

HOLDING ONTO THE PAST: ARCHIVES FOR THE ACTIVE SCHOLAR

M. Terry Thompson
 University of Hawaii
 Social Science Research Institute
 and
 Laurence C. Thompson
 University of Hawaii
 Department of Linguistics

In the spirit of the recent decision by the Modern Language Society and the Linguistic Society of America to "do something" about archiving the precious field notes of present-day scholars, this partly historical, partly evangelistic message seeks to describe what one group of scholars has done to preserve the written and tape-recorded languages of the moribund but highly cherished languages of the Pacific Northwest.

This particular story began with Franz Boas, who trained his students to label their notes carefully and encouraged them to preserve as much information as possible. Most linguists are familiar with the famous Boas Collection at the American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia, where Boas' manuscripts and correspondence are freely available for research. Since Boas' primary work was done in the Northwest, he set a good first example. His student, Melville Jacobs, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Washington for many years, was an archivist at heart. He saved, carefully labelled, not only his own correspondence, field notes, slip files and sound recordings but those of many of his students and some material from other scholars. He consulted with the University of Washington Libraries' Archivist, Richard Berner, on his plans to leave his papers in the Division of Archives and Manuscripts, and a conservation plan was agreed upon.

Because of his disdain for what he called "the gleaners" who do no original field research of their own but are quick to publish material collected by others, Jacobs requested that his collection of papers be closed for 50 years after his death, with access governed by a group of colleagues in the fields of anthropology and linguistics. This was agreed upon, and since Jacobs' death, even with such control, it has been one of the most active in the University of Washington Libraries' large manuscript collection.

In the mid-60s Jacobs impressed upon us the importance of preservation of our collection of manuscripts, field notes, and sound recordings. We began making copies of our tapes and leaving them in his office about that time. After his death in 1972, not wishing to move this collection to Hawaii, we began serious discussions with Mr. Berner about the possibility of beginning our own closed collection while we were still living. Since we were still actively working with most of the languages represented by our notes and recordings, we approached the problem from a slightly different viewpoint. We also were coping with the beginning of the Red Power movement and were faced with trying to protect the confidentiality of the Indian language experts with whom we were working, so we began discussion of a permanently closed collection with access governed after our deaths by a self-perpetuating board of anthropologists and linguists who were familiar with specific problems of the Northwest. The board includes both scholars and Indians, both Americans and Canadians, since the languages which are represented in the collection come from both countries.

A major concern was for the Indian experts who had been consulted and whose efforts in behalf of preserving their languages had been recorded by anthropologists and linguists over the years. Many of them had a fear of newspaper publicity based on myths which seem scatological when evaluated by a different culture. Christianity has had a heavy hand in suppressing these myths, although some individuals have continued to preserve the culture

of their ancestors through the telling of their "old stories". It was necessary to be able to assure them that only persons who were qualified to consult the materials would be allowed to do so. This, then, brought great indignation from some in the Red Power Movement, since they incorrectly assumed that only white scholars would be considered "qualified" to be allowed to consult the materials. So it has been necessary to try to assure the various Indian groups that "qualified" persons could include qualified persons from their own group--but not necessarily from any other tribal group. This has not quieted all fears, nor has it addressed the resentment about native materials being stored (sometimes referred to as "hidden") in what many consider an essentially non-Indian place.

A major obstacle to this agreement was the fact that none of our board members need be resident at the University where the collection was to be housed. That was solved by making the current Archivist or Curator of Manuscripts a member of the board. The next step was the writing of the agreement in a form acceptable to the scholars depositing material, to the University of Washington Libraries' Division of Archives and Manuscripts, to the Washington State Attorney General's Office, and to the University of Washington Board of Regents. Since we were busy collecting still more material, and the Archivist and Curator of Manuscripts were operating with a short staff, several years passed before the final agreement was signed.

Although the time span may seem excessive, the manuscript materials were being left in the Manuscript Collection in "safe copy" form during that period. The Library made little attempt to document the collection in detail during those early years, since it was a closed collection and still under negotiation, but in recent years an outline of the contents has been prepared through a special grant to the Manuscripts collection. Eventually we hope to have a full-scale index prepared.

As a few other scholars began to discuss adding their materials to the Northwest Linguistic Collection, a new Gift of Deed form had to be devised. The wording of the Library's usual form was such that no active scholar wanted to entrust current research manuscripts to the Collection. Although the Deed of Gift included a space for spelling out special rules, the main body of the form seemed to say that the material was being given without any control being maintained by the donor. This made people nervous, and several noted Northwest scholars still refuse to begin a sub-collection there.

The specifics finally agreed upon are:

- 1) Any scholar wishing to begin a named sub-collection is first asked to sign the Library's Deed of Gift (~~Appendix A~~), which specifies that the collection will be forever governed by the original Agreement setting up the collection.
2. This Agreement (see Appendix A) states that the Northwest Linguistic Collection will be permanently closed with access granted on an individual basis by the Northwest Linguistic Collection board, consisting of a group of scholars familiar with the current situation in the Pacific Northwest.
- 3) The Agreement specifies that copies (photocopies, microfilm/fiche, etc.) of the materials may be deposited, with the ownership of the originals being given to the Library but the physical possession remaining with the donor for as long as desired. This allows a scholar to continue actively working with field notes and recordings, with the assurance that a safe copy is in the Archives in case of fire, flood, or airline baggage disappearance, and with the assurance that access to that copy will be limited to those persons given specific written permission by the donor.
- 4) Materials in the Collection may be turned over to the care of the Board at any time, if so desired (examples would be a scholar who changes fields and does not wish to

do any more with with certain materials, or a student who decides to abandon the study of languages and enter another field or simply change the focus of research).

