

## **Making Meaning of Historical Papua New Guinea Recordings: Collaborations of Speaker Communities and the Archive**

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### **Abstract**

PARADISEC's Papua New Guinea (PNG) collections represent the great diversity in the regions and languages of PNG. In 2016 and 2017, in recognition of the value of PARADISEC's collections, ANDS (the Australian National Data Service) provided funding for us to concentrate efforts on enhancing the metadata that describes our PNG collections, an effort designed to maximise the findability and usability of the language and music recordings preserved in the archive for both source communities and researchers. PARADISEC's subsequent engagement with PNG language experts has led to collaborations with members of speaker communities who are part of the PNG diaspora in Australia. In this paper, we show that making historical recordings more findable, accessible and better described can result in meaningful interactions with and responses to the data in speaker communities. The effects of empowering speaker communities in their relationships to archives can be far reaching – even inverting, or disrupting the power relationships that have resulted from the colonial histories in which archives are embedded.

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## Introduction

Historical language and music recordings from Papua New Guinea (PNG) held in the digital repository PARADISEC were recently the focus of a metadata enhancement project. This project highlighted the meaning that can be made of historical archival materials by making them accessible and connecting them with living speaker communities. The records themselves and their descriptions have been enhanced, but more than that, living speakers have been inspired to continue practising and recording their cultural heritage, and new audio visual materials have been produced. In this paper we describe a case study in which records in the PARADISEC archive have been reconnected with living communities, and demonstrate how this has enlivened the catalogue records, and empowered members of the speaker community to curate and begin recording cultural heritage.

From its inception in 2003, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC) was designed as a long-term, secure storage facility for the precious materials gathered by fieldworkers, and one which would not only keep the materials safe, but would also ultimately make them accessible to the communities from which they came, as well as to future researchers. In 2016 and 2017, in recognition of the value of PARADISEC's collections, ANDS (the Australian National Data Service) provided funding for us to concentrate efforts on enhancing the metadata that describes our Papua New Guinea (PNG) collections, an effort designed to maximise the findability and usability of the language and music recordings preserved in the archive. PNG is the country represented by the largest number of records within PARADISEC, with 118 collections, compared to the next most represented countries, Australia (115), Vanuatu (68), Indonesia (59) and the Solomon Islands (31). This illustrates the prominence of PNG data within PARADISEC, as well as PNG's significance within the Pacific in the research areas of language, music and culture.

## Background

### PARADISEC and Access to Historical Language and Music Data

A key aspect of the creation of digital repositories like PARADISEC is that they can provide access to primary material for any authorised user. The accessibility of archival collections is essential to their long-term sustainability, and the solutions offered by digital distribution make it possible for a digitised recording to be simultaneously held in a central location and yet accessible from any other location in the world. This means that digital archives are able to circumvent some of the problems faced by museums and archives of physical objects. The structured metadata requirements of the PARADISEC catalogue oblige depositors of research materials to provide basic information that they may not previously have compiled, including, for each item: a title, date of creation, language spoken, and country in which the item was recorded. Further information can include: the role of participants; the language name as it is known locally (which may vary from the standard form); the type of information (lexicon, song, narrative and so on); geographic location (given by a bounding box on a map); and a free text description

of the item, which can be as rich as the depositor wants. All of this can be improved on by subsequent researchers, who may re-use the data in their own projects.

This is essential in the current archiving environment, where cultural heritage communities have become increasingly active users of digitised archival material originating in their communities (Barwick, 2004). Digitised collections of primary data are now easily findable, but people also expect to be able to access them (Landau and Fargion, 2012). In Australia, the increasing involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making for archives and their collections means that objects are no longer removed from their creators and preserved in distant locations. The return of historical and archival materials in digital forms has become central to discussions of technology in Indigenous Australia, as evidenced by the outcomes of recent conferences: the AIATSIS National Indigenous Studies Conference (2009) and the Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium (2010). In Ormond-Parker et al.'s summary of these discussions, the group calls for 'increased support for programs which support the return to community-based archives of digitised heritage objects, including photographs, audiovisual recordings and manuscripts from national repositories' (2013).

