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Participant-driven language archiving

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1. Introduction

Much has been written about alternative research methodologies in linguistics and related subjects (for recent overviews, see Czaykowska-Higgins 2009, and Linn, this volume). Such methodologies aim to involve speaker communities more centrally in linguistic research. Equally important, but comparatively neglected, is the involvement of speaker communities in the curation, preservation, and dissemination of archived materials. As the field of language archiving matures, this latter topic now merits fuller discussion. This paper presents some general considerations and some specific desiderata for what I call participant-driven language archiving (PDLA). PDLA is an archiving component that assigns role-appropriate archiving rights and responsibilities to individuals and communities who participate as ‘human subjects’ of linguistic research.

My conception of PDLA complements recent work on the roles of speaker communities and collaboration in language and cultural documentation, while also breaking new ground. A successful implementation of PDLA could facilitate cooperation and collaboration, continuing the trend away from ‘lone wolf’ linguistics (Austin 2007). It could also facilitate the ambitious aims of ‘community curation’ as described and envisioned by Christen (2011). It could even result in a less ‘commodifying’ approach to language documentation and archiving (Dobrin et al. 2009). Such potential results would be welcome to many, but I wish to emphasize that PDLA is consistent with a wide variety of outcomes. Crippen and Robinson (2013: 132), defending ‘lone wolf’ linguistics, argue that ‘there is nothing unethical about setting one’s own research agenda and conducting linguistic fieldwork alone’. I would add that there is nothing unethical about communities and individual participants setting their own archiving and dissemination agendas. It is not the aim of this paper to prescribe how communities and participants should use the roles and responsibilities which PDLA would afford them.

I divide the presentation that follows into three rather general sections. The second section of this paper, following this introduction, considers the motivations for PDLA, arguing that existing archives have missed valuable opportunities by focusing almost exclusively on building relationships with

depositors. Having laid out the foundations of PDLA, the third section turns to considering important steps that would need to be taken in order to implement it. Finally, the fourth section focuses on the potentials (and challenges) of PDLA.¹

2. Motivations

Existing language archives afford special roles to depositors. Although the degree of control exerted by depositors varies from archive to archive, in general depositors play roles in the following steps of the archiving process: submitting materials, curating and contextualizing submitted materials, and responding to requests for access to materials. To take a concrete example, at the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at SOAS, depositors are allocated user accounts with ELAR's online catalogue, enabling them to attach and edit metadata to existing resources, and to manage users' access to those resources (Nathan 2013).

Depositors acquire these roles as a result of their relationship to the materials they submit. We take it for granted that not just anybody can 'play depositor' for a given deposit. This seemingly trivial point takes on particular significance when we consider that depositors also serve as mediators between archive users and speaker communities. The DoBeS 'Code of Conduct' makes this explicit with a diagram that has arrows linking archive and depositor and depositor and community, but none between archive and community (Wittenburg 2005). It is assumed that only the depositor has the necessary language or speaker community expertise in the context of a particular project. It is therefore the depositor's job, not the archive's, to communicate with speaker communities. This is taken for granted in much theorising, as for example Dwyer's (2006: 35) description of archiving as a phase in which 'the researcher must carry through the wishes of the consultants' (see Nathan, this volume, for further discussion).

PDLA's primary objective is to establish direct, web-based, relationships between participants and archives, minimizing the use of depositors as proxies. These relationships should focus on the roles and associated capabilities afforded to individuals *qua* participants in language documentation. PDLA is not simply aimed at tweaking archives' representation of participants; it aims to move archives beyond their existing

¹ This paper has benefitted from discussions with Peter Austin, Jeff Good, David Nathan, two anonymous reviewers, and most of all, from fruitful collaboration with Lise Dobrin in 2012.

range of functions to establish new tools that truly reflect and appreciate participants' relationships to the materials.

The rest of this paper focuses on the unique contributions to language archiving that can be made by participants, recognised as such.

