

TWO-WAY RESEARCH FOR AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES : POSITIONING RESOURCES IN THE *GARMA*

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Introduction

The Indigenous peoples of Australia have been putting forward a program for 'two-way research' for at least twenty-five years. This idea is based on reciprocal and equal exchange between various groups; most notably for this paper the focus is on the relationship between Indigenous people and academic researchers. Some of the institutions that deal with language documentation have already been shaped by this idea: the creation of regional Indigenous language centres in Australia has been part of this overall movement, and the ASED A archive at AIATSIS also stands in the middle ground between academics and indigenous communities and their needs. The question now is to what extent can new technology, and more specifically web-based resources, also engage with and serve this 'two-way research' idea. This is a central question because if it is not answered satisfactorily experience shows that Indigenous people will no longer cooperate with academic projects which are perceived as 'one-way' - 'whitefella way', and they will fail. On a more positive note, with appropriate levels of support, and a commitment to 'two-way' research, ASED A and related projects can become an important part of the *garma* or public exchange space between cultures, a goal which can and should include best practice in the technical implementation of exchange.

Two-way research

The Australian Indigenous approach to questions such as education and research is grounded in the relationship between people. I follow this approach here and come to technical solutions last, after the more fundamental questions of human relations have been addressed. First we must understand that, from the Indigenous people's viewpoint, the relationship between white and black in Australia has been characterised by an absence of 'two-way' exchange from the start. Not only was the land stolen from the original inhabitants, but (in contrast to other places such as North America) there was no acknowledgment even that a system of land ownership existed. No negotiation took place in a 'two-way' fashion about sharing the country: the relationship was 'one-way'.

Similarly with knowledge systems: there was no acknowledgment that Indigenous people had knowledge of value that could be shared on a fair basis through 'two-way' exchange (although such knowledge was often appropriated and used). Rather whites told Indigenous people that their knowledge was worthless and that the passage of knowledge

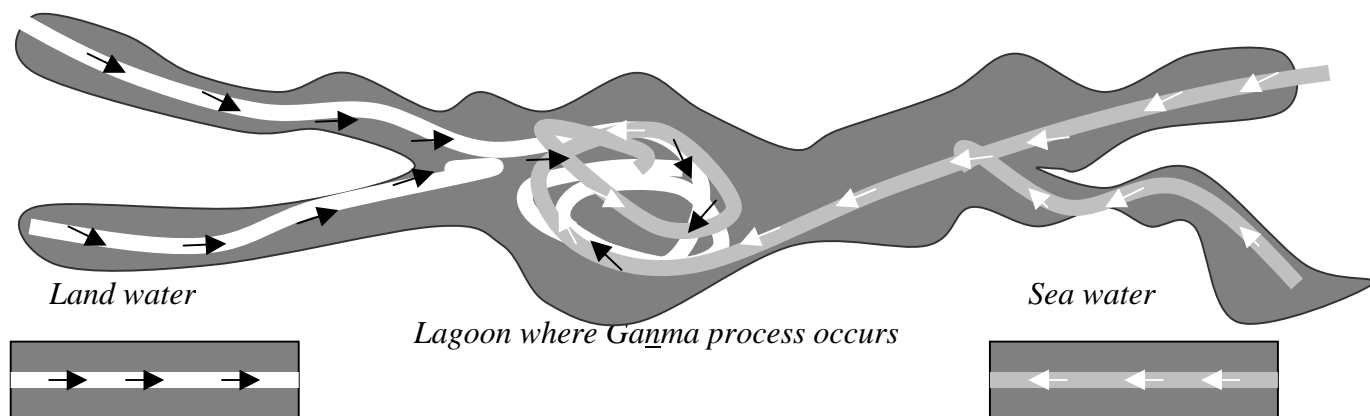
was a one way street in which they would, if deemed worthy, receive superior white knowledge.

