The arrogance of ethnography: Managing anthropological research knowledge

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Abstract: The ethnographic method is a core feature of anthropological practice. This locally intensive research enables insight into local praxis and culturally relative practices that would otherwise not be possible. Indeed, empathetic engagement is only possible in this close and intimate encounter. However, this paper argues that this method can also provide the practitioner with a false sense of his or her own knowing and expertise and, indeed, with arrogance. And the boundaries between the anthropologist as knowledge sink — cultural translator and interpreter — and the knowledge of the local knowledge owners can become opaque. Globalisation and the knowledge ‘commons’, exemplified by Google, also highlight the increasing complexities in this area of the governance and ownership of knowledge. Our stronghold of working in remote areas and/or with marginalised groups places us at the forefront of negotiating the multiple new technological knowledge spaces that are opening up in the form of Indigenous websites and knowledge centres in these areas. Anthropology is not immune from the increasing awareness of the limitations and risks of the intellectual property regime for protecting or managing Indigenous knowledge. The relevance of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in opening up a ‘rights-based’ discourse, especially in the area of knowledge ownership, brings these issues to the fore. For anthropology to remain relevant, we have to engage locally with these global discourses. This paper begins to traverse some of this ground.

Introduction
Social anthropology is operating in a broader range of research contexts than ever before, while the attraction to, and interest in, Indigenous knowledge (or “Traditional Knowledge”1 (TK) as it is often known outside of anthropology) is growing substantially. This is especially so in the applied fields of natural resource and environmental management, where there is a growing awareness that cultural diversity is intimately linked with biological diversity. Large organisations like the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) are now employing dozens of social scientists — including social anthropologists — when only ten years ago this was a rarity. There is also an increasing awareness of the commercial value of Indigenous knowledge to research institutions and the risks to reputation, research grants and publishing when benefit sharing is not negotiated (see Wynberg et al. 2009). The coupling of this increased interest in Indigenous knowledge with the fact that knowledge generated from all research is part of the ‘knowledge market’ has, I believe, created a significant shift in our responsibilities as researchers to Indigenous research participants.
In this paper I explore this issue from my own experience in developing a range of ethical research tools for research organisations and how this has changed my own research practice and perceptions of what ‘best practice’ can be. I start with the assumption that the ethnographic method is able to offer unique insight into local realities and the rich praxis of daily life, and that anthropologists are acutely aware of the need to make research partners of their Indigenous collaborators while in the field. A key reason for this, as Michael Jackson (1995:119) has observed, is that ‘the social not only defines the field of anthropology; it is the ground of its very possibility…its project unfolds within the universal constraints of hospitality…’ So, at the least, on a pragmatic level various forms of collaboration are standard practice while in the field. This paper argues that this collaboration needs to continue when we return to our offices and institutions, and discusses a range of ways we can do this by engaging with, and critiquing, the intellectual property system. And a far deeper and more authentic collaboration is likely to develop if we take such an approach.

My concern in this paper is thus not with the anthropological research method per se, but rather with the ways in which we manage this research knowledge once it becomes data; that is, once it is in tangible form. Once knowledge (about Dreamings, songs, bush medicines and so on) is transformed in this way it gains a different value as it enters into a less negotiated space. The ‘expertise’ of the researcher as knowledge transcriber is transformative; knowledge becomes arranged into factual data, losing its contingent and partial nature. It gains a different potency that tends to favour the transcriber. This process is especially apparent within the accepted academic process of mobilising knowledge through publications. It seems to me that there are several reasons why this form of knowledge mobilisation is ethically blurry, and increasingly so. The first is that our readership has changed to not only include Indigenous research collaborators who increasingly have access to research products via the internet and expect research outputs they can utilise (and this can present its own issues), but so, too, we increasingly have ‘industry partners’ — who are likely our funders — who also have expectations. Our industry partners and funding bodies tend to expect ‘ownership’ of the research products via the intellectual property system. And this ‘ownership’ can include an assumption of entitlement to use in new processes or products (including research products such as workshop seminars, presentations, publications) from which commercial returns may result and from which the knowledge holders may have no attribution, reputational or monetary benefit. The other associated issue is the digitisation of research products and, as Kim Christen has referred to it, ‘the politics of search’, in which Google and the knowledge commons — where ‘information wants to be free’ — has emerged as ‘the dominant information management paradigm’ (Barlow in Christen 2007:4). This paradigm does not acknowledge Indigenous knowledge management systems and protocols that tend to be complex, particularised and situated. There may be a complex mix of ‘hierarchically’ organised knowledge, together with more ‘egalitarian’ modalities (see Agrawal 2002a, 2002b; Michaels 1985).