2.1. Enriching resources

Collecting and correcting metadata about existing archived resources is an urgent task for the field of documentary linguistics. If information about a resource is incorrect, whether it be the details of a transcription, the location of a recording event, or the identity of a speaker, those with first-hand knowledge of the language, community, or recording context are most able to correct the mistake (see also Holton's contribution to this volume which describes an alternative view). In cases where projects were rushed to completion, the data and metadata that ends up in an archive should, if possible, be reviewed and consolidated later. This work is also best done by those involved in the original documentation.

In other cases, entirely new information can be attached to resources. Although linguists are urged to record as much metadata as they can while doing their field research, they inevitably leave gaps to be filled in later (see also Austin 2013). Even the metadata perfectionist is not immune to factors such as changing historical, political, or other perspectives, where information that was once deemed irrelevant may assume greater significance (or the opposite, i.e. it may lose relevance). For example, a fresh interest in issues of language contact might prompt researchers to put together new biographical information about the lives, occupations, language learning experiences, and travels of individual speakers. New information is not restricted to the linguistic domain; it can include cultural and contextual information, which, furthermore, is often possessed only by speakers (or their relatives and descendants). Certain kinds of contextual information can only be provided by those who were there (e.g. where a recording was made), or perhaps those bearing a close relationship to those who were there. Such information, even if non-linguistic, carries great value within a holistic approach to language research.

In other cases, it is simply the passage of time that creates new opportunities for resource enrichment, adding information that can also be of value to language researchers. For example, initially reticent consultants may decide to share information about the meaning and context of a previously recorded conversation that had formerly been thought too sensitive to discuss.

To date, community-driven resource enrichment has been largely restricted to speaker communities in countries such as the United States and

Australia. Lisa Conathan (p.c.) reports, for example, that at the 2011 *Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages* in Washington, DC, participants were able to correct mistakes in catalogue records, and identify the language or dialect of unclassified recordings. Although it is tempting to dismiss such scenarios as improbable in countries where there is limited access to information technologies, in fact, access to these technologies is increasing extremely rapidly in many parts of the developing world.

2.2. Informing consent

Although language archives share a sincere concern that the wishes of endangered language community members are respected in terms of access to and use of language documentation materials, there is in general a disconnect between the tools and systems provided by archives and what depositors and endangered language speakers are able to achieve using those tools and systems. The relationships between archives and community members tend to be mediated through depositors – in the most explicit case, through agreements prepared by depositors and signed by community members (see Wittenburg 2005). Depositors hand language materials over to archives along with metadata and documentation of agreements and consent. Depositors may also be provided with accounts which enable them to update aspects of their archived materials over time.

It is not surprising that archives have evolved in this way. On the one hand, many endangered language speakers live in difficult-to-reach areas of the world, making depositors the obvious if imperfect ambassadors and points of contact for the cultures they research. Until recently, the academic culture of linguistics focused almost exclusively on its ‘scientific’ objectives, leaving little space for less weighty topics such as fieldwork ethics and community relations (a situation that has changed noticeably in the last five years, see Robinson 2010, Rice 2011, among others).

However, even a minimal deconstruction of the depositor-driven model of archiving reveals problems. Concerning the question of access, one ELAR depositor recently wrote (with details changed to preserve the anonymity of both the depositor and the community):

Both interviews I deposited were conducted in the open. The questions were asked by one of my consultants and anyone who wanted to listen could have done so. It was clearly announced to everyone what will happen to the recordings. So far as I am concerned, there is nothing which needs to be concealed and I fully trust the archive to handle everything responsibly... I am bound by an oath so the people fully trust me.

This depositor's statement is well-intentioned, but it also raises several questions. If someone present at the interviews failed to listen at first, do they lose their right to protest later if they finds the content objectionable? Does the fact that the interviews were conducted publicly within the community mean that people outside the community also have a right to listen? Did everybody really understand what it means to deposit recordings into a digital language archive? Is the depositor's trust in the archive well placed? Does the depositor's oath guarantee that they can articulate the speaker community's interests?