The last quarter-century in Australia has seen the beginning of a painful process of righting some of these wrongs, and atoning for others, which will no doubt last another quarter-century. Much could be written about this but I want to focus on a particular idea that has animated many Indigenous people in this process, that of 'two way' exchange. I was first told about this by a Gurindji man who was articulating a philosophy of 'two-way education' in the 1970's which was already widespread among Aboriginal people in the Kimberley of Western Australia and the Northern Territory. In this view (which was a far cry from the reality of Aboriginal education then or even now) whites (such as teachers) and blacks would share power over education; would learn each other's cultural knowledge; and within the Aboriginal community, young and old would learn from each other (McConvell 1982;1990;1994).

A very similar set of ideas was elaborated further and using different ways of speaking among the Yolngu people of North-East Arnhem Land in the 1980's-1990's. Known first as 'two-ways' or 'both-ways', as it developed Yolngu people began to use different words from their own language to give it more substance, and to developed to encompass research more explicitly. Two of these discussed below are *ganma* and *garma*.

Both of these ideas are based on metaphors of place and space (as is much of western conceptual apparatus, including the language of computers and the Web), and the first is also a water metaphor. As Raymattja Marika notes (1999:112) 'water is often taken to represent knowledge in Yolngu [Aboriginal] philosophy'. *Ganma* is defined by her (1999:112) as follows, and diagrammed:

'a area within the mangroves where the saltwater (non-Aboriginal knowledge) coming in from the sea meets the stream of fresh water (Yolngu knowledge). The water circulates silently underneath and there are lines of foam circulating across the surface'.



While the knowledge from different cultures gradually mix in the *ganma*, each system is preserved (as the sea and the fresh water remain distinct) and respected.

Garma has become perhaps the key concept in recent years - and that is the reason why it is the title of the latest album of the band Yothu Yindi (whose leader Mandawuy Yunupingu has been a major proponent of two way education and research) and the name of an annual inter-cultural festival.

'an open ceremonial area that everyone can participate in and enjoy...*Garma* also means an open forum where people can share ideas and everyone can work hard to reach agreement' (Marika 1999:114)

It is the public space in which different groups can display their knowledge and cultural performance, and various creative amalgams can be built by negotiation and mutual consent. It specifically excludes secret/sacred elements (and is thus in some ways preferable to *ganma* which has such connotations). In its application to the intercultural interface it means an set of opportunities to build protocols for culture and knowledge exchange in an open and equal way between groups. In what follows I will explore what this concept, which I believe has resonance with the the 'two-way research' idea found over a wider area of Indigenous Australia, means for indigenous languages research and archiving.

New Institutions of the middle ground: Regional Aboriginal Language Centres

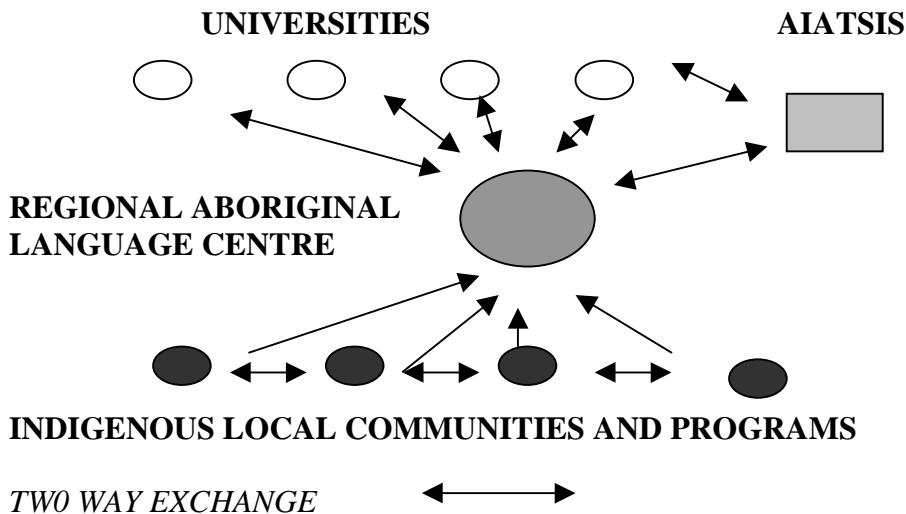
Academic research on Australian Indigenous languages was at a very low level until the 1970's when much new work was done stimulated by such figures as Dixon, Hale, O'Grady and others; SIL linguistic research also increased in quantity and quality. Most of the output was technical dissertations and articles and some published grammars which were immensely valuable but all but unreadable to anyone without a high level of linguistic training. The results were housed in distant and inaccessible locations like universities and AIATSIS (which later moved towards more accessibility; see below).