Several Indigenous scholars have noted that careful decisions about making materials accessible are essential for Indigenous people to consent to the ongoing curation of their cultural materials (O'Sullivan, 2013; Aird, 2002). PARADISEC's access conditions allow for restrictions so that online digital objects are easily accessible to individuals with the correct permissions, but can also be hidden from others. The aim is to make the repository as openly accessible as possible, while respecting cultural restrictions. Each item in PARADISEC has its own deposit conditions, and over half (some 16,000 items out of around 25,000) can be seen or listened to online by registered users: that is, those who have agreed to the conditions of use and registered their email addresses. The remaining 9,000 items require some kind of permission from the depositor. Increasingly, PARADISEC receives enquiries from family members of those recorded, whose voices are preserved in the archive. Access can be provided for an individual to an item that might otherwise be closed to the general public. By making the descriptive metadata publicly discoverable, those who have rights to it are able to find that it exists, while the data itself can remain on restricted access.

The structure and policies of PARADISEC also arise from scholars' reflections on a career of research in Pacific countries, and their understandings of the obligation to give something in return for the knowledge that has been shared during the course of their research, and to train new researchers in better methods to make the return of materials easier (Thieberger, 2018). These efforts at reciprocity take the form of scholars' contributions of time and expertise to improve education and policy, as well as in working out how best historical research materials can be returned for the use of communities (Treloyn and Charles, 2015). The benefits of research for Pacific communities must balance the benefits for non-Pacific researchers – even though what is beneficial for each may be quite different (see Keesing, 1994; Kaeppler, 2017; Gillespie 2017).

## **Enriching the PNG Collections in PARADISEC**

PARADISEC's PNG collections represent the great diversity of languages in PNG's regions. PARADISEC holds recordings in close to 100 distinct languages from PNG, containing music and language materials, often with film and written transcriptions,

fieldnotes or photographs. Some materials are of considerable historical significance. One of these is Ted Schwartz's collection of Manus Province research materials from his Admiralty Islands Expedition in 1957 with Margaret Mead and Lenora Schwartz, complemented by discussions with Mead from the 1970s. The Manus expedition informed Mead's 1956 *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation — Manus, 1928–1953*. Mead's monographs have shaped both academic and popular conceptions of anthropology and of human societies more broadly, and have been contentious in equal measure.

Additional funding from the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language (CoEDL) enabled us to digitise collections identified during the course of our Lost and Found survey initiated in 2011.<sup>1</sup> An example collection is Don Kulick's music and language recordings of the Tayap language from Gapun Village, near the mouth of the Sepik River, East Sepik Province – a highly endangered language currently spoken by around 45 people. Kulick's recordings had been stored privately since they were recorded in the 1980s and had not yet been digitised.<sup>2</sup>

During the project we contacted individual depositors of PNG material, and thereby updated access conditions, so that more recordings have become more accessible to more catalogue users. The process of describing existing PNG collections metadata led us to several new sources which have since been added to the archive, including Ralph Lawton's recordings of the Kilivila language,<sup>3</sup> spoken on the main island of Kiriwina and across the outlying islands of the Trobriand Islands, Milne Bay Province and Susan Holzknacht's recordings from Morobe Province of 15 languages from the east and coastal plains of Huon Gulf to the western plains of the Markham valley and the Markham River.<sup>4</sup> PARADISEC negotiated with the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau at ANU, the premier collector of images of manuscripts in the Pacific, to digitise a set of materials and to make them openly available. PAMBU runs on a subscription model in which the records were difficult to access and were only on microfilm. PARADISEC now houses 28 PAMBU collections, many of which are from PNG.

Recordings from the Divine Word University (DWU) in Madang, PNG, including those recorded by Father John Z'graggen since the 1960s in Tok Pisin and multiple PNG and international languages, have also been included in the PARADISEC collection. These recordings were made in the provinces of Enga, Simbu, Madang and East Sepik and included some material in German, Italian, and Indonesian. Recorded descriptions in Tok Pisin and language maps from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in PNG allowed additional metadata to be added that infers languages and areas and identifies where the recordings were made.