Knowledge as commodity
That knowledge has become the most significant form of global capitalism is captured by the concept of ‘knowledge capitalism’ — where universities operate as entrepreneurial entities and knowledge has become commoditised (see Thornton 2009:21). As Thornton argues, the main incentive for conducting research in the first place is the income-generating capacity of the research and its value to end-users, rather than the pursuit of ideas or curiosity (Thornton 2009). Competitive bidding for money to undertake research enables governments to create a culture of compliance among academics. Australian Research Council linkage grants and Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) also work on this model. As the government seeks to pass the cost of research on to end-users, linkage grants and collaborative research with industry is increasingly the norm (see Thornton 2009:23). There is no room for naivety in this changed knowledge landscape and it seems to me that researchers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) need to play an active role in the governance of research knowledge.

Over the past several years I have been engaged by the Desert Knowledge CRC (DKCRC), the Natural Resource Management Board of the...
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Northern Territory (NRMB NT) and CSIRO to develop a range of ethical research management tools. These resources include an Aboriginal knowledge and intellectual property protocol for the DKCRC (2008a) and other associated ethical research tools3 (see DKCRC 2009; Orr et al. 2009). The resources for the NRMB NT include Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Natural Resources in the Northern Territory: Guidelines for Indigenous ecological knowledge management (Holcombe 2009).4 (See also Holcombe and Gould this volume for a case study of these resources among others.) The work with CSIRO is ongoing in 2010.

As mentioned, many of the research methods advocated in the tools developed, such as relationship building, collaborative research and negotiating benefit sharing, are familiar and, indeed, I assume, pretty much standard practice for most anthropologists (nevertheless, see for instance Fluehr-Lobban 1994, 2003).

However, in the process of developing the resources it has become increasingly clear to me that the ethical management of Indigenous knowledge and intellectual property (IP) in research is not an area in which most anthropologists do any better than any other social scientists, though there are significant exceptions that I am aware of. This general lack of accounting for the management of IP is, however, also apparent in the Australian Anthropology Society Code of Ethics (AAS 2003) and to a lesser extent in the AIATSIS (2000) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies. The AIATSIS guidelines are currently being updated to reflect developments in Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property5 rights and the impact of digitisation since the last review in the late 1990s (see Davis, this volume).

I suggest that the Australian Anthropology Society Code of Ethics could do the same, as currently the only section that touches on managing IP is section 3.7, ‘Due acknowledgement’, and this states, somewhat weakly, that ‘research participants may have contractual and/or legal interests and rights in data, recordings and publications, although rights will vary according to agreements and legal jurisdiction’ (AAS 2003:3). Notwithstanding specific research agreements that individual researchers may have with their Indigenous co-researchers or Indigenous representative bodies, which tend to have clauses specifying where IP vests, the fact is that Indigenous people do have legal rights and interests in their own knowledge and in its production and its dissemination. However, the big stick of legal agreements should not be necessary to realise these rights.