At the same time Indigenous people were pushing for, and in some cases achieving, more practical outcomes based on their languages: bilingual education and language maintenance programs, and developing the idea of 'two-way' education and research. They were unhappy with the unreadability and inaccessibility of the results of much linguistic research and the lack of practical products flowing from this work. They were also unhappy with the remoteness of the institutions taking care of these materials and the lack of Indigenous control of them. At the same time the individual Indigenous communities were well aware that control and handling of these resources by each community separately was not feasible. They did not have, nor could they command, the financial resources or expertise necessary to look after the materials and generate new useful products from them on their own.

These concerns and aspirations dovetailed in the call from Indigenous people for the establishment of Regional Aboriginal Language Centres. These would be small and local enough to be under local Indigenous control but big enough to have equipment and expertise which could be shared between perhaps 20 or 30 small communities in a region. I was involved (with Joyce Hudson, an ex-SIL linguist) in the setting up of the Kimberley

Language Resource Centre in 1984, driven by a strong committee of Indigenous people from all over this region in the north of Western Australia (Hudson and McConvell 1984). Prior to this there had been a strong predisposition from non-Indigenous people to say 'this will not work' because different communities, they said, will not cooperate to set joint priorities in language resource allocation. They were wrong, forgetting that Indigenous people had been practicing 'two-way' exchange and reconciliation between neighbouring groups long before the whites and the idea of central government arrived, and this is the cultural practice that was brought to bear in the management of the regional organisations.

Indigenous people from different sections of the Kimberleys independently selected the notion of traditional 'exchange' (*wirman* or other words in different areas) as the key motivating concept in the Centre. This meant that 'two-way' exchange was active between indigenous groups in region in planning local research, and between the Indigenous people of the Centre and the non-Indigenous holders of information and expertise like the universities and AIATSIS. The Centre, and other Centres which were set up in other regions later following recognition in federal government language policy (Lo Bianco 1987) therefore represented middle-level organisation between national (and largely 'whitefella') bodies and academic-bureaucratic discourse, and the local communities and their languages, cultures and specific concerns. The RALC's were, at the time, the middle ground in which exchange could take place within the region on the 'blackfella' side and between the region and the guardians of national culture mainly in the southern capital cities. This notion is diagrammed below; it is congruent with the notion of *garma* as the intercultural exchange space.



The two way research exchange here between universities and similar organisations and Indigenous-controlled centres is seen by Indigenous people as righting an imbalance created by research which seemed to take away information and give little back. The resentment caused by this was also threatening to seal off avenues of research to academic researchers, and many of these have since swung around to providing benefits to Indigenous communities while still being able to carry out research programs driven by academic goals. This process of negotiating the balance in such research is handled very well by RALC's because of their middle ground role, whereas individual communities often lack the expertise to judge whether the research proposed is feasible or the researcher appropriate. The process can also be initiated in the opposite direction, where communities approach RALC's with their research needs and the RALC's with their academic contacts can often find a suitable person to carry out the research within the parameters laid down by the community or a negotiated variation on these.

The fate of materials to be produced by such research can also be negotiated in advance through RALC's. Typically RALC's themselves will hold copies and be able to recycle these for different applications with the intellectual property holders in the communities close at hand for easy consultation, and an understanding of the local politics and culture sufficient to find a way through problems arising - an understanding typically lacking in remote national bodies. RALC's generally do deposit copies of their material at AIATSIS and the loss of significant material at the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre in floods in 1997 is a cautionary tale for centres regarding the need for such back-up.

