

VWFoundation
DOBES Project
DELAN Network

VolkswagenFoundation and its funding programme “Documentation of Endangered Languages”

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Meeting
Paris
March 2003

VWFoundation

- Foundation

- Strategy

- EL Program

- Conclusions

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Volkswagen Foundation is active since 1962

Objective

support of science and technology in research and university teaching

Balance of 40 years of funding

90 Mio Euro per year

27.000 projects with a budget of about 2.9 Mia Euro

50% of the projects and 40% of the funds for the humanities

independence

VW Foundation is an autonomous and independent funding organization

has its own financial resources and its own management

largest foundation established under private law in Germany

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Funding Strategy

- concentration of funds onto a relatively select number of topics
one is the **Documentation of Endangered Languages** programme
- funding initiatives that are designed to prompt new ideas and approaches, new theories, areas of investigation and methods
- encourage academia to develop and test new cross-disciplinary and cross-national cooperation
one is the **Documentation of Endangered Languages** programme

Funding Practice

- applications from abroad are equivalent to German ones
- however must also demonstrate a defined cooperation with academic institutions and scholars in Germany
- Foundation can provide funds only to research institutions.

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1993 Summerschool “Language Description and Field Work”
initiated by Hans-Jürgen Sasse (U Cologne)
funded by VW Foundation

**result start of discussions about engagement in the area of
the endangerment of languages worldwide**
H-J Sasse (Cologne), U. Mosel (Kiel), J. Wirrer (Bielefeld)
C. Lehmann (Erfurt)

March Board of Trustees established the new funding programme
1999 Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen (DOBES)
Documentation of Endangered Languages

Objectives

Systematic documentation of Endangered Languages

new methods of researching, processing and archiving linguistic
and cultural data

help speech communities to develop schooling material etc

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DOBES Project

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March Pilot Phase

2000 8 documentation projects, 1 multimedia archive project
total 1.7 Mio Euro

March Main Phase

2002 12 documentation projects, 1 mm archive project
in total 3.5 Mio Euro

March New Decisions

2003 expect additional documentation teams

future expect 2 to 3 further calls for participation

next application deadline: 15. November 2003

2004 probably conference about Endangered Languages

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Conclusions

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Documentation of EL seen as successful funding initiative both from purely scientific and broader cultural and political perspective

Many other activities now worldwide to document and where possible revitalize endangered languages

VWStiftung pleased to support and stimulate research in this important area very early after phenomenon of languages dying was discovered

VWStiftung would welcome and is awaiting to cooperate with other organization to join efforts against the irretrievable loss of languages disappearing without leaving a trace behind

