

The Western Archive of Dialects and Languages

Traditionally, once fieldwork in a community was complete, the researcher left, and the participants never saw what became of those recordings and digitized materials. The *Western Archive of Dialects and Languages* (WADL) is a new project between the author and Western Libraries to ensure that the community of research directly benefits from sharing their stories, materials, and time.

The materials, dialect, and stories are preserved in a permanent and accessible, online archive. This ensures that future generations, wherever they live, will be able to access the heritage and history their family members shared with researchers.

I have already digitized, and made public, children's grade-school report cards from Mussolini-ruled Italy, cassettes of self-penned folk songs sung around campfires, and stories of daily-life in depression-era rural Ontario. These may not have been significant at the time, but are now windows into a time that has long ceased to exist.

The goal of this research is to show the importance of heritage—a significant part of anyone's identity. Integral to this is changing the perception that the 'every day', is unimportant. On the contrary, our only access to the past is through the daily lives of those who came before us. We don't connect to our shared history through the famous or the one-of-a-kind; but rather it is through the ordinary that we experience the entirety of a time and place.

By working alongside language communities, I am creating an archive to preserve, promote, and pass on the heritage and histories of all.

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