In 2016, the funding from ANDS enabled the expansion of the PARADISEC staff team to include language assistants, data managers and archivists focused on the PNG collections. We also broadened partnership activities with representatives of PNG communities, reaching out to the Institute for Papua New Guinea Studies (IPNGS), with

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1 This survey aimed to locate further endangered analogue collections and to work with their custodians to find funds to digitise and curate them before they are lost (now hosted by the Digital Endangered Languages and Musics Archives Network (DELAMAN)). See: <http://www.delaman.org/project-lost-found/>

2 See: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/DK1>. Digitising the collections has safeguarded these archival materials. Tok Pisin is becoming the majority language of the village, Kulick asserted 'if the present patterns persist, it is likely that the vernacular will no longer exist as a language of everyday communication in thirty years' time' (Kulick, 1992).

3 Ralph Lawton's recordings of the Kilivila language: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/RL1>

4 Susan Holzknacht's recordings from Morobe Province: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/SH2>

whom PARADISEC has a long-standing partnership that has included return of historical recordings. Collaboration with the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia (PNGAA) resulted in the engagement of Steven Gagau, an active member and a PNG community leader representing the Sydney Wantok Association, who joined our team as a staff member. Steven, a Kuanua and Tok Pisin speaker, is familiar with surrounding language groups in the region of New Britain and New Ireland provinces and has considerable knowledge of PNG more broadly.

Steven works across the full range of PARADISEC's PNG collections. His initial work was directly relating to his mother tongue, cultural heritage and ethnicity in the Kuanua language of the 'Tolai' people of the Gazelle Peninsula of East New Britain Province. The Kuanua recordings were mainly from the collections of Tom Dutton<sup>5</sup>, Meinrad Scheller<sup>6</sup> and Arthur Capell<sup>7</sup>. Steven's improvements to the metadata documented more descriptive and detailed accounts of the audio recordings in the catalogue content, ranging from direct translation and interpretation, names of people speaking or singing, when, where and what they were speaking/singing about, and the types of discourses identified.

In PARADISEC's catalogue, the description field is used to hold multiple interpretations of data. Steven Gagau uses this field to enrich the metadata by adding his interpretation and notes, including his name and the date, whilst retaining the notes and comments of the depositor. Most often, he finds that it is not misinterpretations of the recordings, rather missing interpretations, especially a surprising lack of detail or information. Adding metadata, such as names, places, language and context, is a way to make meaning from the recordings and contribute to making the materials user-friendly and more readily accessible. Steven's work is informed by his ability to recognise a broad range of languages from PNG as well as his connections with members of speaker communities both in Australia and in PNG. For example, he has corrected the metadata of some items that had been incorrectly assigned as recordings of Kuanua and Tok Pisin.

The descriptive work highlights a variety of perspectives on archival objects – for speaker communities, the recordings and the voices of people are paramount, and any analysis in published research is secondary. These descriptions are a research process whose importance is comparable to the published research outputs that remain highly valued by universities and research institutions. Rich descriptive metadata significantly increases the usefulness of PARADISEC's catalogue by growing the potential for users to locate records of individuals or items from particular places. This work has not only enhanced the value of the archival records but has also begun reconnecting these historical records with people and communities who speak the languages recorded.

## **Re-connecting the Archive with Community**

Metadata enhancement work improved the discoverability of the records contained in the repository, but the next step was to extend the reach of PARADISEC into speaker communities. In the period of this project, we trialled several innovative approaches to outreach. Three of these are described here, with a detailed description of the third approach.

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5 Collection of Tim Dutton: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/TD1>

6 Collection of Meinrad Scheller: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/MS2>

7 Collection of Arthur Capell: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC1>

## Taking the Archive to the Community

PARADISEC Director Nick Thieberger arranged with the library at the Divine Word University in Madang for recordings that we had digitised<sup>8</sup> to be played at the local market to see if anyone recognised the speakers or could add more information to the catalogue. Resulting information fed back to us about the content of each recording was then added to the catalogue. Descriptions of the content of 25 items in the collection were sent back from Madang.

