

Living Cultural Storybases

A digital initiative for nurturing the oral heritage of the world's tribal communities.
<http://www.storybases.org>

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Abstract:

The 370 million indigenous peoples represent only about 5% of the Earth's population but more than 1/2 of the intellectual legacy of humanity- its languages and cultures. Yet it is these same people who are the most marginalized, fractured and least represented in global society: they are virtually being swept away by poverty, disease, conflict, and land appropriation. For every group dispossessed, urbanized or assimilated, a culture vanishes taking with it ancient knowledge of the environment, unique ways of living, alternative belief systems, irreplaceable skills, artistry and stories - the rich diversity of humanity.

This is a tragedy not only from a cultural perspective, but from a biological one as well. In forgetting the thirteen names an Eskimo may have for snow the world does not just lose words, it loses intimate, detailed knowledge of a part of the world's ecology and ways of interacting with that ecology that have been both respectful and balanced.

Up until now, the digital revolution, rather than creating a global village, has accelerated this worldwide cultural demise. Yet these same technologies causing the digital divide could nurture indigenous languages and cultures. In the past ICT initiatives have addressed the immediate developmental needs, rarely even acknowledging minority languages or traditions. Living Cultural Storybases seeks to go further: facilitating appropriate, two-way access for all community members to gather and share cultural knowledge through spoken stories.

Living Cultural Storybases are vibrant and accessible evolving digital repositories of cultural information that offer a means to gather, search, connect and access the cultural life of a community. Through current research projects active in Timbuktu, Mali, and the Peruvian Andes this work seeks to develop an appropriate, scalable and participatory model for using ICTs to nurture intangible heritage.



The Challenge:

"It's like standing by watching the destruction of the ancient library at Alexandria, without trying to put out the fire." (Bruce Batchelor)

- One language disappears every 10 days
- In fifty years over one half the world's languages will be gone forever, along with their diversity of cultures and social models
- 70 of the 154 Native American/tribal languages in US languages will be dead in 10 years
- Over half the world's languages are spoken by only 5% of the world's population. These same populations are the most under threat from the forces of globalization and urbanization.
- For every language that dies a unique knowledge base of the natural environment dies with it.
- Recording and preserving languages is NOT enough, a language is not truly alive unless it is spoken and used.
- Almost all aid money is directed towards education, health, and economic development. While these areas are vital, to have a *lasting* impact and meaning for minority communities, development must be rooted in their core cultural values. Culture is the result not of development or education programs, but of encouraging a strong living tradition and local language.
- Working with each endangered language group individually lacks scalability - a global effort is needed in which lessons learned inform a methodology and technology that are both generalizable and flexible.



Our Aims and Methods:

Living Cultural Storybases' aim is to 'nurture the oral heritage of minority cultures in a digital world'. This will be realized through balancing two approaches: social and technical. We will:

- Develop trustworthy and participatory methodologies** that engage and empower dispersed communities and displaced members to embrace, grow and re-interpret their traditional narratives. This includes strengthening a sense of cultural identity, motivating youth pride in their cultural inheritance, promoting the intergenerational transmission of oral heritage and supporting community dialogue and decision making in their own language.
- Evolve a generalizable technology** which provides appropriate, secure, two-way access for the entire population around a dynamic database architecture for storing and sharing their own stories. The system should reflect and respect the culture, through the database's ontology, role-based access and protection of their intellectual property. Two-way spoken access will be via devices that are appropriate and easy-to-use by all within the community setting, thus encouraging further contributions and discourse.

Examples of LCS in Action:

We have two projects currently underway - one in the Peruvian Andes, working with the Quechua speakers, and one in Mali, with the Tuareg, the "blue men" of the desert. Each project is under a year old and we are already seeing exciting results.

Mali

Une Soirée des conteurs avec la musique traditionnelle
 20:00 dimanche le 2ème décembre 2007
 A l'hotel Bouctou, Tombouctou

A Storytelling Evening with traditional music
 8pm Sunday December 2nd, 2007
 At the hotel Bouctout, Timbuktu

Le soir vient du Nord, l'air vient du Sud, l'argent vient du pays des blancs mais le parole de Dieu, les choses saintes, les contes jadis on ne les trouve qu'à Tombouctou (proverbe touarègue)

Soil comes from the North, gold from the South, money from the white man's country, but the word of God, holy things and fine legends, one finds them only in Timbuktu. (Arabic/Goldstone proverb)

Une expérience unique de l'héritage riche des histoires des cultures de notre cité des 333 saints. Tombouctou, accompagnée avec la musique à écouter par les conteurs traditionnels de griot et l'Albino internationaliste, chanteuse Khara Aky.

Una experiencia única de l'héritage riche des histoires de notre ville de 333 saints. Tombouctou, accompagnée avec la musique à écouter par les conteurs traditionnels de griot et l'Albino internationaliste, chanteuse Khara Aky.

Organized by an association & led non profit citizens des Nations Unies qui s'occupent de l'héritage oral des cultures. Organized by a nonprofit association for nurturing the oral heritage of minority cultures in the digital world.

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Peru



LCS Ccatcca noviembre 2007

Yachay wasipi estudiakuna yanapawanchis:

Jhon Máximo Mamani Jancca
 Urbano Gutierrez Condori
 Freddy Jimeno Apaza
 Freddy Roman Mamani López
 Rufana Casilla Jancco
 Juan Apaza Cutipe
 Savino Luna Apaza
 Feliciano Camayaya Tacuri
 Adriel Turpo Mamani
 Alexander Yagura Camayaya
 Jhoel Cáceres Areña
 Carlos Vicente Cutipa Laura
 Reymundo Condori Tacuri
 Eder Gutierrez Ayme
 Ronald Quimayo Cutipe
 Rolando Chino Inquillay
 Walter Molinos Luna Aquino
 Carmen Rosa Vargas Rayme
 Rómulo Rodríguez Ceama
 Braulio Huamán Inquillay
 Freddy John Castro Huamán

Yuspapapusunkichis:

Municipalidad de Ccatcca
 Colegio César Vallejo
 A las comunidades de: Atajista Ccatcca Ccatcapampa Copi Cuyuni Llaccacheta Pumaorcco Queuña

Jatun rimackunata chaiپی rinchichis uyarinchistaq

www.storybases.org

We are indebted to the indigenous peoples with whom we are working and from whom we learn so much - for their trust, enthusiasm, hospitality and friendship. Special thank also to our volunteers and advisors, in particular The Christensen Fund for financially supporting this effort - email:info@storybases.org - web:<http://storybases.org>