AIATSIS

In the above diagram, which represents the situation in the late 1980's, AIATSIS is represented in an ambiguous shading and hovering somewhere between the universities and the Indigenous domain below. It had begun in the 1960's with a more clearly academic orientation towards studies of Aboriginal culture and a benign but paternalistic outlook. Through the 1970's and 1980's with land rights and self determination it came under increasing pressure from Indigenous people to yield to Indigenous direction and orient its studies towards what the people studied wanted to see as results.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is the premier institution for Indigenous studies in Australia. It is perhaps unique in the world in being founded as an independent organisation under its own Act of Parliament. It has, now in 2000, an indigenous Principal, an indigenous majority on its Council (including Raymattja Marika, extensively cited above), and many strong links with the indigenous community and indigenous researchers.

AIATSIS has a strong tradition in promoting and sponsoring research into Australian indigenous languages both by staff and through the grants program. It has one staff research position devoted to languages and until recently at least an Interactive Technology position which had major involvement with language documentation. The last fifteen years have seen a swing towards greater indigenous involvement in research,

and support for indigenous organisations, notably the network of Regional Aboriginal Language Centres which has grown up since the mid-80's., discussed above. These centres, as well as University researchers, benefit from access to the linguistic resources (including ASEDA, discussed below) and also contribute to it, as they carry out regional research.

For these reasons, there can be little doubt that AIATSIS is the appropriate place to host the central Indigenous languages documentation and archiving project in Australia, linked to Indigenous regional centres where these exist. No university linguistics department could hope to match the level of indigenous involvement on a national scale which AIATSIS can provide and that the Indigenous community now insists on. University departments may well have higher levels of expertise and funding support in some technical areas, and AIATSIS welcomes partnerships with such bodies.

AIATSIS has been moving into a position where it can become part of a 'two-way research' system that bridges the divide between local communities and the national bureaucratic-academic complex. As this has occurred, electronic technologies have also moved forward and have been taken up by AIATSIS, RALC's and to a more limited extent, local Indigenous communities. These technologies, especially now the Internet, have also been credited with the potential to bridge divides and abolish the 'tyranny of distance' which many have identified as an Australian malaise. It remains to be seen if this is truly possible or even desired by Indigenous communities whose spatial uniqueness and link to their own country is very dear to them. The question here is whether such technologies can occupy the *garma* or public intercultural space that allows them to be negotiated while still retaining their original ownership and integrity. Below, with this in mind, I look at the example of ASEDA, an electronic archive developed by AIATSIS.

The History of ASEDA

ASEDA (the Aboriginal Studies Electronic Data Archive) was a pioneer in digital resource management in the early and mid-1990's not only for Australia, but for the world. Digital language resources for around 300 Australian languages, such as dictionaries, wordlists, grammars, and texts, as well as other Aboriginal Studies materials such as land claim transcripts, were collected together, catalogued and made accessible to researchers and indigenous communities and language centres, on diskette or CD.

ASEDA grew out of the National Lexicography Project which was run at AIATSIS in the 1987-89 by Jane Simpson and David Nash. This project assisted in the production of a number of Australian language dictionaries, a resource which was of great importance to local and regional programs at the time, but in short supply. As well as hard copy, the project encouraged more people to produce lexical data in digital form or convert their file cards and paper products into this form. ASEDA was built up by Nick Thieberger in a three-year Fellowship 1991-1994 on a Macintosh platform, a catalogue was placed on the WWW, and Hypercard stacks including sound files were developed. At the end of the Fellowship Thieberger reported

By far the greatest use of ASED A has been in supporting indigenous language work in Australia.

The collection has been especially valuable in preserving electronic data files which would otherwise have been lost.

Beyond the physical collection which is presented on two CD Rom disks at the end of the project, the Archive has been a focal point for activities which represent Australian languages, including advice for people working with those languages (both academic and community-based researchers) and popularisation of the nature of Australian languages among the general Australian population (especially through the Dictionaries Project).

Further development and maintenance of the resource was carried out by David Nathan during an Interactive Technology fellowship 1996-2000. However development of multimedia resources for specific languages and educational use was also a major part of the latter fellowship. In the 90's a noticeable trend has been greater demand from Indigenous users either individually or through RALC's and other bodies.

