



## Working With Archival Materials

### Colang 2016 Workshop Syllabus

#### Instructors:

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#### Course description and goals:

As more languages become dormant each year, there is a growing need to develop and disseminate research methods for working with archival documents. This workshop is aimed primarily toward beginning and intermediate participants who either are currently working with or intend to work with archival materials. The workshop will focus primarily on providing and developing skills to accomplish research and revitalization goals through the use of archival documents. Therefore, there will be hands-on practice in class as well as regular assignments for participants. These assignments will allow students to begin working with these materials during the workshop itself, to discuss these methods with fellow participants, and to fix any potential pitfalls or obstacles during the initial stages of this process.

#### Student learning objectives:

- Learn how to prepare for a visit to the archives
- Learn how to spot the strengths and weaknesses of archival data
- Learn how to transform archival materials into a searchable database
- Understand the basics of linguistic reconstruction and reconstitution
- Explore how to put archival data to use for language revitalization

**Course materials:** All readings are listed and linked below in syllabus.

**Supplies needed:** Laptop or tablet to access online course materials.

**Instructional methods:** Lecture, discussion, archives demonstrations (physical & digital), suggested readings.

**Evaluation:** The workshop will be Pass/Fail; full attendance is required for a pass. Students will be evaluated based on (1) their class attendance, participation and engagement, and (2) on a final short presentation on a possible project or language lesson using archival data. This presentation must

demonstrate an understanding of some aspect of the workshop that students found relevant to their own work/research.

### **Disabilities services:**

Please let the instructors know if you need disabilities accommodation. The Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. The instructor will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (208 WHIT, 474-5655) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.

### **Preliminary Schedule**

#### **Day 1: Locating Materials and Preparing for the Archives**

- Identifying and locating archival materials
  - Assignment: Search OLAC and other language archives to locate materials pertaining to your language.
  - Identify documentation and descriptions of related languages (through searching OLAC as well as catalogues of published materials).
  - Locate bibliographies of published materials.
- Preparing for a visit to the archives
  - Creating a workflow for consulting archival materials on site
  - Reading a finding aid
- Metadata
  - Explore any metadata or historical information pertaining to how and by whom the archival materials were compiled.
  - What am I looking at? How and why did the individual(s) collect the data?

### Readings

Gehr, Susan. "Breath of Life: Revitalizing California's Native Languages Through Archives."

*Master's Thesis*, January 1, 2013, 36–62. [http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd\\_theses/4386/](http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4386/)

Simons, Gary, and Steven Bird. "OLAC: Open Languages Archives Community," 2011.

<http://www.language-archives.org/documents/faq.html>.

"Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research." Accessed May 23, 2016.

<http://www2.archivists.org/book/export/html/14460>.

## Day 2: Visiting the Archives and Getting Your Data in Shape

- Visiting the archives
  - Dealing with archivists
  - Options for scanning on-site
  - Ordering materials
- Building a searchable, editable corpus
  - Exploring database options:
    - Reviewing (briefly) the various options for database software, ranging from basic word processing software, spreadsheet software such as Excel, database software such as Toolbox, Flex, Filemaker Pro, and possible web-based alternatives
    - Assignment: Make a list of the database fields which would be necessary given your specific language materials and goals
  - Interpreting the writing system(s)
    - Overview of commonly used writing systems in linguistics
    - Developing a keyboard for transcription purposes
    - Assignment: Go through your archival documents to make a list of all characters and diacritics needed for transcription purposes.

### References of Interest

- Language Geek (for fonts, keyboards, and general information about typography, diacritics, syllabics, etc. in Native languages)  
<http://www.languagegeek.com/>
- LinguistList Software Links (short descriptions and links to linguistics software sorted by category, e.g. lexicons, morphological analysis, etc.)  
<http://linguistlist.org/sp/GetWRListings.cfm?wrtypeid=2>
- Language Documentation & Conservation Journal (publishes occasional software reviews in addition to a wide range of articles about documentation, archiving, and other topics)  
<http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc/>

## Day 3: Identifying the Strengths and Weaknesses of Archival Materials

- Finding strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the data
  - Given the history of the materials themselves, identify possible gaps in the data (semantic, grammatical, cultural, etc.)

- Introducing linguistic reconstruction and reconstitution
  - Explanation of basis behind linguistic reconstruction and reconstitution
  - Exploring examples of how to fill in the gaps in the documentation (e.g. creating new words through cognates, calques, or other means)
- Finding collaborators and building relationships
  - Finding others with complementary skills to yours such as:
    - linguistic collaborators
    - archival collaborators
    - tech savvy partners

#### **Day 4: Putting Archival Materials to Use for Language Revitalization**

- Linking archival materials to needs and priorities of revitalization efforts
  - Prioritizing the specific goals of revitalization when consulting and analyzing these documents
  - Translating archival material into language pedagogy
  - Making an index (if needed) of topics covered in archival material in order to facilitate consultation of documents
- Short presentation: Describe a lesson or project you would make using archival materials from a language you're working on.

#### Readings

- Past Breath of Life Projects