

Talking pictures: examining the role of video in language documentation and archiving

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At DELAMAN IV, a session called “media madness” considered some of the issues and pitfalls for those using video in documentation, and in its subsequent archiving. This presentation gathers the results and analysis of discussion with linguists, filmmakers, performance artists, archivists, community members and others. We are able to distil the issues into five areas:

- (1) goals and methodology of language documentation
- (2) the nature of the video medium
- (3) workflow and workload
- (4) community skills and needs
- (5) data portability and archiving

For each of these areas, we can find significant *prima facie* arguments that video offers benefits to language documenters and their language documentations. On the other hand, each area also exposes significant assumptions, unknowns, and problems for language documenters. Firstly, it is not clear whether video is proposed as a representation, a remedy, a genre or a technology. Secondly, video tends to present us with problems that involve orders of magnitude (e.g. of time, size, cost) that are not normally encountered. There is still more work to be done before the role of video in documentation is clearly understood.