Alex François spent the month of April in Vanuatu, where he collected new data in several languages (Araki, Mwoatlap, Lehali, Hiv, Lo and Mota) on topics including ditransitives, consonant clusters, names of constellations, Social Cognition and lullabies. But the main motivation for his trip was the repatriation of his earlier materials back to the communities.

He distributed 14 literacy booklets in nine different languages to local schools. The books, which consist of alphabet primers, story collections and dictionaries, were warmly welcomed by the local communities. In most cases, these materials are the first documents ever printed in these languages, which earlier lacked any stable orthography. Interestingly, Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education is currently planning to amend its language policy to introduce vernacular languages in the first three years of education – in replacement of English and French, currently the only two languages allowed in primary schools. The literacy materials created this year should be useful when the new language policy is implemented.

After years of preparation, Alex also inaugurated the “Torres & Banks Islands Cultural Centre”, which is now open on the island of Motalava. Along with books and other materials, this multimedia library provides the communities with free and easy access to his audio, photo and video archives from the field. The infrastructure and equipment were funded by the Alliance Française in Port Vila. Alex presented his recordings using a searchable multi-media interface designed for the occasion, which enabled users, despite their lack of computer literacy, to quickly find their way through the collection. The 950 items include 91 hours of traditional narratives, conversations, songs and dances, in 18 different languages. Among these are valuable recordings Alex made with the last speakers of five endangered languages, all now virtually extinct (Araki, Volow, Lemerie, Olrat, Mwesen). These archives – also available online – should hopefully help preserve the linguistic memory of Vanuatu, as well as pay tribute to its rich narrative and musical traditions.

Contact and isolation: variation in the languages of the Cook Islands
2:45-3:45pm: Robert Mailhammer - HD-Linguistics: The Historical Dimension of language description

Focus group meetings with colleagues, PhD students and Pacific Linguistics will be spread throughout Wednesday and Thursday afternoon and Friday morning. Seminar abstracts are available via the [events](#) webpage.
Paul Sidwell and Aung Si attended the 21st meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (SEALS) from May 11-13 at Kasetsart University, Bangkok. This was a really great meeting; there were some 60 talks in 3 sessions, including plenary talks on genetics and linguistics, language documentation and maintenance in Thailand, and the history of Burmese. The program of the meeting can be found here and photos can be viewed on the SEALS Facebook page.

Pleasingly there was high participation by postgraduates, and Asian based scholars. Such meetings, where Asian and Western scholars meet regularly in a supportive environment, are really crucial for the health of the field. In this context, it is really fantastic that the 2012 meeting will be held at Agay, France, with financial support to assist Asian scholars and postgrads to attend.

This SEALS meeting also marks an important transition for the movement. Since SEALS was founded in 1990 it has been an informal movement, with no ongoing organisation. Over time, problems have arisen with the coordination of annual meetings. With this in mind, this year’s meeting has begun the process of formalising the Society, including the election of an executive (Kitima Indrambarya - Kasetsart, Mathis Jenny - Zurich, Paul Sidwell - ANU).

SEALS has also stepped up its public profile: in addition to the regular website, we now have a Facebook page and a LinkedIn group. We also created a SEALS Archivist position (Elisabeth Ginsburg - SOAS) to ensure that the fullest possible collection of SEALS papers, handouts and other documentation will be available online.

Finally, thanks to Aj. Kitima Indrambarya and her staff at Kasetsart University for the excellent meeting.

Nick Evans' recent travels

Nick Evans gave a plenary address in Lyon at the AFLICO conference (the French Cognitive Linguistics Association), on the topic of ‘Grammatical Diversity and Social Cognition’. On the way over he broke his journey in India to visit Aung Si at his field site in the B-R Hills, and was sorely struck by the rampant lantana choking the jungle’s undergrowth – a sad vegetational metaphor for the concurrent loss of linguistic knowledge facing the Solega as they face increasing difficulties maintaining their traditional ties with the forest and its ecology.

He also used the opportunity of being in Europe to visit Hannover with old friend and Coombs denizen Nikolaus Himmelmann in order to plan the wrap-up conference of the Volkswagen-stiftung-supported DoBeS program, to be held in Hannover in June 2013.
Fieldwork updates

Several of us are fleeing the Canberra winter to carry out fieldwork during June:

Piers Kelly is heading back to Bohol in the Philippines for one last short stint of fieldwork.

Fanny Cottet heads back to the Onin peninsula to continue her work on Mbaham.

Rob Mailhammer is going to Croker Island to work on Amurdak from June 6-21. Back from the field, he'll do some research on the history of Amurdak and connections to other Iwaidjan languages in preparation for a talk at the International Conference on Historical Linguistics in Osaka, Japan (25-30 August), where he is organising a workshop on etymology and reconstruction in the languages of Australia and the Pacific together with Harold Koch (ANU). In addition, he'll give a talk on the historical dimension on language description.