The initiators of ASED A began by recognising that much more data (like dictionaries etc) were being produced in electronic digital form and then had the idea that these growing resources could be stored in one location and catalogued, so that clients could request digital data. Access restrictions were in place as with other media but if there was no problem with that, clients could have material sent to them by email or on disk or CD. As the World-Wide Web developed, the ASED A catalogue was placed on a web site but the potential for direct access to data via the Web has not been realised yet.

Increasingly community users and researchers are demanding that materials that can be provided quickly, searched efficiently and selectively used for other purposes. The ASED A facility provided for these requirements in an unprecedented way, although the assistance of an expert in both computer manipulation and often linguistics was necessary to guide clients through the processes involved. Not only was it easy to get information out, it was even easier to send it in to ASED A, in an email or on a disk.

The Present Situation and Future Prospects of ASED A

By 2000 progress had faltered. The initial success of ASED A encouraged more and more researchers, language centres and others to deposit material. But over the recent period the level of maintenance of this resource has declined, and with it the volume of deposits. In the last few years there has also been little emphasis on developing and maintaining database resources in the Research section of AIATSIS, and funding for developing digital resources is now going overwhelmingly to the Library cataloguing system. Changes in staff have meant that the languages area will have less expertise available in future, particularly in specialist linguistic areas of information technology.

Clearly the time has come to reverse this trend and to start to realise once again some of the early promise of ASEDA. But to simply reinstate some minimal form of care and maintenance of the facility is not the best option, in my view.

ASEDA should be improved, and integrated in an overall digitisation plan with the other ideas of an Indigenous Languages database, an expertise database and with other developments in the digitisation of manuscripts and audio-visual data being carried out by the Library and Archives sections of AIATSIS. New possibilities of data-handling such as those being discussed at the present workshop need to be explored.

As part of a project in 2000 *The State of Indigenous Languages* (McConvell and Thieberger 2000) Nick Thieberger has created an Indigenous Languages Database. This will be used as an authority in the library, and links from it to ASEDA have been created. Placing of the IL database on the AIATSIS web site is being discussed.

The ASEDA holdings are already largely tagged for language, but these labels could be linked to the projected IL database (which would link variant names etc) to provide for more efficient searches by language, and to the expertise database which could include both indigenous people and non-indigenous recorders involved with initial authorship and current descendants, organisations etc concerned with material today.

In order to make the products of digitisation of manuscripts and audio-visual material useable, it must be accompanied by the development of special purpose tools for indexing and finding materials which utilises all our research knowledge and expertise. Whatever digital cataloguing scheme is followed when archiving audio-visual and other material it can be indexed by a standard language name from the Indigenous Languages database and also linked to a person or person(s) in the expertise database, which could include various kinds of indigenous expertise including on intellectual property matters.

Recommendations for immediate steps with ASEDA would include:

1. The ASEDA web pages be transferred to the AIATSIS site and updating and renovation of the pages be carried out.
2. Procedures for data handling and access for ASEDA be reviewed, and recommended and approved changes be implemented.
3. Pro-active collection of data for ASEDA be resumed, together with information programs on any new procedures.
4. Workshops planned for the future for Indigenous boodies should include segments on ASEDA and future options for changes in data-handling (including the Web, XML etc).
5. Protocols be worked out with the library and archives over respective responsibilities.
6. A person be made available to deal with enquiries and assist clients in accessing and depositing material.
7. The IL database be further developed and updated and links with other databases (regional surveys and sourcebooks, ASEDA) be improved.
8. Map representations of the data be improved (by updating base map; improving client map interface etc)

Some dangers of one-way resource development

The present workshop takes as its starting point the desirability of an open web-based archive on which language resources are placed and from which anyone can obtain material in a simple fashion. The agenda is then to agree on design features which facilitate this. Many workers in the field will welcome this initiative wholeheartedly.

