

Report on new digital tools for the Native American Languages collection and beyond

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The Native American Languages collection at the Sam Noble Museum/the University of Oklahoma is entering the final year of a 3-year NEH-funded project to make its unrestricted collections materials available online for the first time. This has required developing two custom software systems: (1) a public-facing website, on which we are collaborating with our community advisors and depositors to make as user-friendly and easily navigable as possible, and (2) an archival application based on Invenio CMS customized for the unique needs of language archives. This presentation reports on the progress of the project, including a preview of the public website interface and a discussion of some of the more unique key features. This part of the presentation will be of interest to any and all attendees who might use the language materials in the collection, or might have new material to deposit with us.

The second part of the presentation will discuss the new archival software, as well as the larger infrastructure we've established to create security and longevity for NAL's systems. We touch on some of the challenges we've faced, and what we've learned from the process. We also discuss aspects of the software that are major improvements on the other systems currently out there, which leverage aspects of modern software development (things like version control, permissions associated with different types of user groups, and git-based repository structure). This discussion will be most useful to any tribal representatives present, many of whom are interested in creating or expanding their own language documentation preservation infrastructure. In that vein, we will also explore how this software might fit into the language information/storage/analysis ecosystems that both individuals and tribal language departments might create for themselves (e.g., workflows with analytical tools like ILDA, FLEx, ELAN, and SayMore). Since this CMS will be freely available at the end of our grant, we hope that our work can help others with similar needs, and also help build strong relationships and convenient workflows between the collection and our partners.