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An archivist's view of meta-documentation

The goal of endangered language documentation is to create material that can be used by current and future researchers for a variety of purposes, some of which cannot be currently anticipated. Archivists contribute to this goal by acquiring, describing, preserving and providing access to texts, audiovisual recordings, computer databases and other records. Meta-documentation is an essential aspect of the collaboration between archivists and linguists. Archivists take a broad, historical view of documentation, considering not only immediate research goals and community needs, but also future prospects for use of documentary data, the historical context for documentation, and research interests beyond the field of linguistics.

In this tutorial presentation I draw on examples from the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages at the University of California, and examples of archival standards and practices outside the field of linguistics, in order to demonstrate the value of meta-documentation to language documentation projects.