Managing copyright in the intercultural sphere

A consideration of the concept of the ‘intercultural’ here aids in interrogating the problematic space of knowledge transformation discussed earlier: what happens in the final step after oral knowledge is transformed to tangible data and becomes research product? For the purposes of this paper the ‘intercultural’ concept describes the space where contemporary cultural practice is negotiated, so that the notion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous domains is generally accepted as passé (see Hinkson and Smith 2005). The concept recognises the legitimate emergence of culture at the interface of Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions. Thus, it seems ironic to this anthropologist, as we theoretically and practically engage with this concept, that this approach does not transfer to the way in which research products are managed. Rather, the anthropological management of research data and the resulting research products tend to speak to separate domains, as this data is quickly demarcated as the private property of the anthropologist and/or the anthropologist’s institution. There appears to be a general assumption that Indigenous peoples — supposed research collaborators — should not be concerned with this next stage of academic and legal process. Of course, in some cases, they may not be interested, but I suggest that there are many instances when such collaborative possibilities are simply not raised and for the purposes of this paper this issue goes to the heart of the arrogance of the ethnographic method.

Interestingly, although we don’t tend to use the term ‘informant’ today — generally regarding this as derogatory — this is effectively what the Indigenous knowledge holder is reduced to when knowledge becomes the property of the researcher via the legal system in which we are embedded. Or, that is, a representation of this knowledge becomes fixed in ‘publication time’. So, while the
language may have shifted, the substantive effect continues. It is at this point, when we enter the realm of the IP system, that our contested and at times opposing epistemologies and value systems come into play.

Nonetheless, I suspect some readers may be thinking ‘I wrote the thesis, journal article, book, report and so on...it’s not only my effort, but my interpretation, so my rights over the final knowledge production should be owed primary recognition’. Or, at the least, very little thought is put into the issue — ‘it’s simply the way the legal system works’. It seems to me that both reasons are inadequate because, as anthropologists, I argue that we should be critiquing this privatisation of knowledge and the fundamental inequity that accompanies it, not least because of its colonial roots (see Maffie 2008; Nakata 2007; Tuhiai Smith 2003). I will return to this issue and the relative incommensurabilities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge management later in the paper. First I consider the range of ways in which our Indigenous collaborators can be recognised for their intellectual input and the concept of the intercultural can also be realised in this space of intellectual property.

The areas of IP management I refer to are copyright over written materials and the associated issues of attribution. Attribution or acknowledgment can occur in a range of ways — most commonly at the front of a text or the end of an article. Although for some, or even many, anthropologists it is standard practice to include a list of Indigenous co-researchers in published papers or theses, there are also many who do not. In 2008 I thumbed through a recently examined PhD monograph in the supervisor’s office. In my flick through, I noticed that the field site was a place I was very familiar with, having worked there as an applied anthropologist over several years. I also noticed that in the acknowledgments I would not be discovering who the student had worked with as they were described as ‘the mob’. Although there were exhaustive acknowledgments of the range of non-Indigenous expertise, not one Aboriginal person was listed. As I continued my flick through, this anonymity of all ‘informants’ was explained as being for ‘political reasons’.

My understanding of this community was that its members were very experienced in the ways of research via several land claims under various Acts, having already serviced several other PhDs in anthropology and linguistics, and through maintaining a language centre and associated formally trained local linguists. I also would have thought that if the content was that politically sensitive, then the student should not have been writing about it. I found the arrogance of this approach repulsive, as the work and effort put into this thesis by the knowledge holders was effectively rendered invisible. When I raised this issue with the supervisor, he commented that none of the examiners had mentioned it as a problem. Was I just being uptight? During the many workshops held with Aboriginal people to develop the ethics resources mentioned earlier, this issue of due credit and attribution emerged very strongly and it was argued that anonymity is increasingly going out of vogue. Attribution is, after all, about acknowledging where a story originates (Janke 2009a:12) — its provenance.

As Kim Christen has noted in her recent text Aboriginal Business: Alliances in a remote Australia town, which is based on research in Tennant Creek, ‘naming and recognition are central to both Warumungu sociality and academic citation practices’ (Christen 2009:preface). She names the 26 Aboriginal people she worked closely with, only omitting those who chose to remain anonymous. It seems to me that attributing or acknowledging the knowledge holders up front is the least the writer can do. There are also other ways in which individuals as knowledge holders can be recognised within a text, and this brings us to copyright.

