Case Study XVII

Building the Dena’ina Language Archive

Gary Holton, University of Alaska Fairbanks, USA
Andrea Berez, Wayne State University, USA
Sadie Williams, Eastern State University, USA

As the world’s indigenous languages continue to be threatened with extinction, technology can play an important role in indigenous language revitalization, maintenance and preservation (cf. Buszard-Welcher, 2001). The emergence of electronic language archives provides an unprecedented opportunity to both preserve and provide access to often obscure and inaccessible endangered language data. Indeed, the relative ease of use of new electronic tools has made digital archive projects within reach of even modestly funded language communities. However, the ability of these data to endure in electronic format hinges crucially on attention to accepted standards of digital preservation. Lack of attention to open formats can lead to “digital carnage” (Bird & Simons, 2003). Similarly, lack of attention to proper digital storage — for example, by relying on CD-ROM for data preservation — can also lead to data loss (Bradley, 2004).
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