What’s old is new: Data, documentation, and discipline (in)dependence

Introduction

- Primary texts in the humanities
- Language documentation in contemporary linguistics
- Our common epistemological responsibility

Language data: What’s old

- Primacy of linguistic data
- Data driven research
- Data as common denominator

Language data: What’s new

- Documenting our data digitally
- Providing wide access to our data
- Archiving our language documentary materials
- Incorporating digital language documentation into theory, methodology, analysis, practice, teaching, and learning

http://w
Language documentation: Why?
- Save old data from office graveyards
- Reduce, reuse, recycle
- Ethics: Doing linguistics “the right way”
- Not just for endangered languages!

Language documentation: How?
- Pretheoretical methodology
- Conduct, content, context
  - Best practice
  - Discourse centered
  - Ethnographic
  - Language ideological
  - Linguistically relative
  - Adequate

Language documentation: Best practices (Bird & Simons, 2003)
- 70 values-based recommendations
  (content, format, discovery, access, citation, preservation, and rights)
- Seven dimensions of portability
  almost a decade old but still relevant

Language documentation: Best practices (Gippert et al. 2006)
- What documentation is good for
  - Process vs. product

Language documentation: Problems with digital archives
- Archival content
- Archival access
- Audience design
Discipline (in)dependence: Data and theory

- Linguistics: Data driven vs. theory driven
  - Data as practice
  - Theory as science
  - Language documentation and theory
- Google nation: The data speak for themselves

Discipline (in)dependence: The data/documentation interface

- Theory independence
  - Relatable archival formats (Whalen, 2004)
  - Move the conduct of linguistics back toward inductive reasoning (Furbee, 2010)
- Interoperability protocols

Discipline (in)dependence: E-MELD accomplishments

- E-MELD School of Best Practices in Digital Language Documentation
- Open Language Archives Community (OLAC) metadata server

Discipline (in)dependence: Crisis in the humanities I

- “Business model” academics
- Closure of language and linguistics programs
  - SUNY Albany
  - Western Michigan University

Discipline (in)dependence: Crisis in the humanities II

- Corporate values: Compensation based on measurable output
- Primary source language data undervalued
- Data remain fettered

Discipline (in)dependence: Crisis in the humanities III

- If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em!
- From the Lone Ranger to Team Humanitas
- Institutional Repositories (IRs)
  - Marketable products (commodities)
  - Interdisciplinary value
  - Delivery system

Discipline (in)dependence: Data as practice

Discipline (in)dependence: Theory as science

Discipline (in)dependence: Language documentation and theory
Discipline (in)dependence: IR path

Linguists deposit primary texts in huge, reliable archives with interoperable electronic formats

Economy of scale

Language data accessible to nonlinguists

Evolution in primary research

Discipline (in)dependence: Final thoughts: IRs and data

- Decentralized language documentations (IRs go local)
- IRs encourage networking/partnerships
- IRs “free” the data

Summation

- Documentation of language data in IRs as key to 21st century practice of linguistics
- Facilitate potential for language data to become discipline independent
- Fortify teaching, learning, and research in linguistics
- Devolve data to data providers
- Build trust/value (grassroots)

- We are all at risk, commonly accountable

* Archive your primary data, what’s old can be new again!

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What’s old is new:
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Thank you!!! 😊

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References