Currently, the standard model of written copyright ownership is that copyright is automatically held by the person (researcher) who puts pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. This is unlike other types of IP, such as patents, trademarks and designs, which need to be registered. So once researchers make knowledge tangible by writing it down, they effectively own that knowledge; it becomes their property and, within the context of IP law, the Indigenous people who imparted it lose all rights over it. The authors are the only people now cited as that knowledge holder; any royalties go to them or those they have assigned and they hold the moral rights for false attribution and right of integrity (Janke 2009a:5). In 2003
a draft Indigenous Communal Moral Rights Bill proposed amendments which would give moral rights to Indigenous groups — but it still has not been tabled in parliament. And Janke suggests that it is unlikely to proceed until the government sets its direction on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights (Janke 2009a:12). I will return to this issue later in the paper.

A common model of copyright management for academics is assignment of copyright to the publisher — especially journals — while the funding body (unless otherwise negotiated) gains the copyright and the associated royalties that may flow from CAL — Copyright Agency Limited. However, these rights have to be assigned. Meantime, there is an increasing practice of co-authorship and co-sharing of copyright. The text *Cleared Out: First contact in the Western Desert* (Davenport et al. 2005) seems to me an exemplar collaboration with shared copyright between the three co-authors — with the royalties going to the Martu. This may not be a straightforward option for most academic publications as anthropology is a diverse discipline and we write about an eclectic range of issues using many different writing techniques and of course there is the issue of perspective. However, the argument that co-authorship and/or shared copyright is not an option because we tend to work in remote areas with people who have little interest in these things, partly because English is one of several languages, is becoming tenuous at best. Technologically these places are fast becoming radically less remote, with the development of knowledge centres and digital archives and a drive for repatriation of research materials. In practice, the ‘best practice’ models can give Indigenous collaborators choice in precisely what will be published, attributed and shared in the commercial and reputational benefits of publication.

One of the Australian researchers at the forefront in this field of digital innovation and Indigenous knowledge is Michael Christie (Charles Darwin University). See Christie’s contribution in this volume for a discussion of his current collaborative project: ‘Teaching from Country: ICTs for Remote Indigenous Knowledge Authorities as Tertiary Educators’.

The digital knowledge economy is now active in great swathes of the Western Desert through Ara Irititja (a travelling archive). The Northern Territory library service is active in more than 21 communities with the development of local knowledge centres and associated training and support, while other independent art and culture centres are developing their own interactive archives — such as the Mukurtu Archive in Tennant Creek, where, as Christen (2008:23) notes, preservation becomes ‘a type of cultural production’. These significant changes in only the past ten years, and the obvious implication is that the production of knowledge is increasingly complex and occurring across a diverse range of mediums.

However, in the meantime it still seems to be standard practice for ethnographies to represent Indigenous knowledge, such as Dreaming (*Tjukurpa*), as narratives or to transcribe songs in texts that are then analysed for their cultural and social meanings with minimal or no attribution. In my 1998 PhD I followed the practice of most social anthropologists in not specifically attributing the storyteller or the group with knowledge rights — as the knowledge holders. However, in the thesis — notably in the methodology — I was reflective about how I was managed as a researcher as my collaborators made active choices about what to reveal, but I would realise and interrogate this co-production of knowledge differently today. Likewise, I did not recognise the limitations of conventional copyright laws. As Janke (2009b:13) notes, ‘why should Indigenous people have to rely on creative lawyers using inadequate laws to protect their Cultural and Intellectual Property’. One of the obvious limitations is that the Copyright Act does not recognise communal or shared knowledge — an individual or organisation needs to be attributed. However, there are several ways to manage this and Indigenous authors are, I think, at the forefront in doing so. Senior Arrernte woman Veronica Dobson, in her recent text *Arrernte Traditional Healing*, allocated copyright in three ways:

© in traditional knowledge: The Arrernte people

© in compilation: Veronica Perrurle Dobson 2007

© in photographs: Barry MacDonald, or as indicated in captions (Dobson 2007).
Another recent text, *Angka Akatyerr-akert: A desert raisin report* published by the DKCRC, also shared copyright several ways. It notes that the report is to be cited as Alyawarr speakers from Ampilatwatja, Fiona Walsh and Josie Douglas (2009:ii), while the case of allocating copyright is as follows:

Copyright held by individual storytellers, individual photographers and their organisations.