## Sharing Archival Recordings Among Community Members

E'ava Geita of Koitabu village in PNG was in Melbourne and responded to a request by the School of Languages and Linguistics for speakers of PNG languages to participate in a field methods course. In doing this, he came across items in his language in the collection. He highlights the great value of PARADISEC's ongoing efforts in accurately documenting PNG language and culture:

'If only you witnessed and captured the reaction in me going through the recordings at home! It is quite an amazing experience! From feeling of awe to emotion to deep excitement! The feeling of knowing that your language has been documented or recorded in a structured way, kept safely somewhere in the world, hearing it spoken 50 – 60 years ago and by some people you haven't seen but whose names you only hear in history etc is quite incredible. It is most heartwarming to know that it is possible to sustain the life of my language. Thank you once again for the opportunity to listen to the records!

As I see it now, it is "US OR NEVER!" In about three or four Koitabu villages, the observation is that people in my peer group can understand in full but speak a little. Generation after us cannot do both. I believe that if we don't teach ourselves now and pass on, the language will be totally gone in the next 10 to 20 years.'

## Inviting Community Contributions to the Archive

PARADISEC has been able to attract funds to employ members of speaker communities to feed their cultural knowledge directly into the archive. In addition to Steven Gagau, we have also employed Lizie Wea, a Drehu speaker, to work on items in the collection from her island in New Caledonia. She has been using the latest tools for transcribing the recordings so that the collection is enriched with these time-aligned transcripts.

Building on these experiences of community engagement, Steven Gagau subsequently drew in turn on his relationships with the Australian PNG diaspora to work intensively with one speaker of the Kilivila language, Grace Hull. Steven's work processing the Ralph Lawton collection differed from the metadata enhancement work he had already completed on PARADISEC's PNG collections. For the Lawton materials

<sup>8</sup> This work was done with funding from a Legacy Materials Grant provided by the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme.

Steven participated in the entire process from the time the physical reels entered the lab to be digitised through to the digital items being reconnected with the speaker community through Steven's community contacts, and especially through Grace Hull. In October 2018, PARADISEC staff members Jodie Kell and Steven Gagau conducted an interview with Grace Hull at her home on the NSW Central Coast. In the course of the interview, they played recordings by Ralph Lawton that had been added to the PARADISEC repository during the course of the PNG collections enhancement project, elicited Grace's responses to these, and made new recordings of song and dance that are linked with the Lawton recordings. These recordings have now been deposited into PARADISEC in a new collection.

Lawton's song recordings were made between 1961 and 1973 in Oyabia village, Kiriwina in the Trobriand Islands, where he lived and worked as a Methodist Missionary. Lawton returned to the Trobriands eight more times between 1976 and 1986 and worked with Trobriand co-translators in Canberra during this period, publishing a translation of the New Testament in the Kiriwina language in 1984 (Lawton, 1993). Before Steven and Grace enriched the descriptions of Lawton's recordings, the metadata in the collection described item RL1-009 as 'Traditional chanting, drums and singing'. Drawing on their expert advice, the recordings are now described to indicate that the songs are in the form of calls to the spirit world and past generations of the dead ancestors, and relate to Kula trading of valuables. They are sung during sea voyages to keep the voyagers safe. The recordings include performances on the drums called *Kasausau* and *Katuniniva* used to accompany circle dances.

This information enhances the findability of the item through the use of more specific location and date information and particular detail about cultural practice (Barwick and Thieberger, 2018). But engaging with the speaker community brings more to the archive than just enhancing the metadata; it can have far-reaching effects. As the video evidence recorded in the interview session attests, hearing these recordings was not just an exercise of metadata enhancement for Grace. When she heard the refrain of the Prophetic Song in an item recorded by Ralph Lawton,<sup>9</sup> she started dancing and later dressed in her traditional clothes and body paint (Figure 1) and showed us the dance, explaining that as soon as you hear this kind of song, you have to get up and dance, 'you can't help yourself'. The music and Grace's reaction to it evoked the excitement of community gatherings in Kiriwina. Grace's reaction is also a poignant reminder of the ways in which performance records in an archive are best made meaning of in their embodied and specific cultural contexts, and that they only really come alive when reconnected with the people they belong to.

