Understanding Metadata

Find resources by ...

Search

Reset search

Access protocol
- U R C S (156)
- U R C S (6)
- U R C **S** (2)

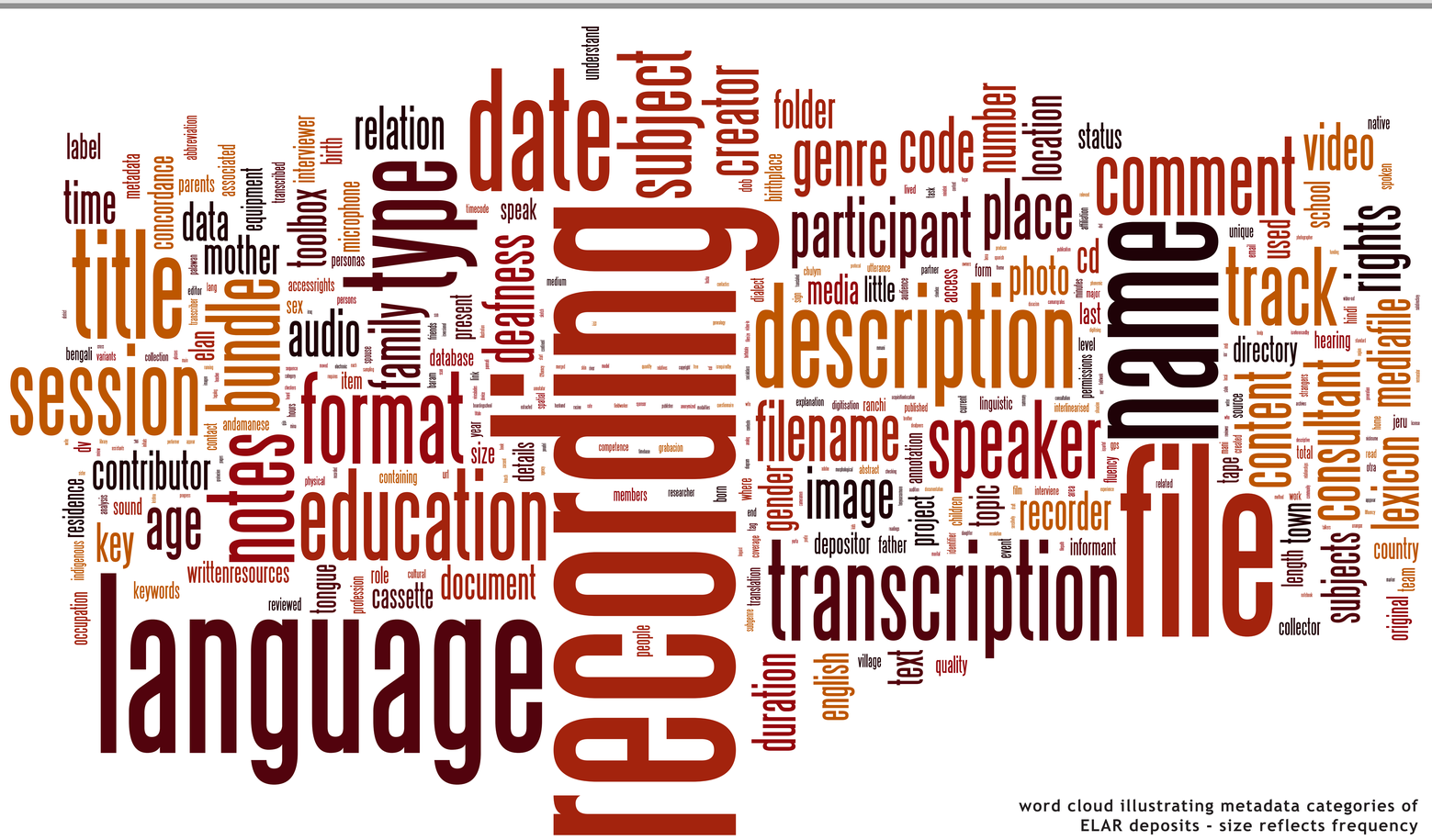
Language
- Bislama (13)
- English (10)
- Mavea (161)

Type
- Audio (158)
- Image (2)
- Spreadsheet (1)
- Transcriber (156)
- Video (3)

Genre
- Chronicle (13)
- Conversation (74)
- Description (5)
- Kastom (6)
- Metadata (1)
- Narrative (31)
- Personal history (3)
- Personal story (14)

Topic
- Animal (5)
- Bird (6)
- Bodyparts (3)
- Clothing (3)
- Colour (1)
- Dwelling (4)
- Earth (3)
- Fire (4)
- Fish (6)
- Hunting (3)
- Kinship (4)
- Mind (1)
- Person (1)
- Plant (3)
- Quantity (2)
- Sky (2)
- Time (2)
- Water (1)

Participants
- Albina Anyamova (1)
- Aleksandra Anyamova (1)
- Kolja Pakin (16)
- Misha Pelikov (1)
- Mishka Pakin (6)
- Olga Pelikova (2)



word cloud illustrating metadata categories of ELAR deposits - size reflects frequency

- The main task of metadata is to carry *the ability to understand data* into the future.
- It is also responsible for supporting preservation, management, retrieval and usage of resources.
- Technical factors for implementing metadata are undeniably important, but they lie at one end of a spectrum of factors.
- Metadata for endangered languages reflects the diverse and inchoate nature of the field of language documentation.
- The bottleneck for metadata is documenters' expression of their complex and nuanced knowledge about resources.
- Metadata categories need to be *discovered* rather than simply predefined.

http://elar.soas.ac.uk

Description

Metadata does more than give a prospective user some idea of the content of a resource. Metadata is responsible for carrying the understanding of a resource into the future, to a variety of unknown users. These users may know little about how and why the resource was created and organised, what people and events were portrayed, and the surrounding contexts. In endangered languages fieldwork, the depositor may be the only person who has access to this information, and if it is not passed on as metadata, future understanding and usage of the materials is diminished.

Discovery

Search engines such as Google may be a primary method of discovery, and it is useful for linguists to be able to search for data via portals such as OLAC. However, for a wider range of users, discovery potential is increased enormously by providing faceted browsing of richer detail about documentations, since typically only a minority of people use a search facility to locate content within websites.

Structure/Navigation

Classical metadata systems refer to simple objects such as books or single data files. Language documentations, however, are typically composite objects such as sessions or bundles, consisting of grouped and linked files. Metadata plays a key role in representing these objects, and, in turn, in determining the granularity, navigation and usability of the screen interface used to access the resources.

Accessibility/Usability

Using only search-within-metadata for data retrieval discriminates against many users. Most prefer browsing rather than searching, and searching forces people to have clear ideas about what they want, and how to spell the term that might retrieve it.

Many endangered languages materials are sensitive or restricted, so they are subject to access control based on suitable metadata categories. ELAR's interface clearly displays access metadata, and matches an object's access conditions with the user's access rights, so that users do not browse or search only to find that the resource of interest is inaccessible to them.