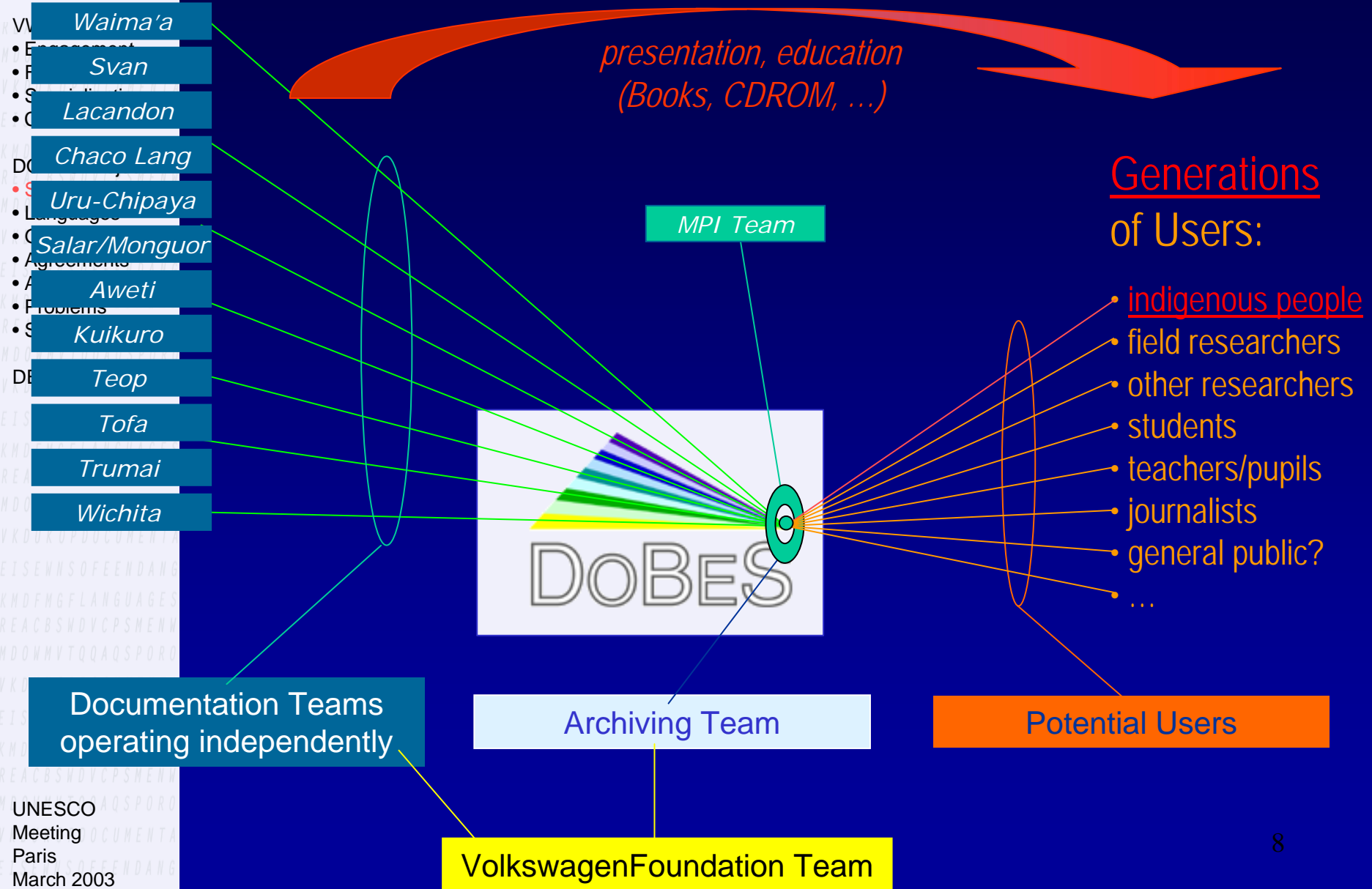
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The DOBES Model of Language Documentation