If we play this back in an Australian Indigenous context, however, it sounds different. While, as we have discussed, negotiated and controlled exchange of knowledge in a 'two-way' framework is desired, open access to knowledge is not considered as necessarily a good thing at all. In traditional situations it can be - literally, not in the computer sense - a fatal error to know too much when the knowledge has not been correctly bestowed.

This refers to 'men's business' or 'women's business' - secret-sacred matters of ritual, one might argue, nothing to do with the nuts and bolts of language, grammars and dictionaries. Not so. It has been recorded that even within Aboriginal communities themselves, that elders have refused to pass on knowledge of everyday language on the grounds that the young people are not fit to receive it. In many communities in Southern Australia particularly, knowledge of the language (and it may only be remnants of a lost tongue) will not be freely given to members of other Indigenous groups, nor to non-indigenous researchers.

It has also be argued, or more often assumed, that the traditional restrictions are fading away in modern contexts, so researchers need not be overly concerned about them. There is some reduction or dilution in some restrictions, it is true, and this may occur even while these cultural concerns are finally being recognised by public bodies after years of flouting them. For instance, in recent years it has become standard practice for television stations in Australia to show a warning before films of Aboriginal people are shown because of the sensitivity of many communities to images of people now dead. At the same time, in an Aboriginal community I have just visited large banners have been produced to celebrate historical events in the area, and are displayed in prominent public places, featuring pictures of people who have died. This was done apparently with the support and involvement of local people and shows a major shift in attitude from twenty-five years ago when I first met these people, when any such display would have been greeted with alarm and horror. White ideas of how to celebrate the past are clearly having influence here and perhaps creating new Indigenous amalgams of ideas. It would be premature however to assume that the display of images of dead people is now welcomed or uncontroversial.

Even when people agree to particular projects, the underlying belief systems may not have changed radically and can reassert themselves. The reason why images, sounds and names (or similar words) of dead people are suppressed by many Indigenous groups in Australia is that these traces can have the power to summon up the ghosts of those departed and hinder them in reaching their eventual resting place. Ghosts can be harmful to the living and the ideal is to avoid attracting them so that they leave the world of the living as soon as possible. This belief system is one which I would guess is retained by

most Indigenous people in Australia. While contraventions of traditional practice are apparently tolerated in a world where white practices hold sway, if and when an incident interpreted to involve a ghost occurs, these infringements are most likely to be held responsible and this can lead to recriminations and divisions in the community.

These restrictions related to deceased persons also pertain to sound recordings. When I first encountered the speakers of the language whose representatives are now banning publication of a dictionary (discussed below), twenty five years ago, I recall going into a room in a local resource agency and finding a prominent Indigenous leader working with audio-tapes. Assuming he was recording, I asked him what he was doing and was told that he was wiping all the tapes which contained the voices of dead people - many hours of irreplaceable material.

My reaction as a white linguist was complete horror, perhaps similar to the local Aboriginal reaction to hearing a dead person's voice on tape. Discussions followed over the following months with the eventual outcome decided by Indigenous groups that such tapes were to be stored in a locked secure place for the amount of time needed to ease the restriction (perhaps ten years or more). There has been ongoing fine-tuning of policies of how to deal with such issues in recent times, greatly assisted by the existence of the Regional Aboriginal Language Centres acting as forums mediating the views of different Aboriginal communities and the concerns and advice of such non-Indigenous people as linguists.

This is, to my mind, an example of how a 'two-way' process can lead to a better outcome in research practice for all sides.

Not all such problems are being resolved, however. Restrictions on the distribution of linguistic material going beyond issues of death taboo or the secret/sacred, are beginning to be imposed by Indigenous language-owners also in northern Australian communities, where I have never before encountered them over twenty-five years work. Such moves are occurring particularly with severely endangered languages, and are becoming more like other disputes over the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples with which we are becoming familiar.