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<sup>9</sup> Prophetic Song, recorded by Ralph Lawton:  
<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/RL1/items/014>



**Figure 1.** Steven Gagau (holding and wearing big cone shell from Vakuta Island, under arm a coconut woven basket for men only and shell money (Trobriand Islands) and carved PNG bird of paradise on black wood of Ebony tree), Grace Hull (in costume and holding a mini carved example of Kula Trade Canoe) and Jodie Kell (holding a coconut woven basket used by both men and women) at Grace’s home in October 2018. All objects from Grace Hull’s personal collection, reproduced with permission.

During the interview (though not caught on video), as Grace began to listen to the singing recorded in Lawton’s item ‘Funeral singing, traditional chanting, drums and dancing’,<sup>10</sup> she immediately started rocking as if she was cradling a baby in her arms and moving with the music. With a shaky voice she provided contextual information about occasions for singing this kind of song and explained the lyrics sung by a mother who has just lost her child:

‘As the waves crashes, the white foam I see. I can’t help myself but I have to pick up the flowers and put it in my arms and sway with the waves. I want to come and flow with you.’<sup>11</sup>

The poignancy of Grace’s response highlights how much is missed in the previous descriptive metadata, which failed to capture the meaning of the song, and which could not capture the sense that it not only commemorates a lost baby, but provokes the visceral memory of the baby and all of one’s own babies.

<sup>10</sup> Funeral singing, traditional chanting, drums and dancing, recorded by Ralph Lawton: <http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/RL1/items/008>

<sup>11</sup> ‘Toksav: Culture Talks’, PARADISEC podcast, forthcoming 2019 (00:14:10).



The interaction with the PARADISEC collection also had the effect of inspiring Grace to consider what other efforts she and her speaker community could be making to preserve their cultural heritage to ensure that songs and dances and the cultural knowledge they represent are passed on to future generations. Holding cultural heritage in archives is a valuable endeavour in its own right, but capacity-building among speaker communities increases the possibility of cultural heritage continuing to be cared for into the future, and even of performance traditions being revived.

## Cultural Authority and the Archive

The effects of empowering speaker communities in their relationships to archives can be far reaching – even inverting, or disrupting the power relationships that have resulted from the colonial histories in which archives are embedded. In Ann Laura Stoler’s terms, archives can be viewed ‘as both transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule’ (Stoler, 2002). In the archive, the white/European researcher is often positioned as expert on cultural knowledge collected by them in field research. The researcher also holds considerable power over records of this cultural heritage, given that the permissions for access to archival records are usually determined by the depositor – who is usually a researcher, rather than a member of the community who are the real owners the cultural heritage, and have the most at stake in its preservation.

Genevieve Campbell has illustrated the problems intrinsic to these power relationships in her example of senior people from the Tiwi Islands in Northern Australia, who had to request permission to access recordings of their own parents’ singing, held in the collection of the non-Indigenous researcher. In cases where permission could be granted, the Tiwi applicants signed the form both as applicant for permission and as community authority giving permission. In other cases, permission was denied, and people were unable to access records of their family members’ voices (Campbell, 2014). An example from PARADISEC’s work on the PNG collections demonstrates how reconnecting archival objects with speaker communities can invert this power relationship.

In conversations between Grace Hull and Steven Gagau, Grace alluded to Steven’s status in her community as a black *dim dim*. The term *dim dim* was originally from the Milne Bay region, and has now become part of the *lingua franca* of PNG, Tok Pisin. It refers to a white person and it denotes a higher level of status, outside knowledge and influence. In the colonial past a similar term was ‘masta’. Grace used this term somewhat jokingly, teasingly calling Steven a black white person, and by giving him this title, she invoked his standing in the community. Steven is a PNG diaspora community leader and President of the Sydney Wantok Association who is involved in a range of community activities and projects including fundraising, social and cultural events, such as traditional ceremonies.