The greater the physical, temporal or metaphorical distance between material collection and archiving, the greater the possibility for misunderstanding. Although many linguists agree that they have an ethical obligation to obtain informed consent prior to conducting language research, consent about access is usually obtained through agreements made in the midst of fieldwork. As Thieberger and Musgrave (2007) point out, however, it is difficult or impossible to foresee all the uses to which endangered language materials may be put, especially in the fast-changing digital landscape. Good (2010) provides a typical example of how the march of technology has changed our understanding of the concept 'open access'. A linguist working in 1980 may have obtained informed consent from and discussed access issues with their speaker consultants. But in 1980, 'open access' meant 'copies available on request', whereas today it means 'unmediated web access'. Good asks: 'How do we determine 2010's access to materials that were "open" in 1980?'

There are also the inevitable problems of (mis-)understanding: what, exactly, did an individual or community provide consent for? In a recent case outside linguistics, Arizona State University agreed to pay \$700,000 to 41 Havasupai tribal members after allegedly using their DNA for purposes for which it was not donated. Tribal members donated DNA in the early 1990s for use in the study of diabetes. Later, the same DNA was allegedly used to investigate their ancestry, a sensitive topic to which the tribe objected. Had ancestry been the initial topic of investigation, the Havasupai might never have consented to donate their DNA (Harmon 2010).

In the context of documentary linguistics, such considerations lead Thieberger and Musgrave (2007) to question the legitimacy of consent. How can communities with little or no access to the internet be expected to grasp even the most basic uses to which their material will be put without direct experience of the medium itself? In such cases, perhaps consent cannot be truly informed. Accepting this conclusion and exploring its practical implications, Robinson (2010: 189) unravels an 'ethical bind': when a community does not understand the internet, then the linguist might make the decision whether to publish the materials online or not: 'erring on the

side of “caution” and not publishing on the Internet is just as paternalistic as deciding that the community would approve if only they understood’.

There are no easy solutions to these problems. However, providing an open communication channel between endangered language speakers, archives, and linguists would be a step in the right direction. It increases the possibility that consent can be re-envisioned as a continually negotiated relationship between linguists and consultants and other stakeholders, thereby informing and legitimizing consent. Rice (2010) calls this ‘ongoing consent’, while Robinson (2010: 190) writes of obtaining consent in an ‘ongoing and collaborative way’.

Ongoing consent is at the core of the PDLA-based relationships between archives and participants in language documentation. This relationship also presents the opportunity to connect archive users to participants, should participants wish to connect in this way. The potentials (and challenges) of this opportunity are discussed further in Section 4.

3. Implementation

The discussion to this point motivates a new component of the archiving process: a component designed to elevate the role of participants. Deferring for now what the component would look like, this section considers some preliminary steps that would need to be taken before implementing PDLA.

3.1. Social networking

Social networking websites, not so long ago thought of as a frivolity, are now becoming conventional places where institutions and people interact, even within the academic humanities. In some cases, an institution’s website integrates with existing networks using Facebook or similar plug-ins; in other cases, institutions build functionalities tailored to their particular users and functions. Whatever the implementation, the effect is the same: using social networks, users can communicate with each other and thereby (ideally) enrich some system through their interactions.

Language archiving is no exception. The role of social networking as the driving force behind ELAR’s access and subscription system has been described in detail (Nathan 2010, 2013). I will not treat the topic further here, except to state the obvious: without communication channels between participants and other users, PDLA will remain no more than an idea. Social networking may not be the only way of achieving such communication, but given its current ubiquity and level of participation, it seems a sensible path

to explore. The following sub-sections therefore take for granted that archives will have built-in support for social networking.

3.2. Self-identification

PDLA's premise is that participants are involved in archiving by virtue of their role as participants in the process of language documentation.² While recognizing the role of participants at the level of archive deposits is a step in the right direction, I also want to focus on the much greater potential for fine-grain role recognition at the level of individual resources or bundles of resources. PDLA requires a communication channel oriented to the level of individual resources, so that granular decisions can be made about those resources. This sub-section spells out a system by which individuals can target resources and identify themselves as participants in those resources.

