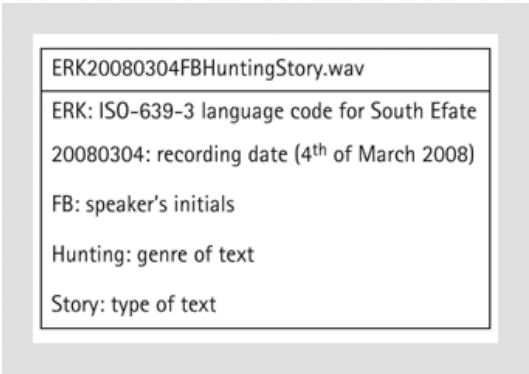


You may be tempted to use the default file names assigned by your equipment; for example, your digital recorder may name files with something like STE-001, and your camera may assign names like IMG_0086. As a first step, you can always make note of the default name in your notebook, but be sure to rename it and record the correct metadata to them as soon as you can. These default file names may not be unique, especially if you are using multiple recording devices or if your device recycles file names upon download.¹⁴

Figure 4.4.



Example of semantic file naming.

There are several strategies you can choose from when you are deciding on your file naming convention. Some people prefer semantic file names, which carry a great deal of information, as in Fig. 4.4. The file name, shown in the top line, includes several meaningful chunks, including a language code, the date of recording, the speaker's initials, and a brief description of the contents. One advantage of this system is obvious: you can easily see basic information as you look through your directory of files. Another advantage is that your computer will sort your files depending on how you order the information in the file name (in this case, by language first, then by recording date, then by speaker). A disadvantage of this strategy is that the names are rather long and can be difficult to read. Another disadvantage is that this system may not coincide with your archive's naming system. When you deposit your files you will need to assign each file an archive-appropriate name. This strategy for file naming is also a bit redundant: all the information contained in the file name will also be repeated in separate fields in your metadata catalogue. Nevertheless this system is useful for browsing your directories.

Another approach is to include most metadata only in your catalogue, and assign relatively simple unique file names that include only a minimum of meaningful information. An example would be 2011001.wav, for the first recording made in 2011. This approach is easier to read and a bit less redundant in terms of record-keeping, but the file name may still need to be converted for deposit in an archive.

A third approach is to simply adopt the file naming convention that your archive requires, for example ALB01-001-A.wav for an item held in PARADISEC. This file name carries little meaningful information beyond the depositor's initials and the order of creation, but it is the least redundant method and will require no conversion upon deposit.

In the end, the choice of a naming convention is up to your preferences, but consistency is key and, more importantly, a file's name must be permanent once it is assigned. Take care with hyphens and underscores (and other non-alphanumeric characters), as these may be 'reserved' characters in some archives and will need to be converted later. To ensure the greatest legibility and persistence of your file names it is still best to use ASCII characters, although Unicode may become more acceptable in the near future. Be consistent in using upper and lower case—for some computer systems upper- and lower-case characters are treated equally, but in others they are not.