In context, however, the title reveals more about how knowledge systems in research institutions have operated. It is assumed that the *dim dim* is a man of status and education who holds power and influence. In the past *dim dims* included white government officers, missionaries, business owners and managers, and the white researchers who came to communities, making records of the community’s knowledge and taking it away again. Documenting this knowledge, they wrote books and articles about the things they knew, depositing records in archives for which they are still identified as collectors and are able to determine access permissions. The locking up of

cultural heritage in archives by outsiders holding community knowledge is a model which leaves the power over community records in the hands of outsiders. In the Australian settler colonial context, theorists such as Patrick Wolfe have asserted that colonial claims to the authority to speak about culture ‘necessarily participate in the continuing usurpation of indigenous space’ (Wolfe, 1999). The act of consulting speaker communities as experts in their own knowledge, therefore, does not just enhance the archive but has the potential to disrupt the power structures of the colonial archive.

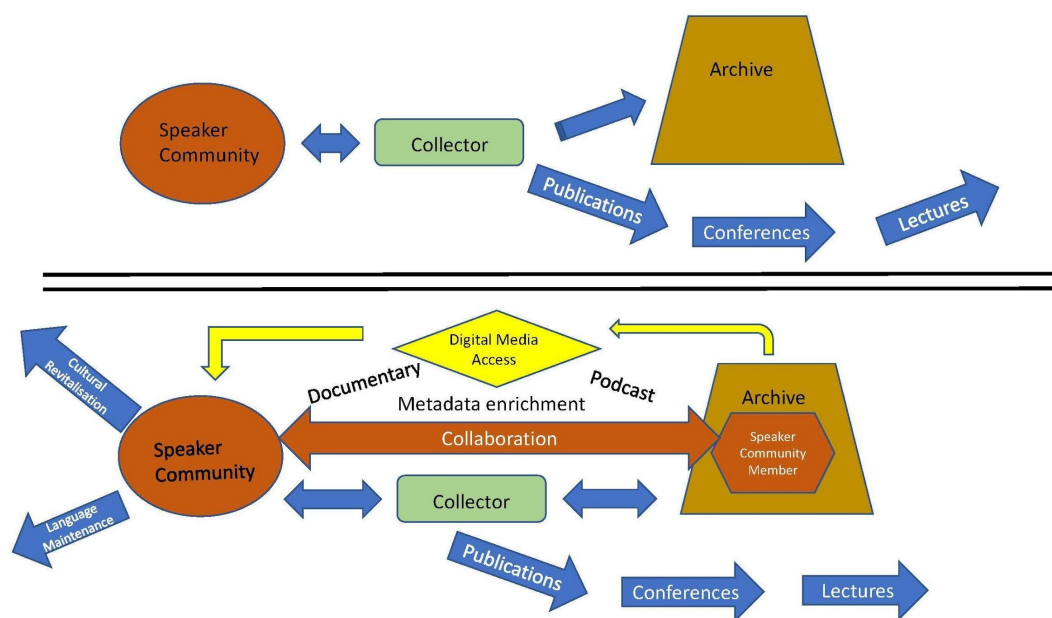
Steven sees his position in the archive as wearing different hats or acting in different roles; as an archivist, as a member of a speaker community, as someone who has worked across different regions in PNG and as a diaspora community leader. Fusing these roles, he acts as an intermediary in the role of community member inside the archive, connecting recordings back to communities and attempting to present the information from a community user perspective, rather than that of the academic outsider. Traditional academic outputs are often not readily accessible to speaker communities for a variety of reasons. Access is often closed to those without an institutional login and the highly specific form of language in written publications provides a barrier to non-specialist comprehension. The speaker community may not even know the recordings exist, or be in contact with the researcher continuing to act as the owner of the recordings and archival materials. Donning the hat of archivist has opened access to materials of which Steven may not otherwise have been aware and has enabled sharing and distribution of these materials with his wider community.

His work as archivist and producer of a forthcoming PARADISEC podcast has left Steven feeling more confident about exercising control over impactful outputs emerging from the archive. Along with Jodie Kell, as director of the podcast, Steven played the role of the broadcast producer, linking Grace with Jodie and enabling the production of meaning from the recordings that were originally recorded by Lawton. In the interview Grace was asked about how she feels about the recordings and she replied, ‘I think I’m glad and lucky that I’ve known Mr Gagau and Mr Gagau connected you and you have just saved some of my culture, songs, some recordings’.<sup>12</sup>

In this statement, Grace recognised the importance of Steven as the link between the archive and herself as a representative of the speaker community. Steven is both part of the community and part of the archive. The experience of Grace’s strong emotional reaction to connecting with the archive confirmed for Steven that this kind of collaboration makes new meaning of objects in an archive. The creation of the Grace Hull collection (GH1) demonstrates the participatory loop that this kind of collaboration has the potential to create, linking archival centres with speaker communities. This can enable return of materials, negotiated access and control over the materials through an open-ended dialogic workflow, that not only adds meaning but also reformulates the relationships between speaker communities and archival practitioners (Kell and Booker, 2018). This refiguring of relationships within the archival process is demonstrated in Figure 2.

