

7. Easter Island Cultural and Linguistic Heritage Project: Creating a Digital Archive for Rapa Nui Oral and Video Histories.

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Abstract

This project aims to help establish a digital archive of oral and video histories of the Rapa Nui community, which has lived through very rapid and pronounced social and linguistic changes over the last century and particularly since the establishment of Chilean civil administration and regular air travel forty years ago. By documenting and recording the history of this community through personal narratives, the project will contribute to the community's efforts to preserve and maintain its threatened language and social memory. The personal narratives of those now living on the island will recollect a broad spectrum of experiences such as life under the Easter Island Exploitation Company (1895~1953) when the islanders were confined to the village of Hanga Roa and many were still monolingual speakers. Other narratives might recount the political revolt which led to the arrival of the civil administration and the opening of the island to the world in the mid 1960s, or the islanders' experiences of subsequent social changes in daily life. With the community's support, timely efforts to record and preserve these narratives will contribute to the revitalization of the Rapa Nui language, and the preservation of personal voices which give expressions to this language for future generations to hear and see.