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Scenario



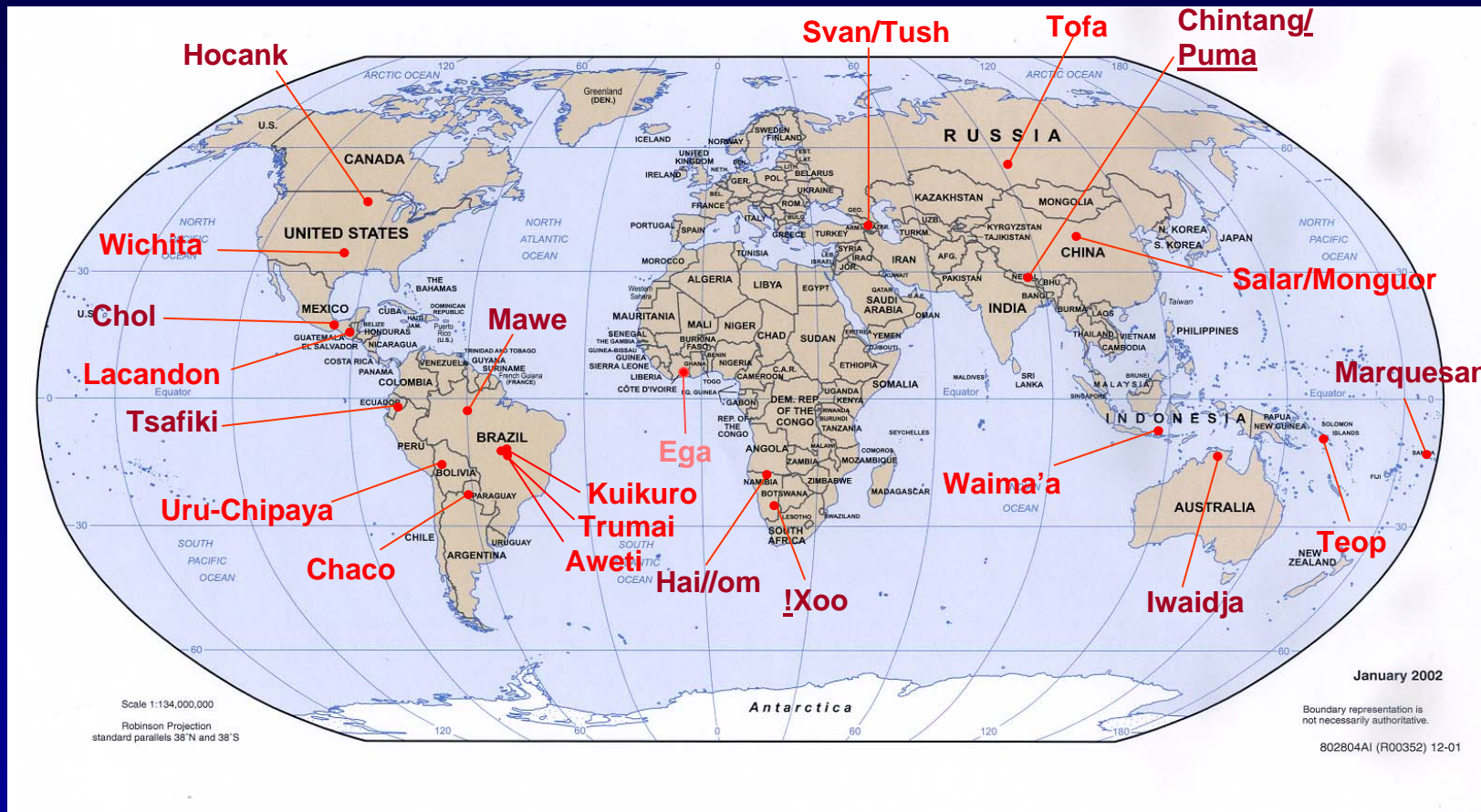
Languages in DOBES

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DOBES Project

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- started September 2000 with 8 teams in a pilot phase
- currently DOBES includes 12 teams
- expect up to 20 teams operating in parallel for the next 4 years
- 4 new languages: Chantal, Beaver, Bora/Ocaina, Saliba

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- language documentation to preserve them as a crucial part of human heritage for future generations
- revitalization and support of communities is recognized by all participants as another major goal
- language documentation capturing also its cultural background, facial expressions, gestures, dances, environment, etc
- therefore focus on audio/video recordings and inclusion of ethnologists, musicologists, ...

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- Scenario
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- basic agreements of how to document a language
- basic agreements about documenter-archivist interaction (workflow)
- discussion about and implementation of archiving standards and policies (open standards, long-term storage, distribution of multiple copies)
- expectation of maximal openness, but fully respecting the wishes of the indigenous communities
- much training and high degree of interaction
- broad discussion about ethical and legal issues
agreement about Code of Conduct and procedure
- discussion about access right issues to come
currently most material is not accessible

all agreements are results of a bottom-up interaction process

State of Archive

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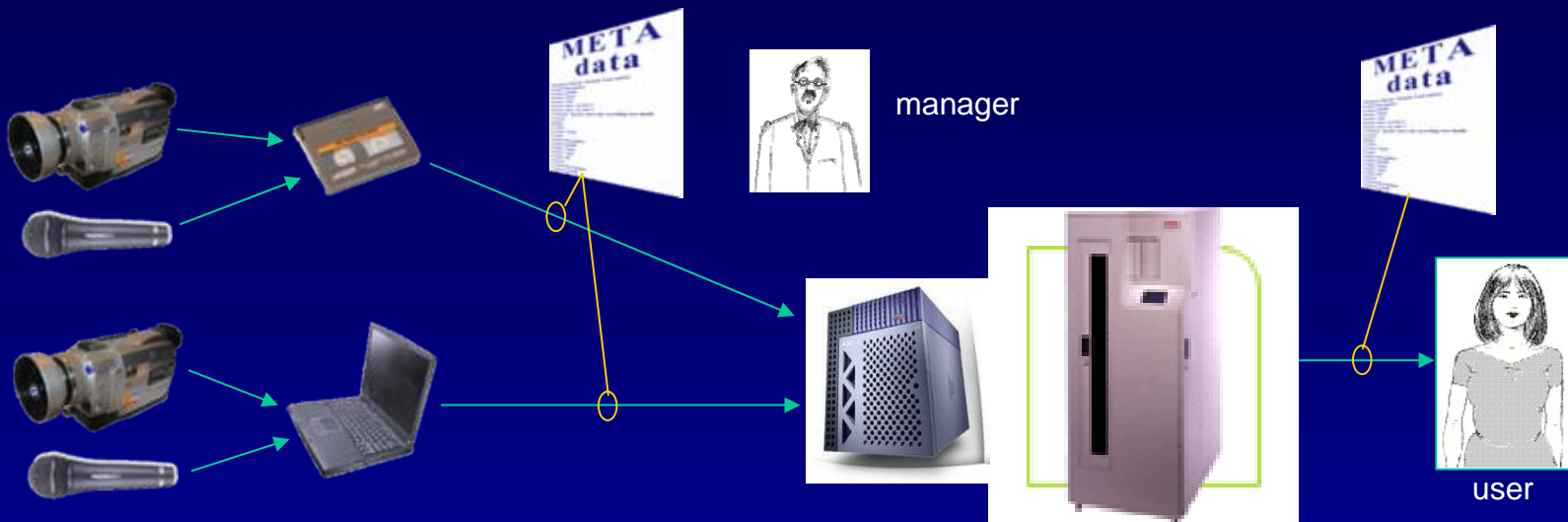
- Scenario
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DELA