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Toksav: Culture Talks’, PARADISEC podcast, forthcoming 2019 (00:22:30)



**Figure 2.** The old model (top) and the new model we are advocating for (bottom), in which digital archiving in a publicly accessible archive enables archival objects to be reconnected with communities, and also for new meanings to be made of those materials.

Community engagement with the archive can be a highly emotional, and sometimes distressing experience, but it can also motivate the revitalisation of cultural practice (Treloyn and Dowding, 2017; Barwick and Thieberger, 2018; Curran, Fisher and Barwick, 2018). In Grace Hull’s engagement with the PARADISEC collection, she was not only distressed by the thought of all of the knowledge that has been lost to history by the passing of generations, the interruption of long-established processes of knowledge transmission and the imposition of hybrid cultural paradigms arising from colonisation, she was also motivated to create new records of the culture that is still known. PARADISEC now includes Grace’s new recordings. Her video and audio interviews not only add a rich context to descriptions of other historical recordings, they build and revise the archival record by making new meaning of the historical records through description and through new media that enriches the corpus.

The possibility of speaker communities interacting with the archive also opens it up to multiple interpretations of the data. When the data on which the interpretation is based is in a publicly accessible archive, these interpretations should also be reproducible (Berez-Kroeker et al., 2018). From the perspective of archives, the possibility of diverging interpretations of research data can be viewed as a richness of interpretation rather than a problem needing to be mediated. As scholars seeking to understand colonial paradigms have suggested, the material held in archives illuminates the process of knowledge production in colonial societies. There are facts that can be extracted from data sets held in archives, but a diversity of perspectives on the circumstances in which those materials were recorded, how and why they were deposited in archives, and how their meaning has changed over time are also scholarly lines of enquiry that increasingly occupy scholars across disciplines of history, anthropology, linguistics and ethnomusicology aiming to examine the ways colonial power dynamics have determined parameters for knowledge (Stoler, 2002).

## Conclusions

Making historical recordings more findable, accessible and better described can result in meaningful interactions with and responses to the data in speaker communities. Our connections with people in the region continue to increase as our collection becomes more widely known. Our ability to employ Steven Gagau and Lizie Wea (although dependent on us applying for and receiving small grants) has broadened our connections with the PNG and Pacific community in Australia. The process of archiving necessarily detaches the archived object from its context, and records of performance cannot help but lose parts of the performance itself, no matter how high resolution the archived digital object. However, information from speaker communities and descendants brings richer contextual descriptions to archival objects than were often documented at the moment of recording and transferred to catalogue descriptions. It is only in ensuring the archival object is connected with the people and culture from which it comes that fuller meanings of objects can be preserved.

Maximising the potential of PARADISEC as a distributed, rather than a centralised, archive is an ongoing process, and PARADISEC continues to partner with institutions most closely connected with source communities. Providing a location for records to be housed, with clear permissions and licences, is a service that is greatly needed, especially in more remote areas where there is no reliable internet access. Current plans include using raspberry pi<sup>13</sup> to create local wifi transmitters that can be used in field sites with no internet or with limited bandwidth (Barwick and Thieberger, 2018). This approach allows for localised versions of PARADISEC catalogue entries, with their related audio and image files, to be loaded up in regional locations, and then distributed for use on mobile devices in source communities. Distributing resources for which PARADISEC acts as caretaker and reconnecting them to the communities where the cultural materials originate and where they belong has the potential for ever new meaning to be made of historical materials residing in the archives.

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<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.paradisec.org.au/blog/2018/07/local-wifi-versions-of-paradisec/>

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