For speakers to be treated as participants, they must be able to find the recordings, images or texts in which they feature and confirm their participation in them. This can happen in one of two ways: in the first, let us assume that a depositor has already noted a speaker's name and/or role in metadata for a resource. In this case, the task is simply to link the speaker to the item of metadata. This could happen, for example, in the same way that depositors are linked to their deposits within the ELAR system: when a depositor applies for a user account, their application is verified and linked to the database record specifying that individual as depositor. They then gain depositor rights and responsibilities. In the second scenario, the depositor has not already identified a particular speaker, and so instead that individual comes across the resource 'out of the blue'. In this case, the individual would be asserting that they are 'that person' that features in 'that recording'.

I cannot resist giving this process a snappy name: *That's me*. Envisioned as such, and if developed as a tool for archives, *That's me* would enable speakers to identify themselves as participants in audio or video recordings, photographs or text. But why stop there? If a 'that's me' identification is possible, then why not 'that's my brother', 'those are my ancestors' and so on? I include at least some such extensions also under the rubric *That's me*.

However, I want to stress that the most important element of *That's me* is that a *That's me* identification is not simply the same thing as attaching

² This is not meant to imply that individuals with other roles in the language documentation lifecycle should not also be represented in the archiving process.

metadata to a resource. Adding a metadata value, such as a person's name, to a resource does not confer on that person any role or associated rights and responsibilities in relation to the resource. By contrast, a *That's me* identification is an assertion of a person's moral rights in relation to a resource, rather like the kind of assertion one makes when tagging oneself in an image on Facebook.

The distinction between a person being identified as a metadata value attached to a resource, and that person asserting their rights in a resource, is an important one. The point is not that a metadata mention brings no kudos to the person mentioned. For example, various web systems rely on 'reputation scores' based on metadata about the contributors of postings and subsequent viewers' ratings. But no level of reputation can be traded in for moral authority, and no number of metadata mentions can create or change the relationship between a person and their posting. *That's me* is the glue that links individuals to resources, thereby creating the role of participant.

Is it reasonable to expect an existing archive to be able to implement an architecture for a *That's me* kind of self-identification? An anonymous reviewer of this paper suggested that it might 'require a complete overhaul of the [archive's] architecture.' Perhaps a *That's me* architecture would be best implemented as an independent registry or website communicating with individual archives. In this way, archives that wish to support the *That's me* concept could pool resources towards its development.

3.3. Conflict resolution

In typical archiving approaches, depositors declare the right to deposit materials and the acquisition of any necessary permissions to do so. There tends to be little conflict over such matters as who should be allowed to access what, how materials are presented, or whether materials can be published elsewhere; and related discussions generally take place between depositors and archives. In practice, archives accede to depositors' wishes.

However, if competing moral claims to a resource are permitted, such as through *That's me*, then there is the potential for a greater degree of conflict. The relevant archive bears some responsibility for helping to resolve any conflicts. A participant's views about how or whether to share a particular resource may differ from the depositor's view. If neither position is *a priori* 'correct', a means of review or adjudication is needed. Recognizing that this is a deeply complex area likely to be best fleshed out through actual practice, I will not suggest a particular approach to conflict resolution. Suffice it to say that it may not be possible to resolve all such conflicts through application of a set of policies or rules, and disputes may have to be

dealt with on a case-by-case basis, referencing past decisions and practice, and considering available technologies for implementing solutions.

4. Potentials (and challenges)

In this paper I have offered some motivations for PDLA and briefly presented three preliminary steps that need to be taken to implement it. Let us now assume that some archive has a social network enabling its users to communicate with each other, has provided a *That's me* mechanism for transforming users into participants, and has devised a method for resolving conflict around moral claims to resources. How might that archive differ from other archives? What are the potentials (and challenges) for such an archive?