Copyright in research and compilation: Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre.

Thus, the issue is not that communal rights cannot be attributed but that there also have to be avenues for CAL payments to be made and that if copyright is infringed, the copyright holder has the potential to manage the legal liability. By all accounts, however, it is rare for a copyright-holding author to have to manage such legal issues, so this is not a reason to not seek copyright.

Janke (as an IP lawyer) states that researchers who hold copyright also hold a fiduciary duty to safeguard the integrity of the knowledge encompassed by it. This could entail displaying a ‘Traditional Knowledge Notice’ in conjunction with any copyright.10 Such a notice can appear with specific content within a text or at the front of the text near the copyright notice. It can be limited — which requires seeking permission from knowledge holders for use — or it can be unlimited — within educational contexts for instance — with attribution (see Janke 2009a, 2009c). It seems to me that involving the Indigenous knowledge holders we work with in the decision making about such knowledge notices and other forms of IP management is an essential part of an ethical knowledge governance model.

So, if the copyright is not shared — as above — then other mechanisms such as displaying a ‘TK Notice’ should be used in conjunction with any copyright. Such notices have been used in relation to texts on Indigenous plant knowledge where there are obvious sections on TK. Within a text a notice is inserted at the front near the copyright notice, which might read ‘Traditional knowledge notice’, ‘Aboriginal knowledge notice’ or ‘Indigenous cosmology notice’. An example of a notice that could be used in a published book that contained TK is as follows:

The language and information contained in this book includes traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of the [name of Indigenous group].

The information should not be used without observing the Indigenous cultural protocols of attribution to the group/community.

Or a more specific notice could be included alongside a transcribed piece of knowledge recognising that it should not be quoted without specific attribution of the person or group who gave that knowledge — a more limited licence and the need to return for consent to use. As Janke (2009a:15) states, ‘notices included in published documents and on websites put the users of the content on notice that any traditional knowledge should not be used, adapted or commercialised without the free prior informed consent of the relevant traditional custodians’ or at least without attributing it to them, rather than a sole non-Indigenous author, for instance.

I am not aware of any social anthropologists who have used such notices — or tailored their own — within published texts, but I am keen to be corrected. However, innovative management of IP is being done within digital mediums at the local knowledge centre level with community websites. Some good examples can be found through the work of anthropologists such as John Bradley with the Yanyuwa11 and Kim Christen with the Warumungu. Christen, in particular, has critically engaged with the challenges that the IP system and the digital medium pose to Warumungu knowledge management protocols and has assisted them in developing their own — in a form of ‘remix’ (Christen 2005:315). Such innovative and ethical management of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property realises that the IP system was developed for modern Western science and the neoliberal politic of knowledge as a commodity on the free market. Table 1 outlines these differences — albeit in an essentialised way.

**Contesting epistemologies**

The growing awareness that the IP system represents a relatively incommensurable knowledge
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Table 1: Indigenous notions of cultural and intellectual property versus non-Indigenous notions of intellectual property (adapted from Janke 1998:75 originally, followed by DKCRC 2008b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Indigenous</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written knowledge</td>
<td>Generally orally transmitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on economic rights (the economic value of knowledge)</td>
<td>Emphasis on preservation and maintenance of culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individually based — created by individuals</td>
<td>Socially based — created through the generations via local cultural transmission processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property rights are owned by individual creators or their employees and research companies</td>
<td>Communally owned but often custodians are authorised to use and disseminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property can be freely transmitted and assigned — usually for economic returns — for a set time, in any medium and in any territory</td>
<td>Generally not transferable, but transmission, when allowed, is based on a series of cultural qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property rights holders can decide how or by whom the information can be transmitted, transferred or assigned</td>
<td>There are often restrictions on how transmission can occur, particularly in relation to sacred or secret material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property rights are generally compartmentalised into categories such as tangible, intangible, arts and cultural expression</td>
<td>A holistic approach, by which all aspects of cultural heritage are interrelated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

