Ethnologue Global Collaboration Project

Call for Ethnologue Field Contributors

SIL International has launched a project to recruit a network of proactive field contributors for the Ethnologue. Each contributor will take on a portfolio of languages to monitor (for instance, all the languages in a particular country—or just part of a country when the country has hundreds of languages). We are now recruiting for this cadre of contributors. This is not a full-time job, nor even a part-time job. It is more like a Key Result Area in a person's PRD which shapes how they go about their main job. Nor does it entail the obligation to track down every missing bit of data, but only the commitment to help us keep improving the quality of the data. Here is a description of what is involved in the contributor role:

Qualifications

The following are the qualifications for working in this role:

- Knowledge of and experience in the country or region or language family which will constitute the contributor's portfolio
- General familiarity with the major concepts of language ecology and language development
- Interest in monitoring the "linguistic landscape" of your portfolio, including demographics, country language policy, language vitality, language use and attitudes, language development status, writing systems, linguistic typology, etc.
- Willingness to network with others who can provide the above kinds of information
- Basic computer skills

Key Activities and Results

For many, the activities required of an Ethnologue contributor are those in which you already engage. Enlisting as a Field Contributor will provide you with an easier way to share the results of your experience, and ongoing knowledge gathering with the Ethnologue editors. Field Contributors receive special recognition in the Ethnologue publications and you can include the role and title in your CV.

Observe

As a Field Contributor, you will always have your eyes and ears open for changes in the situation of the languages in your portfolio. When you meet people who speak one of the languages or who have recently visited the language area, you will naturally gravitate toward asking them a few questions about the language situation.

Research

Based on the Ethnologue's own internal metrics on the completeness and quality of language entries, you will get a custom report identifying the data points within your portfolio that need special attention (such as key fields that are missing or reported data that is more than a generation old). That report serves as an agenda for what needs improving in the contributor's portfolio.

Update

After making an observation or doing some needed research, you will be able to access the Ethnologue database directly via a web browser and update the appropriate fields. Your updates will be marked as pending until they are reviewed for consistency with editorial policies by the Ethnologue editorial team and then accepted to become part of the next released edition.

Collaborate

Where you do not have access to the needed data or where there are other Field Contributors with overlapping portfolios, you can collaborate with others (including the Ethnologue editorial team) to develop an acceptable update proposal. For example, information about a language classification could be updated in collaboration with the Ethnologue's classification editors, or the identification of a writing system might require consultation with the Ethnologue's scripts editor.

Review

Once every three years, the Ethnologue performs a systematic review of all the information in the database. When this comes due for your area, you will be asked to carefully review every language entry in your portfolio and make updates as needed.

Training and Tools

As a Field Contributor you will be supported through the following training and tools:

Background Knowledge

The major concepts of language ecology and language development are explained in the new book *Sustaining Language Use: Perspectives on Community-Based Language Development,* by Ethnologue editors Paul Lewis and Gary Simons (see http://leanpub.com/sustaininglanguageuse). If you agree to serve as a Field Contributor, you will receive a free copy of this e-book.

Contributor Training

You will attend a 3-5 day training event with other new Field Contributors to learn how the Ethnologue database is organized, exactly what information we are looking for in each database field, and how to use the web-based user interface and its associated documentation. We have received funding from the Tyndale Foundation to cover all of your expenses with respect to this training.

Online Editor

Key to this strategy of siting the contribution of Ethnologue data in the field is the development of a forms-based editor that will allow Field Contributors to use a Web browser to contribute their updates directly to the Ethnologue database. The online user interface is linked to a growing corpus of documentation about the editor itself and about every field in the database.

Ongoing Support

The Ethnologue editorial team will provide you with ongoing technical and editorial support. Since the Ethnologue database is not static but is regularly being expanded or refined, the addition of new data categories to the database will require additional description and explanation.

Opportunities for Sharing and Collaboration

It is expected that the corps of Field Contributors will develop into an interactive Community of Practice in which participants share insights with each other and assist each other in addressing issues that arise. This will happen largely through the wiki space that houses the documentation on every field of the database. We also anticipate that there will be opportunities for you to serve (and be recognized) as the editor for publications focused on your portfolio. Where possible, you may also be able to serve as a liaison with local scholars and facilitate collaborative research.

Call for Participation

We are now recruiting for this cadre of new contributors. If you would like to be a Field Contributor, would like more information, or if you can tell us of people who would be good candidates, please send us email at Editor_Ethnologue@sil.org.