Greg Dickson is continuing fieldwork on Marra and Kriol in the Northern Territory, happily using up ELDP grant funds to pay Marra elders who not only provide him with translations of Marra texts but also choose to write full transcriptions themselves (see left). Maïa Ponsonnet is also carrying out ELDP-funded fieldwork in the Northern Territory, continuing her work on Dalabon.

Awesome – there were free cocktails and a DJ. For those who missed the fun, Piers will present a summary of his research for the Philippine Studies Group in July.

Greg Dickson gave a presentation entitled ‘An update on kinterms in Roper River Kriol’ at the Top End Linguistics Circle meeting at Charles Darwin University (Darwin) on June 2.

Piers Kelly gave a seminar on Eskaya literature as part of the CAP Anthropology seminar series. It was totally awesome – there were free cocktails and a DJ. For those who missed the fun, Piers will present a summary of his research for the Philippine Studies Group in July.


Modality workshop at Langfest: call for abstracts

Abstract submissions for the workshop ‘Modality in the Indigenous languages of Australia and PNG’, to be held during the ALS conference in December, are invited until 23rd June. The conveners Patrick Caudal (C.N.R.S./Université Paris Diderot–Paris 7/UWA), Tom Honeyman and Stef Spronck have received overwhelming interest in the workshop, but more abstracts are welcome.

The workshop will specifically address the problems of ‘discovering’ modal categories, for example: how to discuss modality in the field. Secondly, the workshop will tackle the problem of the theoretical/typological identification and study of modal forms. Although the focus of the workshop is on languages from Australia and Papua New Guinea, more typologically and methodologically/theoretically oriented papers are also invited.

Contact Tom or Stef for more information or visit the workshop’s website.

Presentations and publications

Bruce Birch who is working on the DoBeS-funded Iwaidja Documentation Project continues his excellent work on Croker Island, Northern Territory. He has recently published two subtitled videos online: Khaki Marrala’s oral history about the hanging of Warndi-warndi and Joy Williams preparing stingray.

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Chuck Grimes also appears in the latest in the Typological...
The Asia-Pacific is the most complex and varied linguistic landscape in the world, with three thousand of the world’s 7,000 languages. Many are endangered and in coming decades the region is confronting an epochal narrowing of the human knowledge base through language loss. Linguistics in the College of Asia and the Pacific promotes the study of this linguistic diversity in its fullest sense, including documentation and description – producing grammars, dictionaries and collections of textual materials, usually from on-site fieldwork – work that is equally important for small speech communities themselves. Minority languages researched in the department cover sites ranging from Vanuatu, New Caledonia, PNG, Australia, Indonesia, Timor Leste, the Philippines, Taiwan, India and Japan. Other research focuses on national languages of the region, such as Japanese and Indonesian.

Our postgraduate training aims to produce descriptive linguists of the highest quality. We teach into all levels, including undergraduate courses in Japanese, Indonesian, Linguistics and Pacific Studies, Master’s Courses in Linguistics and Applied Japanese Linguistics, and advanced doctoral training. We co-host Paradisec, a digital archive dedicated to recordings of languages and cultures of the Pacific. We also publish the monograph series Pacific Linguistics, which has produced over 600 publications.

## Coming up...

The series of seminars, workshops and conferences continues throughout June and beyond. All held in Seminar Room B, Coombs building (unless otherwise specified), they include:

**June 17** (11:00am-12:30pm): Thesis Proposal Review - Niko Kobepa

**June 22** (9:45-10:45am): Contact induced change and the history of Torau - Bethwyn Evans

**June 22** (11:00am-12:00pm): Evidentiality, Mirativity and Epistemic Modality in Kurtöp - Gwendolyn Heslop

**June 23** (9:45-10:45am): The languages of Temotu: what we know, what it means, and what comes next - Åshild Næs

**June 23** (11:00am-12:00pm): Parallel lines meeting on the Boloven Plateau - Paul Sidwell

**June 23** (1:30-2:30pm): Contact and isolation: variation in the languages of the Cook Islands - Rachel Hendery

**June 23** (2:45-3:45pm): HD-Linguistics: The Historical Dimension of language description - Robert Mailhammer

*(Note: all seminars on June 23 held in Hedley Bull 3 Seminar room)*

**July 15** (3:30-5:00pm): Pama-Nyungan subgrouping - Claire Bowern

**August 12** (3:30-5:00pm): Writing Thai/Lao/Khmer Gender Histories from language sources - Peter Jackson

**August 19** (3:30-5:00pm): Language Documentation in a time of Truth and Reconciliation – Deborah Hill (University of Canberra)

**August 26** (3:30-5:00pm): Men harp on the same string? Variability and Consistency in the Idiosyncratic Selection of Fillers in Japanese Monologues: Gender Differences – Shunichi Ishihara

**September 30** (3:30-5:00pm): Writing TBA - Rupert Stasch

**October 20-23**: International Workshop on the Languages of Vanuatu (Kiooloa ANU Coastal Campus).

**November 18** (11:00am-12:30pm): The vocabulary of emotions in Dalabon: an overview – Maïa Ponsonnet