

# MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY

TKRP was initiated in 2001 by elders of the Kuku Thaypan clan from Cape York, who were concerned that the cultural knowledge of their clan would be lost when they passed on. Victor Steffensen, a Tukuluk man who had been learning from the Kuku Thaypan elders for many years, began at their request to record the elders on video explaining their knowledge, beliefs, and practices for future use by their clan. Victor developed a flat file database to store the video footage.

In February 2006 Natalya joined the project to redesign the flat-file database into relational form. She aimed to create a robust, flexible, searchable infrastructure to support the archiving and ongoing use of the traditional knowledge being gathered by indigenous community members. She was struck by the enthusiasm and excitement shown by participants involved in the TKRP project.

*All the knowledge the old people taught me over ten years, I want to pay the old people back by showing the young people.*  
— a participant



**Usability testing session for the TKRP Database: a group of testers gather around a laptop, passing feedback to Natalya who is on a mobile phone on loudspeaker.**

This project presented some interesting challenges. Particularly, the database had to be potentially usable and culturally acceptable to any of the hundreds of clans and language groups in Australia, with their differing needs, languages, and cultures. It needed to be able to take “any data the Elders choose to talk about”. Additionally, clans needed to be able to document their

knowledge while maintaining cultural duties required of them such as secrecy and custodianship of knowledge. As such it was an honour to witness appropriate examples of the culture, and meet representatives of the Kuku Thaypan, Kuku Yalanji, and Aurukun people.

Natalya is grateful to ALIA for their recognition, encouragement, and support. She acknowledges Victor Steffensen and Dr Andrew Wood of DSTC for the opportunity to be involved in this inspiring project. She also acknowledges Jacqueline Gothe of UTS as well as her UTS Masters supervisors Jan Houghton and Maureen Henninger for their guidance, criticism, and encouragement.

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*Editor's note: Natalya's paper will be published in a special issue of the Australian Library Journal.*

## Multilingual glossary : a communication and signage tool

<http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/multicultural/glossary/>

The multilingual glossary is a professionally translated, and culturally appropriate, signage tool for library staff – designed to allow them to communicate simple information to an increasingly culturally diverse community. Regina Sutton, New South Wales State Librarian, launched the Multilingual Glossary in November 2007.

The glossary was developed by a committee of multicultural librarians. Over a period of two years the Working Group of Multicultural Services trialled different approaches to cooperative translations and developed a glossary of commonly-used library terms and phrases. While some libraries have staff that possess language skills, they are generally not qualified interpreters/translators, nor are they necessarily representative of the major language groups in that community. Also, the library staff with language skills needed to assist the public are not available at all times.

The Working Group identified the need to develop a tool that would be easy to access from any library and would not be restricted by available technology or a lack of staff with language skills.

Web-accessible alternatives, such as translation software, were also researched by the Working Group but found to be unreliable – often providing grammatically inaccurate or culturally inappropriate translations.

The glossary allows you to search for specific library service-related English phrases, retrieving a non-English equivalent in one of 49 languages.

It is a cost-effective means of providing information in multiple languages and assists public libraries to respond promptly to the changing profiles of the community.

### Global users

The glossary database is a partnership between public libraries and the State Library of NSW, which hosts the website and is available to global users via the Internet. It is a free and innovative contribution to international library-based multicultural services. Positive Feedback through ‘request a Phrase’ have been received from users such as Vancouver Public Library, Canada; Brooklyn Public Library, USA; Wellington City Library and Tauranga City Library, New Zealand; and from other states including Queensland, Victoria, and Western Australia and several from libraries in New South Wales.

### Other applications

The database concept of gathering commonly-used terms in a specific environment has other applications reaching far beyond the library world. For example, Gold Coast City Council wanted to explore the possibility of developing a similar database that will allow them to store translated information in several languages for pet licensing, rubbish collection, recycling, etc. so they could print on request and therefore eliminate some language communication barriers.

### Using the glossary

- To view the text in different languages you may need to download the fonts on your computer.
- The fonts and help to install them are available on the screen.

