Unit 33

Organizing and Storing information

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lesson plan

Duration:

1.5 hours

Objective(s):

This unit provides participants with practical knowledge on organizing and storing the data and information generated during inventorying activities.

Description:

The unit presents key issues related to the organization, preservation and storage of data and information. It covers issues to be considered before leaving the fieldwork venue, issues of rights and different modalities and tools for data organization and storage, while respecting the principle of community participation and consent. Participants learn about compiling, logging, collating and transcribing information gathered. They develop hands-on experience extracting information from data collected, create a simple catalogues and discuss the usefulness of data storage and archiving in the context of inventorying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Proposed sequence:

* Introducing key issues
* What is the data to be organized
* Cataloguing
* Exercise: organizing and cataloguing information from field work
* Digital content
* Storage and preservation
* Community access

Supporting documents:

* Unit 33 PowerPoint presentation
* Dublin Core Metadata Element Set http://dublincore.org/documents/dcmi-terms/#H3
* A Manual for Documentation Fieldwork and Preservation for Ethnomusicologists. 2001. Bloomington, the Society for Ethnomusicology.
* Still photography log: [www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/photolog.html](http://www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/photolog.html)
* Audio and video recording log: [www.loc.gov/vets/vetform-reclog.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/vets/vetform-reclog.pdf)
* Sample transcription and archiving form: www.ohioswallow.com/extras/9780804011167\_sample\_transcription\_log.pdf

Unit 33

Organizing and storing information

Facilitator’s narrative

###### SLIDE 1.

Organizing and storing information

As a starting point for the discussion, the facilitator will present on some of the key issues related to the organization, preservation and storage of data and information after completion of the fieldwork. The details vary greatly depending on the inventory plan, the technologies used and the form the inventory is intended to take. This workshop session is designed to link issues of data organization with concerns relating to long-term preservation of material and community ownership and access. In the spirit of the Convention (Article 15), it is assumed that community members are participating in the process.

At the beginning of the presentation, workshop participants are asked to imagine that they are still at the fieldwork venue where they gathered data with a community and are about to leave.

Please note that the hands-on exercise in this unit requires that participants were collectively involved in fieldwork either during the practicum on inventorying or during the pilot activity.

###### SLIDE 2.

In this presentation …

###### SLIDE 3.

Before you leave the fieldwork venue

One can only organize data that one has at one’s disposal. Once the fieldworkers leave the site where the data collection and generation is taking place, it is usually too late to address gaps or mistakes. Therefore, before leaving the fieldwork area fieldworkers need to verify all facts as well as unfamiliar terms and names. No one can exclusively rely on their own knowledge alone, but fieldworkers need to ensure that the data gathered is accurate and reflects the diversity of views present in the community. When recording an event or an interview, it is important to take down and verify complete information. As spellings of places and names can vary, be sure to record the name and spelling used by the community.

###### SLIDE 4.

Data rights issues

Rights

Though not specifically required by the terms of the Convention, except in the case of nominations, it is advisable to have community members sign a form giving their free, prior and informed consent (see Unit 22).

In any event it is necessary to obtain permission to record, interview or carry out any form of inventory. Communities should be part of determining the possible future uses of the materials, which in the spirit of the Convention, should always contribute to safeguarding (see Unit 9). They should discuss the types of access that they agree to and are comfortable with. There may be specific cultural or social restrictions on access to some materials within a community even if such restrictions are not part of national law. All such conditions should be noted down and attached permanently to the material. If inventoried material is made available on the internet or may be used for creating a product, permission for such uses is required in writing. It is advisable to obtain permission at the time, as it may not be possible to easily reach practitioners or community members at a later stage.

It is indispensable to provide copies of recordings, photographs or other materials to community members. Therefore, all the necessary names and contact information have to be noted. In addition, fieldworkers need to ensure that the names of all those who have participated in any capacity are taken down so that they can be appropriately acknowledged.

Preservation of documents

As with the handling of other content, paper documents, if created, need care. Contents can be preserved through digitization such as scanning. The information on documents can of course be used for cataloguing and to create metadata. Metadata is ‘data about data.’ It may describe or systematize data gathered.

###### SLIDE 5.

What is the data to be organized?

This slide lists possible kinds of materials and data that could be generated through the fieldwork practicum or inventorying exercise.

###### SLIDE 6.

Revise, complete and follow up notes

During a field practicum, fieldwork or any data gathering, it is not possible to take down all information in full. Notes are always full of abbreviations and incomplete pieces of information. Things that you think you will remember are not always documented fully. Thus, the first thing is to revise and expand on all notes and label, verify and check all information as soon as possible. At this stage, check your data with others present and correct information and supplement it. Begin sorting materials so that they can be collated with other media, and list information that is to be used later.

This process is even more essential when you want to deposit materials on a shared website or a community centre. Remember that the materials will be accessed by others unfamiliar with your experience.

###### SLIDE 7.

Create logs

Identifying materials gathered and documenting them for future use is critical, as without basic information at the field level long-term preservation and use cannot be successful.

Logging involves identifying the contents, order, duration and size of the digital file. This involves working with recording sheets prepared while carrying out the fieldwork or with sheets that are taken up later.

###### SLIDE 8.

Collate materials

Next, it is essential to collate the materials so that all media related to each event is connected. Create a numbering system for this purpose. A simple one using the place name, date and serial number should suffice.

###### SLIDE 9.

Transcribe and translate

Transcribing and translating the text cannot be done fully in the workshop context; however, it is worth introducing at this point, as it can prove useful for annotating content, publishing and analysis.

