

One Dictionary, One Language, One Team, but Working at Different Locations or on Different Computers? The Problem of Version Control and File Management— Turning Chaos into Quality

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The increased availability of laptops and other personal computers, along with readily available dictionary software like Shoebox (and its direct descendant Toolbox), have made it feasible to work on dictionaries of minority languages as teams (rather than as a scholar with one or more assistants), to work on multiple computers, even to work in multiple locations. This is on the increase as foreign scholars become more aware of the advantages and very real possibilities of training mother-tongue speakers of languages to take more active role(s) in compiling dictionaries.

However, as there are more attempts to work successfully as a team in this way, I am getting fairly consistent reports from around the world of frustration, mangled data, and chaos.

This paper identifies some of the common problem areas, and discusses some solutions that have been tested and shown to work in typical situations.

It discusses how to manage information and files when there is a team working in different locations, or on different computers. It describes some fairly simple procedures and safeguards for how to keep things from getting out of control.