One language centre has refused to allow publication of the dictionary of the local language in any way. The reasons behind this are complex, and may related to the previous banning by the language centre of publication of a book on medicinal plants on the grounds that white researchers were making use of this knowledge to profit from it (which has been true in a few cases). Another reason, commonly found, is that sections of the community do not like the way the language is being taught by the local school. Often this is being done with the best of intentions, but white people involved in school programs are distorting the language in some way which is objectionable to speakers. Consequently some people feel it is better not to allow 'open access' to resources like dictionaries, thinking this may lessen the chances of this kind of proliferation of unauthorised versions of a language.

Whether or not these concerns are valid, or the remedies prescribed effective, this kind of restrictiveness has been spreading in the last few years. The idea that a dictionary of the languages concerned might be directly accessed on the Internet (as dictionaries of several Australian languages are, with the apparent approval of speakers) would be anathema to those enforcing publication bans. I have no doubt myself that this represents an overreaction on the part of some language-owners but this does not mean that it should be ignored. What the language owners are worried about is a violation of intellectual property rights perhaps, but at a deeper level, a violation of the principle of 'two-way' exchange in research. In both cases - the medicinal plant researcher and the naive white teacher running a local language program - the right kind of exchange and negotiation has been missing and 'one way' decisions have been made.

At the risk of being called a Cassandra, I want to warn that such restrictions on publication, and on research, emanating from Indigenous concerns, are tending to spread over a wider area in Australia. The availability and publication of Indigenous language materials on Web sites has been, so far, well handled in the main and following 'two-way' principles, in the sense that language-owners have been consulted and involved. There is a strong possibility however that someone in future may put some language materials on a Web site which contain elements which are either restricted for spiritual reasons or perceived as incorrect. Such an event is likely to have negative effects on Indigenous attitudes towards such activity generally, unless the particular case can be dealt with within an understood 'two-way' framework

A two-way way forward

Some of the background materials for this workshop have suggested that there are a number of players or stakeholders in the business of creating web-based language resources (users, developers, sponsors) , and have encouraged us to assess the view of each of these groups towards design features of the resources. In a two-way exchange perspective, the groups are typically in a give-and-take relationship acted out in the forum of information exchange. I have focussed here on academics and technical people on the one hand and language-owners on the other. Both groups use the resource by accessing it; taking away elements and adapting them for different purposes. Language-owners also provide the raw material, the texts, words etc, and on the other side, academics and technical people organise these resources, make them available in new ways and add value to them.

This 'two-way' relationship may sometimes seem to be a very parochial affair played out between a small group of speakers of a particular language, and a small group of academics/technical people, perhaps even one individual, researching that particular language. This parochial situation may produce particular types of solutions, which may be more generally useful and may spread, but typically will produce a patchwork of inconsistent practices. The parochial situation may also produce problems, such as those discussed above in which interests clash and unfortunately negative consequences of these events can also spread, potentially leading to the flow of information drying up (to revert to the water metaphor introduced earlier).

The features of inconsistency and incompatibility in ways of handling language data is obviously something which the present workshop is trying to deal with by asking participants to focus on developing 'best practice' guidelines. This is a *garma* without the language speakers. Another similar attempt to transcend the parochial exchanges in digital language resources was the development of ASED A. This largely side-stepped the question of compatibility in resources by accepting all types of digital resources without many technical restrictions at all, and providing ad hoc solutions for reading and adapting resources to users. This really brought in another kind of exchange, between the person running ASED A, and the various users, as advice was offered about how to use the resources. In this process there was a kind of consistency in advice offered which probably produced a trend of consistency in practices, but nothing approaching a set of protocols or a restructuring of the digital data in the archive to enforce a more unitary system.

By all accounts this way of running ASED A worked quite well for most users for some years. The question which faces us now is whether the present critical point reached points towards a reversion to the earlier system with additional support (if it can be found) or a more thorough attempt to bring consistency to the digital resources and the protocols of handling them, leading hopefully to simpler access.

The impression I get from the preliminary materials circulated for this workshop is that the latter - a solid push towards consistent data handling not only across individual archives but internationally - would be the message. This too has strong financial implications for AIATSIS and may only be feasible in stages.