4.1. Negotiating access

In existing archives, the depositor determines the access protocol³ for a resource, and the archive implements the decision. There may be reasons to change the protocol later. For example, a speaker featured in a recording may decide, for whatever reason, that they would like their identity to be anonymised. A speaker may request more restricted access to a recording, perhaps even specifying those people they would allow to access it.

Alternatively, a speaker may wish some recordings to be more openly accessible than the depositor specified. The depositor may have instructed the archive to restrict access under a 'precautionary principle' that the community is wary of making them public. However, perhaps the depositor has not yet sought the community's views or is simply not yet ready to share the recordings with a wider audience. The resulting situation could be at odds with the preferences of speakers who may derive benefit from being identified and their contribution to research being publicly recognized (see below).

Will revisions of access protocol be reached collaboratively or following some form of conflict resolution? I predict that cases of collaboration will greatly outnumber cases of conflict. There is already evidence that depositors wish, and indeed are asking, to be relieved from making decisions about access, preferring instead to leave them in the hands of community members and participants. ELAR encourages depositors to provide additional

³ The term 'access protocol' is used here in the sense used by ELAR, i.e. it refers to the sensitivities and restrictions, if any, associated with archived material, and their implementation in an archive.

information about access on its deposit form, which supplies useful evidence about their preferences when invited to formulate them.⁴ Several ELAR depositors requested that access decisions be handed over to the community (although not always stating unambiguously who is supposed to ‘speak for’ the community). For example, regarding his deposit, *Paman languages: Umpithamu, Morrobolam, Mbarrumbathama*, Jean Christophe-Verstraete states that ‘access to this deposit will only be granted after consultation with the Lamalama people’.⁵ For her deposit *Conversational Kiksht* (currently open to community members only), Nariyo Kono writes: ‘to determine membership in the community, please contact Valerie Switzler, the director of the Department of Culture and Heritage, Warm Springs language program, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon’.⁶

In other cases, depositors wish to delegate access decisions to speakers in specific recordings. For example, Jay Huwieler states that for his deposit, *Bajika: Swadesh List Elicitation Sessions*, access should be ‘closed to everyone, unless individual [is] approved by [the] consultant’.⁷ Similarly, with respect to *Arandic songs: documenting Aboriginal verbal art in Central Australia*, Myfany Turpin grants access to several named individuals, and then gives those individuals the right to determine who else can access the materials: ‘copies of this material can only be obtained with consent from all three of the following men: [redacted]. If these people are no longer around, consent must be given from [redacted] and the most senior male descendants of [redacted]’.⁸ Finally, regarding her deposit, *Barupu Grammar and Dictionary Materials*, Miriam Corris writes: ‘any person named on a recording or transcript may receive a digital copy of the materials’.⁹

These depositors’ requests reflect a nuanced view of access to endangered language materials which challenges both a binary approach of ‘open’ versus ‘closed’, and a push for open access at all costs. Nevertheless, I have not seen these kinds of protocols implemented and automated by existing archives, not even ELAR, which has put the principle of negotiating access at its very core (Nathan 2013). In this sense, it could be said that depositors are already pushing in the direction of PDLA.

⁴ I am grateful to ELAR for sharing this information with me.

⁵ elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0058

⁶ elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0066

⁷ elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0038

⁸ elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0019

⁹ elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0037

4.2. Repatriation of resources

In a Native American context, the term ‘repatriation’ has typically referred to the return of human remains to family members or descendants from places they have been removed to such as museums. In the United States, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 legislated for the process whereby human remains could be returned to the tribes from which they were taken. More generally, repatriation also refers to the return of funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to lineal descendants or native communities. Within the U.S., the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) has a Repatriation Office, and the National Museum of Australia has a repatriation team. The Smithsonian’s Repatriation Office splits the process into six steps, culminating with Deaccession and Repatriation.¹⁰

In the art world, many works of considerable value and antiquity held by major Western museums were acquired through colonial looting. In this context, repatriation refers to the return of these objects to their countries or communities of origin. Given the cultural, religious, and financial value of many such objects, this is a particularly charged domain. For example, debate continues about whether the Elgin Marbles, a collection of classical Greek marble sculptures originally from the Acropolis, should remain at the British Museum or be returned to Athens.

