

Summary

Humanities research creates records that are of vital interest to a broad range of people both inside and outside of academia. Until recently, access to those records has been difficult, but digital research has the potential to change that. There has been more recent focus on training and advice so that research data is created in standard formats, with suitable descriptions, and with licences for re-use. There have also been repositories established to curate these records. Increasingly, funding agencies are asking for primary data to be made accessible, and this requires all the steps just outlined to be in place.

In this talk I will show how our discipline of linguistics has engaged with the need to curate primary records into the future.

The creation and description of research records has not always been a priority for linguists, and any records that are created have typically not been provided with good archival solutions. This is despite these records often being of cultural or historical relevance beyond academia.

Many academic researchers at the end of their careers despair at the task of making sense of a lifetime's output of papers, notes, images, and recordings. Our project, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC), began in 2003 by digitising analog tape collections and providing sufficient metadata to make them discoverable. These tapes belonged to retired or deceased researchers and would otherwise have been stored in a house or maybe a library, but in both cases are difficult to find and more difficult to access.

In this talk I outline how PARADISEC works and how to find information in it. I will show how we provide access to the collections we hold and how that has helped build links with people and agencies in the Pacific. We have partnered with a number of museums and cultural centres to digitise analog tapes and are working on ways of getting information about the collection to the source communities so that they can find recordings made by their members in the past. All of this represents a model for humanities scholars more broadly.