###### SLIDE 10.

Cataloguing (1)

Some basic aspects of cataloguing are described here. These may be carried out after the workshop, but materials can be organized with this in mind. This process is the first step in creating systematic data gathering. It will assist in depositing the materials in the community or an institution.

You have to ask, what is the use of the cataloguing? Catalogues can be created for personal use or for institutional use such as an archive, museum or the use by the community concerned. A catalog may be a list, a card catalog, a database or more popularly a spreadsheet.

###### SLIDE 11.

Cataloguing (2)

The primary function is to describe the materials in a systematic and consistent method and aid retrieval. A catalog of material created for information collected for an ICH Inventory should aid a community member as well as persons not from the community to locate and use the information.

It is useful to review the collected materials to ensure that basic information required for cataloguing is gathered and noted. As cataloguing is linked to access and retrieval, it is critical that community access is at the forefront. Categories commonly employed by the community should be incorporated into the catalogue and used.

A catalog can be created in more than one language. Local names for genres, instruments, crafts should be used. General descriptions or translations can be added as well as images or other visual aids to improve access.

Good cataloguing assists preservation. Information easily obtained through a cataloguing system reduces handling of originals.

###### SLIDE 12.

Exercise: organizing information

This exercise requires that workshop participants have collectively carried out inventory fieldwork (either during the practicum or a pilot activity). They would be requested to reflect on how they can organize and catalogue the information gathered and to this effect they would be asked to create a small catalogue-type document following the instructions on the slide.

You can alternatively go over one section of the inventory framework that they used for the fieldwork and ask that they retrieve audio, photograph and questionnaire information (as appropriate). Then they would be asked to collate the information and summarize that particular section. This exercise would serve to demonstrate that it is important to organize data collection prior to fieldwork, so that one does not return with overwhelming and irrelevant information.

###### SLIDE 13.

Data implications for digital content

It is assumed that in most cases recordings will be made using digital equipment for audio, video and photography. As such, here we deal with file formats rather than with physical objects. Although digital recordings are stored on disks and SD cards, these are not safe for long-term use and storage and should be transferred to more stable media such as hard disk storage with back-ups.

Logging and listing needs to be done for both digital and analogue recordings, but digital media is more fragile in some ways. Digital media such as SD cards may be reused and thus transfer and naming of files is necessary.

All equipment creates generic filenames. It is advisable to move all such files to suitable folders and name them using a numbering system or another consistent naming system.

###### SLIDE 14.

Metadata (optional)

This slide explains the concept of metadata as related to cataloguing. It is up to the facilitator, depending on the participant composition, to decide whether to include this issue. It may be useful to introduce the term at this point as it is often used and mentioned. A simple demonstration can be done by right clicking on any file, selecting ‘Properties’ and clicking on ‘Details’. This will show the metadata captured by the equipment which forms part of the file.

The subject of metadata for inventorying is not covered in this unit as such. However, further reading can include information from:

The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (<http://dublincore.org/metadata-basics/>).

###### SLIDE 15.

Storage and preservation

It is useful if not imperative to introduce the idea of storing the data and recordings gathered for inventorying. Even if workshop data is not stored, the idea of storing and some introductory remarks are useful. When storing information, it has to be kept in mind that intangible cultural heritage is constantly changing and being recreated. Therefore, recordings and data from a particular period are useful, as they provide a record and a baseline for change. Audiovisual media is especially fragile, and depositing such materials in a database ensures preservation as well as access. Data bases should be equipped with means to migrate contents as required by technical changes. They also provide a central point for providing access in a systematic and fair manner.

However in all cases, agreements must be created with the institution hosting the database in question so that access and other restrictions are documented, and permanent access to the community is ensured. It is also recommended to support the creation of a community archive if there is a community hall, media centre or an institution that can take on this function. Archives and community centres can also assist in community outreach and dissemination through their own programmes.

Organizing data to be deposited in an database or archive would be an appropriate way to preserve and disseminate the inventory materials with the consent of the community concerned.

###### SLIDE 16.

Working towards storage (1)

Though various aspects of working towards archiving have been introduced in this presentation, this slide provides a short checklist to orient participants towards archiving, bearing in mind community participation.

###### SLIDE 17.

Working towards storage (2)

Audiovisual media needs to be stored on a hard disk system such as a RAID-based system. Depositing at an archive or storage institution can help to this end. If a small storage set-up is being created, a server with an internal RAID can be used with a tape back-up or other forms of back up, such as DVDs, although these are not suitable for long-term storage.

Audio files should be saved in the .wav format ideally at 48 khz 24 bit or 96 khz 24 bit. If recordings have been made using a mp3 player leave them in the mp3 format. Video recordings come in a variety of formats at present. In all cases, choose equipment that uses the minimum possible compression. Current archiving standards for video suggest a DV25 stream with .mxf (Material eXchange Format) wrapper. Images should be scanned as .tiff, though access copies can be made on jpeg. In all cases, lower resolution can be used for access.

Store paper records in polypropylene sleeves, if possible. Remove pins and clips from paper as they rust and damage the paper.

Materials should be stored in a dust-free environment with stable temperature and humidity, to the extent possible. Audiovisual materials are best stored in an air-conditioned storage space, but if this is not possible ensure that they are kept away from heat and direct sunlight.

###### SLIDE 18.

Community access

Plans for community access should be made and provided for during fieldwork (practicum or pilot activity) and emphasized as part of data organizing activity. If community participation is to be ensured, then it must be planned and foreseen for all stages including the organization of information and data.