

PARADISEC

Australia lies within a region of great linguistic and cultural diversity. Over 2000 of the world's 6000 different languages are spoken in Australia, the South Pacific Islands (including around 900 languages in New Guinea alone) and Southeast Asia. Within the next century this number is likely to drop to a few hundred. The majority of these 2000 languages and their associated cultural expressions such as music are very poorly documented. Even in those languages that have begun to be documented, many of the most developed cultural expressions (such as the dense and highly allusive language used in song) have never been studied.

PARADISEC (Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures) offers a facility for digital conservation and access for endangered materials from the Pacific region, defined broadly to include Oceania and East and Southeast Asia. Our research group has developed models to ensure that the archive can provide access to interested communities and conforms to emerging international standards for digital archiving.

We have established a framework for accessioning, cataloguing and digitising audio, text and visual material, and preserving digital copies. The primary focus of this initial stage is safe preservation of material that would otherwise be lost, especially field tapes from the 1950s and 1960s.

Data Preservation

Recorded material needs to be preserved in a way that allows it to be read into the future. Reel to reel and cassette tapes are becoming obsolete and playing them is becoming more difficult. If there is only one copy of the recorded material it is even more vulnerable to being lost, in cyclones, fires or simply as a result of poor storage conditions.

PARADISEC adopts the current best methods for preserving audio data by digitising it at the highest quality available and storing several copies in separate locations. PARADISEC makes digital copies of tapes and returns the originals to depositors or their institutions. We provide secure interim storage while tapes are being processed but cannot offer longterm storage.

Information discovery

Cataloguing information (or *metadata*) accompanies all items in the collection. In addition, the catalogue references items which have been assessed for eventual incorporation into the archive, but which are not currently in digital form. This permits otherwise undiscoverable resources to be located. The collection is catalogued using descriptors based on Dublin Core and the Open Languages Archives Community (OLAC) recommendations. Our current metadata set is available for download from our website. By using these metadata standards we are able to share information about what is located in the collection. The goal is that any resource from the region be discoverable regardless of where it is located, and regardless of where the researcher is located. Access to the data itself requires permission which is specified for each item in the collection. Access is currently available only to depositors via password. The PARADISEC collection metadata can be searched via OLAC at <http://www.language-archives.org/tools/search.php4>

Intellectual property issues

Normal copyright restrictions apply, and each item in the collection has its own access conditions, as specified by the depositor and performer using our deposit form. If an item is distributed, the moral rights of speakers and performers are asserted. We make special allowances for work in progress or data that is not for general distribution. Further information is available from our website.

Cultural renewal

A founding principle for PARADISEC is that small and endangered cultures need support for locating and reintroducing material that was recorded in the past. Ensuring that the material is well cared for means that it can be made available into the future. Digital outputs from PARADISEC are available in various formats depending on the needs of the users. While audio files are archived at high resolution, they can be made available as mp3 or in other digital formats for delivery on CD or over the web.

Technicalities

The main focus of the current project is the digitisation of audio files. Our Quadriga system uses the AudioCube workstation to digitise audio material at 24-bit, 96 kHz in Broadcast Wave Format (BWF). A backup version of all data is held offsite at the Australian Partnership for Advanced Computing (APAC) facility in Canberra, using the GrangeNet network to deliver the data from Sydney. Further details on our workflow are available on the website.

PARADISEC is managed by a steering committee representing a consortium of three Universities: the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne and the Australian National University. We welcome participation by other institutions.

Workshops

From time to time PARADISEC organises seminars and workshops. In 2003 we hosted a successful workshop, 'Researchers, Communities, Institutions and Sound Recordings' (University of Sydney, 30 September-1 October 2003), which was attended by Australian and international experts and sponsored by the Australian Academy for the Humanities. See our website for further information and selected papers.

International links

PARADISEC has established links with relevant agencies in the region and is keen to establish more.

PARADISEC conforms to international metadata and audio archiving standards and is actively pursuing links with other digital archives of endangered cultures through DELAMAN (Digital Endangered Languages and Musics Archives Network <http://delaman.org>) and OLAC (Open Language Archives Community <http://language-archives.org>).

Call for participation

We ask ethnographic researchers to deposit textual or audio or video material with PARADISEC to ensure that it is discoverable and remains available into the future.

For more information please visit our website.

Services offered

PARADISEC offers a number of services for cost recovery fees, including digitisation of audio material and training in ethnographic documentation techniques of recording, data management, and data linkage. Topics covered include:

- use and comparative advantages of types of recording equipment;
- lexicographic software;
- transcription and interlinearising of texts;
- linkage of digitised audio and transcripts;
- managing information as it is collected to facilitate later access;
- assessment and cataloguing of data collections.

Please contact us for further information on costing and availability of services.

Contact

For further information, contact the project manager:

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Or contact our Administrator (Sydney Unit):

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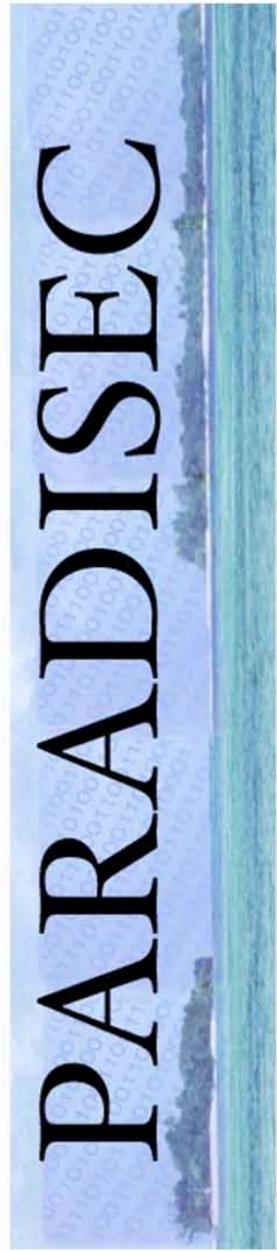
See our home page at <http://paradisec.org.au>.

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www.paradisec.org.au

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The banner features the word 'PARADISEC' in large, bold, black serif font on the left. To its right is a vertical image of a tropical beach with turquoise water and a sandy shore. On the far right, the text 'Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures' is written vertically in a smaller, black serif font. Below this, the website URL 'www.paradisec.org.au' and the email address 'admin@paradisec.org.au' are also written vertically.