If ASED A is going to take a new direction this may be a great opportunity for it to also address more clearly the nature of its relationship to language-owners and its 'two-way' role and responsibilities. I do not mean to be critical of past performance in saying this, as just as technical problems were worked through with users by the person running ASED A, so were problems of access, appropriate use and so on, dealing insightfully with individual cases. The approach needs to be raised to a more general level of consistency by systematic involvement of language owners and their representatives.

My suggestion is that Regional Aboriginal Language Centres and similar language bodies can have a role in providing the Indigenous input in the 'two-way' *garma* space. Most of these bodies are currently moving into production of digital resources in addition to print resources. For instance the RALC Diwurrurru-Jaru in Katherine, Northern Territory, has a plan for a dictionary database and a collection of story texts for the Gurindji language on CD-ROM, for which I have collected much data over many years and which I am currently working on in conjunction with the Centre. At this stage this type of activity is probably more typical of such bodies than Web-oriented development and appears more useful to them for their local and regional aims. Web sites are seen, in as much as they are seen at all, mainly as forms of advertisement and promotion, and for most language-owners promotion of their language activities to a wider public is not a high priority. It may be that Web-oriented resource development (and adoption of XML

as a standard for instance) is in fact just as, or ultimately more useful, but most such bodies remain to be informed and convinced about that. In a 'two-way' framework it is important that bodies dealing with language archives or clearing-houses should not race too far ahead of the language-owners and their representatives.

AIATSIS has a key role in providing such information and advice and linking such developments at a regional level with an Australian national resource such as ASEDA. The RALC's and the national body FATSIL (Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages) are asking for workshops from AIATSIS on issues of use of archives, access and adaptation of archived resources, and if a coherent plan could be developed, this could be worked through in such forums and the Indigenous perspective incorporated.

There are at least three sets of digital language resources that need to be addressed in any move towards restructuring of data handling, both at a technical and human-relations level:

1. **Existing ASEDA holdings.** As already discussed, these are a mixed bag of different types of files in different formats relating to many different languages, a few subsequently published but most not. Each has a catalogue entry and a paper file recording accession details and access restrictions.
2. **Newly acquired digital holdings.** Further files are currently being deposited and are being treated at the moment as previously; however opportunities exist for upgrading handling.
3. **New digital items resulting from digitisation.** These result from a projected program of digitisation of analog sound recordings (many in Australian Indigenous languages) and images being undertaken by the Archives section of AIATSIS independently of the Research section and ASEDA.

Each of these needs to have a plan developed for it, and there also needs to be an integration of these plans, with input into the plan from RALC's and FATSIL. Once protocols for data handling and access have been updated, conversion of files to new formats may be undertaken, depending on the level of funding and support available. Priorities will need to be set for this so that in most cases it is clear whether a conversion process should be initiated for a particular item, whether old or newly acquired, without the need for extensive consultation on each case.

A process of reviewing access conditions on items should also be set in place, with the aim of ensuring that Indigenous intellectual property rights are recognised and clarified, including information about how such rights are inherited. Once again it would probably not be feasible for AIATSIS to consult over every single holding with individual families and groups, but here the RALC's and similar bodies can provide general advice covering most cases, and a procedure to follow where there is lack of clarity or dispute.

Issues such as solutions to access issues if such an archive as ASEDA moves towards a more open profile on the Web or goes further in the direction of publication must in my

view be subjected to Indigenous ‘two-way’ scrutiny too in ways that I have suggested. Obviously licensing, passwords and access levels are among technical solutions that can be proposed.

Some readers may feel a sense of unease during this presentation, especially in the light of the earlier discussion of the diffusion of restrictions in the Indigenous domain. By seeking the partnership of Indigenous groups, are we not heading for a more restrictive environment in language information exchange, rather than a more open one? I am optimistic, myself, that the opposite is the case. A ‘one-way’ system created to serve academic interests only is the type of system which would cut off the flow of information and the creation of new cross-cultural ideas which accompanies that flow. By approaching language-owners and Language Centres in a ‘two-way’ spirit, and creating a *garma* middle ground, the result will be a more open situation which will become more and more open as trust grows.

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