Within linguistics, one occasionally hears of the repatriation of old recordings to native communities. Yamada (2007: 269-270) describes working through Berend Hoff’s (1968) grammar of the Kar’inja (Carib) language with her collaborator and native speaker Chief Ferdinand Mandé in Suriname, and discovering to their surprise that Chief Mandé’s grandfather had been one of Hoff’s consultants. Yamada met with Hoff, who gave her 18 hours of his recordings and permission to distribute copies to his consultants’ descendants. Finally hearing these recordings had a tremendous emotional impact on Chief Mandé and other elders from the community. Yamada describes how one female elder, on listening to her ancestors’ songs, was inspired to: ‘dance and sing at her upcoming eightieth birthday celebration – no matter how much her voice quivered or her knees ached’.

In this case, it was sufficient to provide descendants with copies of original recordings. As far as we know, the community did not object to

¹⁰ nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/repatriation/

these recordings being more widely available. Sometimes, however, repatriation consists of returning recordings to source communities, without retaining a copy at the source institution. Repatriation of ‘born-digital’ materials requires careful consideration (see Christen 2011 for further discussion and examples). A community might wish to receive digital copies of materials and insist that all other copies be permanently deleted. However, if a community trusts an archive’s implementation of access protocol, they might instead be content for the archive to hold copies of the materials, either as closed access ‘backups’ or under a restrictive access conditions. Leaving copies in an archive will make it easier for individuals or communities to change their minds about access conditions over time, and could also be used to provide other stakeholders (for example, the linguist who collected the recordings, or their colleagues or descendants) with a platform for negotiating access. In these ways, PDLA would facilitate processes of digital repatriation, which overlaps considerably with negotiating access.

4.3. Financial benefit for participants

Another potential of PDLA is that it could help enterprising speakers to gain financial benefit from their reputation and efforts as language consultants. Just as linguists can derive career rewards from research on an endangered language, it seems reasonable that consultants may also expect long-term benefits from their work. Linking individuals to the resources in which they occur opens a communication channel between those individuals and linguists (and others). No doubt this is already happening informally, but PDLA could facilitate and broaden such channels and even provide mechanisms for recognition, including payments to consultants. Perhaps the AILLA archive foresaw this possibility – without the commercial dimension – in its Deposit Form, which states: ‘we expect to have many recordings in our collection that are untranscribed and unanalyzed, and are hoping that members of our user community will gradually help us to produce transcriptions, translations, and analyses, making these oral works more accessible’.¹¹

Empowering participants to become active (and potentially paid) players in the documentary linguistics ‘market’ has the potential to dramatically transform the way linguistic fieldwork is done. The idea here is not to provide participants with royalties from an archive selling their materials; of

¹¹ www.ailla.utexas.org/site/forms/ailla_depositor_packet.pdf

course, this is unlikely given that archives are normally not-for-profit organisations. Rather, the idea is to facilitate payment from individual linguists to participants for further consulting, be it for the clarification of existing resources, the creation of new resources, or participation in entirely new projects.

4.4. Challenges

This paper has outlined a model for archiving which highlights the role of participants. I have shown that if an archive were to implement a few steps in this direction, new possibilities would be opened up in terms of negotiating access, repatriation of resources, and rewarding participants.

These possibilities also pose challenges. The first and perhaps most worrying of these is the question: if this model became widely adopted, would linguistics be subject to a crippling level of ill-will and dispute, such as that which regularly afflicts archaeology and anthropology in connection with the repatriation of human artifacts and remains¹² or the art world in connection with the repatriation of cultural heritage (see above)? That is, by opening the door to conflict, would the model encourage it?

