however, may be a simple but weatherproof handheld device, as these allow greater flexibility for recording both specific points (e.g. a field recording site) and track information. For transferring data to the computer, models that connect via USB rather than the older serial port are much more convenient.

p. 51

1.6 Summary

The topic of recording techniques and related equipment is complex. The disadvantage of the tremendous technological advances that are being made is that it is seemingly impossible to assess all the available choices between different devices. When it comes to buying equipment, our general advice is to ask fellow researchers (in person or via email lists like RNLD) for their suggestions on specific items. We advocate the use of video recorders as the basic recording device because it makes for a richer documentation. Where this is not appropriate or possible, a high-quality solid-state audio recorder should be the standard. Smaller recorders are also good as go-everywhere pieces, as are small devices with at least limited video capability. In general, external microphones should be the first choice for recordings.

Buy the best equipment you can afford and learn how to use and maintain it at a basic level. At the very least you should know how to adjust audio levels and, for video, to make manual adjustments to exposure and focus. You must also be able to keep the power supply going. Beyond that, you should be able to assess the nature of a recording situation and identify potential problems with noise and lighting so that you can then make the best of it by adjusting settings and arranging the recording setup with a minimum of fuss.

The goal of good-quality recordings is complicated by the many environmental and human variables one must consider. The aim is simply to achieve the best recording quality under the circumstances, not to emulate broadcast standards, and naturally considerations of content (what you record) should take precedence over those of technique (how you record it) as long as you obtain a decent audio quality. In terms of what to record, variety is good—the broader the range of recordings, the richer will be the documentation of the language and culture.

1.7 Where to Find More Information

We do not supply links here to individual technical equipment. What follows is an eclectic list of sites that people have found useful.

http://www.i.nl/DOBES/audio-video

Dokumentation Bedrohter Sprachen/Documentation of Endangered Languages: audio and video-related information.

p. 52

http://www.rnld.org

Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity: the email list includes field recording topics which are summarized in the FAQ pages on the website.

http://bartus.org/akustyk

Bartek Plichta's audio resource which includes his vowel analysis software, equipment reviews, and field recording advice.

http://transom.org

Includes postings about audio recording techniques and tools.