5) Those materials are then the property of the Library, but the donor or his heirs may retain still the publication and literary rights, if so specified in the Deed of Gift¹.

6). Or a scholar may transfer literary rights to another scholar. It would be wise to do so by formal written document.

7) For reasons of safety, when the Library has physical possession of both copies and originals, they will be stored in different buildings when at all possible (certainly easily done at present, since the Archives collection is in a separate building).

8) Also for reasons of safety, no sound recordings will be played back on a machine with recording or erasing capabilities, and at any rate usually only a copy will be used for playback.

These simple rules have made it possible to begin a growing collection of important manuscript materials in an area where the native Indian languages are disappearing. And in the process it has encouraged tribal groups to begin their own collections, though often without the safeguards necessary for a true archive.

Another growing collection, primarily from the Northwest but encompassing all of North America and including considerable ethnographic as well as linguistic material, has been established using the same basic rules. This is the Jacobs Research Funds Collection, housing copies of materials from individuals who receive research grants from the Jacobs Research Funds, just as the Boas Collection at the APS Library houses copies of materials from individuals who receive research grants from the Phillips Fund.

Beginning such a collection takes patience and tact, both on the part of the involved scholars and of the archivists. But it works so well that there is no reason not to begin other collections in other places. We do encourage scholars involved in Northwest language studies, however, to seriously consider adding safe copies of their material to this growing collection where all the complicated work has already been formalized.

¹ Little has been written until quite recently about the literary rights of the language consultant who originally contributed the material. This problem has not been resolved to the satisfaction of all, and reassurances that the board will act responsibly in all cases may not satisfy some. At any rate, knowing that the collection is under the continuing control of a group of scholars and Indians who are responsible is enough for most donors.

APPENDIX A

THIS AGREEMENT made (DATE) between the Board of Regents of the University of Washington, hereinafter referred to as the "University," acting on behalf of the University of Washington Archives and Manuscripts Division of the University of Washington Library, and Laurence C. and M. Terry Thompson, hereinafter referred to as "Contributor,"

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, it has been recognized by the University and a number of scholars interested in Linguistics that the establishment and maintenance of a Northwest Linguistic Collection in the University of Washington Library would be of benefit both to the University of Washington and to the aforementioned scholars,

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual agreements hereinafter contained, the parties hereto hereby agree for themselves as follows:

The University agrees:

1. To establish and administer a Northwest Linguistic Collection in the University of Washington Library System, which collection shall consist of the correspondence, field notes, notebooks, audio-recordings, holographs, typescripts of articles, reports and unpublished papers, and other related material presented to the University by contributors to the Collection;

2. To designate upon the request of a contributor any material presented to the Northwest Linguistic Collection as material included in the Northwest Linguistic Collection, provided that no agreement is hereby made to consolidate any material presented to the Northwest Linguistic Collection as such into uninterrupted shelving units²;

3. To store all original material presented to the Northwest Linguistic Collection at a location separate and apart from the storage location of any copy of such material, but to otherwise make such original material available for copying or other use under the same rules governing the access to copies of such material;

4. To have audio-recordings in the Northwest Linguistic Collection played for users only on equipment in which accidental erasure is non-existent or minimal; and

5. To establish through the University of Washington Library's Archives and Manuscripts Division policies or arrangements for the copying of material presented to the Northwest Linguistic Collection, the object of such policies or arrangements being the minimizing of any hazard to the original integrity of material donated to the Northwest Linguistic Collection.

The Contributor agrees:

1. To donate to the University, and more particularly to the Northwest Linguistic

² This rather legalistic jargon has a relatively mundane meaning: that material donated to the collection may be physically stored in several different locations, rather than all together on the same shelves. Since the Archives has each donation numbered, and items are placed on the shelves in numerical order, it is not difficult for the Archives employees to find all of the materials from any particular donor or in any particular language, whether they are microfilm/fiche, original notebooks, photographs, tape recordings, etc..

Collection of the University of Washington Library, the present ownership of the original and one or more copies of the contributors correspondence, field notes, notebooks, audio-recordings, holographs, typescripts of articles, reports, and unpublished papers, and other related material as selected by the Contributor, provided that the present possession of the original, as well as all publication and literary rights to contributed material, shall remain with the Contributor for his or her life if so desired by the Contributors. Unless previously donated, present possession of the original and all publication and literary rights to contributed material shall pass to the University upon the death of the Contributor, to be administered by the Board of Trustees of the Northwest Linguistic Collection.

The University and the Contributor mutually agree that

1. A Board of Trustees composed of at least six persons shall govern access to contributed material in the Northwest Linguistic Collection upon the death of the Contributor of that particular material. Initially trustees will be jointly appointed by the University and those who have already contributed to the Northwest Linguistic Collection. Additional trustees may be appointed by agreement of a majority of the trustees. A permanent trustee shall be either the University Archivist or the Curator of Manuscripts. The term of office for each trustee shall be for life, unless the office is resigned. Each trustee shall name his own successor in office, subject to the approval of the other trustees at the time of succession.

2. Access to material presented to the Northwest Linguistic Collection by the Contributor will be governed by the following rules:

a. During the Contributor's life, access to any material in such contribution for the purpose of copying or other use will be granted only with the written permission of the Contributor. Following the death of the Contributor, access to any material in such contribution for the purpose of copying or other use will be granted only with the written permission of two of the trustees of such contributed material;

b. A copy of material in the Northwest Linguistic Collection may be made for a Contributor or any other person granted access to the Collection at the expense of the person requesting the copy, and such copy may be removed from the University of Washington premises.

