

It's about time: skills and sustainability in endangered language fieldwork and documentation

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This talk will range across the practical, the philosophical, and the partisan, in order to explore relationships at the heart of sustainability: between languages, their documentation, and time. I will look at time scales from the geological down to the millisecond, drawing out questions and provocations for those teaching and learning language documentation and those supporting endangered languages. Questions will include: what is the relationship between documentation and archiving? how does the digital domain threaten our data whilst providing the only route to the future? how far can the ecological metaphor be applied to language loss? Finally I will argue that our work stands on such a fragile basis that resilience - the ability to respond to adversity and change - is preferable to sustainability as a goal.