A first response to this question is to distinguish those fields of inquiry. Many cultural heritage objects were acquired through colonial looting or similar actions which we would not defend today. Language materials, by contrast, are more likely to have been produced through collaboration, especially since professional sensitivities have improved in recent decades. Moreover, since language materials are now in digital form, everyone can have a copy without diminishment of the original, so disputes are generally limited to narrower and more predictable discussions around terms of access rather than possession *per se*.

A second response is to accept that some conflict is inevitable, and that this is not itself a bad thing: better to know what irritates people than to maintain a dishonest silence. A *That's me* self-identification followed by an access protocol revision process provides a mechanism to raise a conversation that would not have otherwise taken place. Without such a mechanism, a participant's concerns would either remain unarticulated or unshared, or would need to be expressed through a more inefficient and perhaps discouraging process (for example, through a letter or email).

¹² See, e.g. the 'skull wars' described by Thomas (2001) in connection with Kennewick Man.

The second of the challenges is the possible abuse of a *That's me* system. 'Scammers' posing as participants may attempt to assume others' identities, make bogus entries, or reap others' benefits. While this is a real danger, it is not an argument against the proposed mechanisms. Abuse is a concern everywhere, even for archives in determining who to allocate the role of depositor or other access to. Archives need to have strategies for verifying users anyway; similar strategies need to be applied (or extended) to verifying participants.

In summary, the transformational potential of PDLA outweighs these challenges. The challenges encourage welcome debate and progress in the ethics of inclusive research, and present tasks that need to be faced in running any online facility supporting interactive membership.

5. Conclusion

And your father? Do you have [a photograph] of him?

He does not respond to this at first.

Somewhere I have a photograph that he is in, but you cannot see him clearly. He didn't like being photographed. You get in their books, he'd say, and you can never get out.

(Ondaatje 2007: 95)

In the beginning I did not think to submit my photos taken among the [...] people, but if you do not mind, I will collect photos about my consultants. But they are poor people there, they live in bad environments, it is seen on their clothes. What to do?

(ELAR Depositor, 2010)

Thus for the use of ethnographic realist images within the tourist industry it would be argued that culture becomes dead through the act of photography, represented for tourist consumption by a moment that has vanished, or perhaps, never existed in terms of the subject's experience.

(Edwards 1997: 62)

The three quotes above express a common concern over the unforgiving permanence of the photographic record. In the first quote, a traveler child explains his father's resistance to being photographed. Submitting to a photograph, the father felt, was an irrevocable decision; once you enter the

archive of images, there is no turning back. The other quotes are more troubling, if less eloquent. They tell us that it may not be possible to know how a culture wishes itself to be represented, and that this problem is amplified if there is an intermediary such as a photographer or a linguist-depositor.

While these difficulties cannot be solved simply, PDLA at least holds the promise of resolving the traveler's dilemma. At any point the traveler could revoke his decision and his photographs would be removed from view in the archive.¹³ Depositors could make a choice based on whatever information they have at the time, and then at some later point a community member could refine or revise that choice, even substituting different photos if necessary.

It might be protested that removing items from an archive negates the point of archival preservation; however, if PDLA is taken seriously as a principled component of archiving then such assumptions may need to be re-thought, perhaps even radically. In any case, archivists themselves are not strangers to the concept of 'de-accession'.

Language archives claiming to serve speaker communities as well as researchers should have a coherent strategy for involving community members in the archiving process. They can engage relevant stakeholders in the continual recreation of meaning from archived material to ensure that those materials do not become dated or frozen in time. Moreover, they can address asymmetries in the treatment by archives of depositors versus the participants in the language documentation process. In this paper I have argued that part of this objective could be achieved by what I have called PDLA, participant-driven language archiving. Enabling speakers to assert their moral authority over materials that they participated in creating, and connecting them to other archive users, will raise new potentials and challenges while moving archiving and language documentation in an exciting new direction.

¹³ But how deeply? Perhaps an archive would remove materials from view, or from its storage repository, or even from every backup stored on tape.

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