- To work, use the Word format, create your document, and from the tool bar of your computer, use Format and select font. This will allow you to freely change size.
- The gif format is your point of reference if you need to re-check your work.
- Word and sentences are meant to be used as they are; do not combine words as grammar changes with the different languages.

You may find the glossary very useful when informing your clients that “library items that you requested are now available” or to tell your clients that you have “books in Hindi” and have a choice of 49 languages to do it. Some libraries have book sales and you may want to draw attention that you also have books in languages other than English to sell.

### At the coalface

The staff at Fairfield City Library, New South Wales, were actively involved in the development of the glossary because of the clear need to improve access to the full range of library services for the local community who speak around 133 languages. Although multilingual directional signage has been installed at Fairfield for several years, staff members have made use of the glossary over the last year to create a wide range of temporary attractive displays – complete with multilingual slogans for “Happy New Year”, “Welcome”, an International Year of Languages display, etc. The words and phrases for use in multilingual displays highlighting the various types of services that the library provides have been created in colourful fonts, using Microsoft Publisher, and stored in a folder in the Council’s intranet, for later use by any library staff.

### Future development

During 2009, a subcommittee of the Working Group on Multicultural Library Services will review and update the glossary.

If you require more information, please contact the authors.

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## AUSTLANG – online Australian Indigenous languages database

Did you ever wonder what Indigenous languages belong to your region? Did you ever have to find out whether Arrente and Aranda refer to the same language? If so, a unique online resource on Australian Indigenous languages is now available to you from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

AUSTLANG is the first online database to provide wide-ranging access to information on Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. It provides alternative names of languages, alternative spellings of language names, history of language classification, the level of endangerment of languages, history of speaker numbers, available documentation, researchers, and language programs. It also has links to other web sites and other databases on Australian Indigenous languages. The dynamic web-based features make it possible to search for Australian Indigenous languages by language name, place name, or by navigating Australia through Google Maps.

The National Indigenous Language Survey conducted by AIATSIS in 2005 found that of the known 250 original Australian Indigenous languages present before European colonisation,

only 18 languages were considered ‘strong’ with speakers across all age groups. All other languages are either no longer spoken or endangered.

In addition to 250 languages, AUSTLANG lists their dialects separately and provides information about each language and dialect.

As information on Australian Indigenous languages continues to emerge, AIATSIS will continue to update AUSTLANG. AIATSIS welcomes contributions from anyone who is working in the Indigenous languages sector.

AUSTLANG is available online at <http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au>.

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## Higher Education

### Audio-Visual Language Library at the University of Sydney

I have been the Language Librarian at the University of Sydney’s AV Language Library since June 2007. The AV Language Library, which is part of Arts Digital in the Faculty of Arts, is a closed-access reserve collection which aims to serve the needs of students wishing to study a foreign language within the university. The Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, offers a significant and diverse range of language courses; these include: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek (Classical & Modern), Hebrew (Classical & Modern), Hindi-Urdu, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Pali, Sanskrit, and Spanish.

The AV Language Library is unique in the sense that it is primarily an audio-visual library that makes significant use of digital technologies for language practice. Students, and anyone within the university who wants to study a foreign language, use the 33 computers in the library’s Self-Study room to work on their listening and pronunciation skills with the Language Player software, a state-of-the-art program that has many capabilities not available with traditional tapes and tape players. It replicates and extends the functions of a traditional language laboratory, and enables students to listen, record, playback, and communicate with other students, their teacher, or work in groups. Students can compare their pronunciation to native speakers via the Student Track feature, and may also slow down original recordings to various speeds.

In addition to curriculum materials, the library holds kits for learning over one hundred languages by self-study, and an extensive collection of interactive, self-paced learning multimedia kits for students learning English as a second language (ESL).

Most materials are available from the computers located in the Self-Study room.

### Recording studio

Teachers may also professionally record materials for their students to practise their language skills. This can be done from the recording studio near the AV Language Library and uploaded onto a dedicated server for students to access through the computers in the Self-Study room.

### Satellite TV broadcasts

What is also unique about the AV Language Library is that students and staff can watch satellite TV in several languages (e.g. Arabic, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Spanish, and