researcher

Workflow utterly important - otherwise chaos



561 audio/video sessions (~ 300 h recordings)

Annotations, Field notes, Grammars, Lexicons, etc
many Photos and drawings

whole corpus at MPI 15.000 sessions (~ 3000 h a/v)

Archiving Problems

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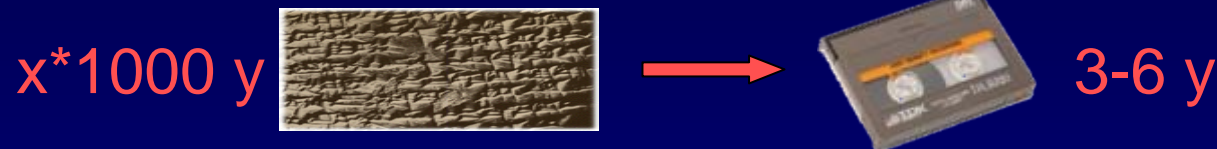
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March 2003

1. Languages (and Cultures) are endangered

2. Short Media Lifetime (Clay Tables vs. Magnetic Tape/CDROM)



3. Short Lifetime of Encoding Standards

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Cinepak 10 y \longrightarrow MPEG2 30 y ?

4. Short Lifetime of Container Formats

average software lifetime < 10 y

5. Short Lifetime of Researchers

average "scientific lifetime" < 40 y

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DOBES Project

- Scenario
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given the circumstances

- documentation as goal is new - also the archiving part
- different teams working on different languages
- different disciplines involved (linguists, ethnologists, technologists, ...)
- different working styles, schools and “jargons”

DOBES is very successful!

Our thanks go to an excellent collaboration with

- Greg Anderson, Sebastian Drude, **Arienne Dwyer**, **Bruna Franchetto**, Dafydd Gibbon, Raquel Girardello, Sven Grawunder, David Harrison, Reinhard Hiss, Heinrich Lieb, Armik Mirzayan, Ulrike Mosel, David Rood, Jessica Reinig, Marcia Schwartz, **Ruth Spriggs from the beginning teams**
- Berry Carlson, Suzanne Cook, Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar, Nikolaus Himmelmann, Jost Gippert, **from the second round teams**
- Vera Szöllösi **from the VolkswagenFoundation team**
- Daan Broeder, Hennie Brugman, Reiner Dirksmeyer, Gerd Klaas, Roman Skiba, Martin Bisselink **from the archiving team at MPI**

and many others in particular the consultants and communities

Digital Endangered Languages Archive Network

Given all the aspects we are faced with DELAN wants to:

- form an open umbrella for all the archiving initiatives
- maintain a joint web-site with links to various useful FAQ
- distribute a joint electronic newsletter
- establish an electronic preprint server
- organize training courses
- work out ethical guidelines and inform about juridical aspects
- define principles of access to the EL archives
- tackle the long-term storage aspect

Who is DELAN at this moment?

SOAS-ELAR, AILLA, DOBES, MPI, PARADISEC

for more details, please, look at

<http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES>

<http://www.mpi.nl/tools>

<http://www.mpi.nl/corpus>

currently preparing a comprehensive web-demo
will be available in April