A balancing act

community interests and language documentation.

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What is language documentation?

• language documentation is ‘concerned with the methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings for compiling a representative and lasting multipurpose record of a natural language or one of its varieties’ (Gippert, Himmelmann, & Mosel, 2006, p. v).
• The DOBES programme funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, begun in 2000 and still ongoing. It has funded 30 documentation teams and has also been prominent in the development of software tools and both practical and theoretical standards of documentation.

• The Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP), funded by Arcadia. Since 2003 ELDP has funded projects on around 130 languages, and generally allocates around £1 million in grants (out of a bequest of around £17 million) per year.

• Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL) funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in the USA. Initiated in 2002, it aims to award $2 million annually.
The documentation, and therefore the archive, contain the following types of material:

• annotated audio and video recordings of diverse speech events with transcriptions, translations into one or more major languages, morphosyntactic analysis and other comments on content and linguistic phenomena

• photographs and drawings partly bundled into groups of photos documenting processes, as, how to build a house

• music recordings and videos of cultural activities and ceremonies

• a description of the language's genetic affiliation, its socio-linguistic context, its phonetic and grammatical features, and the circumstances of research, recording and documentation

• keyword-based descriptions to facilitate the organization and accessibility of documents in the archive
Endangered language archives

We (ELAR) aim to:

• provide a safe long-term repository of language materials
• enable people to see what documentation has been created for a language
• encourage international co-operation between researchers
• encourage endangered language communities to participate and to build on the work done, in order to safeguard their languages
• provide advice and collaboration
Session
Name: CanoeBuilding_01BC
Title: CanoeBuilding_01
Date: 2004-12-19

Description
Canoe Building 01

Location
Project: Saliba/Logea

Content
Genre: Discourse
SubGenre: Procedural
Task: Unspecified
Modalities: speech
Subject: Unspecified
Interactivity: non-interactive
PlanningType: semi-spontaneous
Involvement: Unspecified
SocialContext: Family
EventStructure: Monologue
Channel: Face to Face

Languages
Description
The Logea dialect is predominately used
Language: Saliba

Description
BC talks about canoe building practice

Actors
Description
BC is the principal speaker
Actor: BC
Actor: BD
Actor: Anna Margetts
but the bamboo tubes that are used in the evening (and) stay there overnight ...