

International Council of Archives

Oral Presentation Abstract

Talking Back: making original language source material accessible

Presenter

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Abstract

I think it is well known that many Indigenous languages are laying dormant deep within the bowels of various collecting institutions waiting for the time when researchers rediscover them. Sadly, more often than not, these snippets of information are all that is left of a language an entire Indigenous group's cultural identity.

The objective with this paper is to highlight Phase 2 of the joint State Library NSW and Rio Tinto initiative *Rediscovering Indigenous Languages Project* and that is the digitisation of selected wordlists.

However digitisation is one of the last steps in this phase of the project. When the material has been located, which is Phase 1 of the project, more descriptive catalogue records are created. After that the manuscripts is "treated" by our preservation lab and then the digitised word list is placed on the Library's website. This process will both improve access to the rediscovered language lists as well as preserve them for future generations.

There are many examples in Australia and overseas of successful language revitalisation programs based on documentary sources. *Rediscovering Indigenous Languages Project* endeavours to make a meaningful contribution to various Indigenous communities efforts in the reclamation of their linguistic heritage.

Biography

Melissa Jackson is of Bundjalung decent with family links to the Baryulgil area near Grafton.

Melissa has worked in various NSW government departments, including Department of Housing and Attorney Generals Department before starting work at the State Library of New South Wales in 1991. One of two Indigenous Services Librarians, she has a background in teaching graduating from University of Western Sydney and she obtained her librarianship qualifications from University of Technology Sydney. She is currently studying for a Master in Indigenous Language Education at the University of Sydney.