus), rather than a loon. The q’Aq’ was not to be eaten, because a man once turned into one. Joseph Grinnell ("Birds of the Kotzebue Sound Region, Alaska," *Pacific Coast Avif.* 1, 1900), says that "Although the [Kotzebue] natives eat loons and gulls as readily as ducks and geese, of the grebes they say, 'no good cow-cow, all same dog,'" and Ivan N. Gabrielson writes (Gabrielson and Lincoln, *The Birds of Alaska*, 1959, p.67) that "Gabrielson has never had an opportunity to try Eskimos on this bird, but he has seen them eat*

The new dictionary will also incorporate hyperlinks to Eyak texts, as opposed to the numbered references used in the 1970 manuscript. It will also include linked audio gathered both from archival materials and from recordings of present-day language learners. The Eyak dictionary project is not exclusively either top-down or bottom-up. Funding is drawn from grants to ANLA and to the Eyak Preservation Council. Personnel include both linguists at ANLA and community members at the Eyak Preservation Council. Still, a crucial bottom-up aspect of this project is that it was inspired by the community itself in order to support language revitalization goals.

## **4. Outlook**

Continually increasing interest in language maintenance and revitalization in Alaska highlights the importance of the kind of mediation described above. Conathan (2011: 250) notes that 'to facilitate effective use, archives must provide efficient and complete access to metadata and records'. Providing increased access is indeed a necessary first step, but it is not always sufficient. If we are to ensure effective use we must also ensure that resources are relevant. We must work with communities to mediate language resources. As described above, ANLA has taken some initial steps in this direction, but clearly much more needs to be done, both in Alaska and around the world.

While the specifics of current language revitalization movements in Alaska are unique to Alaska, the recent experiences of ANLA with respect to user communities have relevance more broadly. Just as for ANLA, many of today's language archives were originally created primarily to preserve documentation of languages which were quickly losing native speakers. Thoughts of how that information might be used, and by whom, were not given high priority. But inevitably it is speakers and their descendants, not linguists, who will show the most interest in language resources (see Austin 2011). Engaging with these user communities is crucial to making archival resources useful. Social networking could provide the most straightforward and cost-effective way to identify the most important resources within an archive (see Nathan 2009). Users can bring knowledge that the archivist may not have, but Indigenous users in particular bring their own perspectives and thus complement the archivist's subjective evaluations. Ultimately, mediated resources will be more useful to all archive users.

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