paradigm that results in inequitable outcomes when transferred to use for Indigenous knowledge protection or defence is gaining ground internationally. WIPO — the World Intellectual Property Organization — established an inter-governmental committee on IP and genetic resources, Traditional Knowledge and folklore to provide a forum to consider the relationship between IP law and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge — or ITK.12 It has developed draft provisions relating to the protection of ITK. However, there is a perception that the pre-eminent role of WIPO has led to the debate occurring within the parameters of IP law. As such, in 2007 the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues called for submissions to consider whether there ought to be a shift in the focus of protection of ITK away from IP law to protection via Customary Law (Dodson 2007). Both international bodies are now investigating the possible development of an international sui generis13 legal system — some sort of instrument such as a treaty — that would recognise that ITK is not simply a different type of IP but, rather, a completely different entity (see also Drahos 2004). It is not for this paper to critique the false dichotomy suggested by this notion of a discrete set of laws to service a discrete knowledge system; nevertheless, it is useful to reflect on the fact that the IP system was developed to manage a certain type of knowledge — modern Western science. What it doesn’t appear to take into account is the intercultural reality of contemporary knowledge transfer and the ‘remix’ that this activity results in, which has been touched on here.

Nevertheless, some important international instruments are emerging to counter the hegemony of the Western knowledge paradigm and all that this has entailed. One of these is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was endorsed in 2008 by the Australian Government. Although the Declaration is not a legally binding instrument, it speaks to this current debate and introduces core concepts that ratifying states have a reputational responsibility to introduce into policy, if not law. Of particular relevance here are Articles 31 (1) and 31 (2) within the Declaration. Article 31(1) states in part that:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the
manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of flora and fauna, oral traditions, literatures, designs...They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions.

Article 31 (2) states that ‘In conjunction with Indigenous peoples states shall take effective measures to recognise and protect the exercise of these rights’.

In two submissions (Holcombe et al. 2009a, 2009b) to the Commonwealth Government in relation to a review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2020, Holcombe, Rimmer and Janke argued that the government needs to set a direction on Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights because there are ‘currently no regulatory mechanisms, laws or policies that specifically provide rights to Indigenous peoples over their Indigenous knowledge and intellectual property’ (Holcombe et al. 2009b:2). As such, it is up to researchers, on a case by case basis, to ensure that the Indigenous peoples they work with are recognised as co-producers of knowledge within the IP regime. This is because universities and other funding bodies who are keen to ensure access to potential IP and commercial benefit are not likely to.

Conclusion

This paper argues that anthropology should be at the forefront in this knowledge governance field because, as knowledge miners, the anthropological method compels us to gain as much information as possible to illustrate our expertise and our authority. The representations of knowledge that we produce and that are recognised under the IP regime develop their own potency and ‘truth’. As this form of knowledge circulates beyond the local, unless locals are engaged in these representations they lose control and gain little or no recognition for their expertise. Should we not instead be ‘dispersing power and democratizing knowledge’? — as is the intellectual program of Native American philosopher of ethno-epistemology James Maffie (2008:26–7). We need to resist this urge from within the discipline to ‘own’ this knowledge and get with the new game of realising the co-creation of knowledge and sharing the power that comes with it. This, of course, also applies to our funding partners, research institutions and government.

In reflecting on the title of this paper — the ‘arrogance of ethnography’ — it is pertinent to recall that Indigenous people tend to invest considerable trust in the relationships we develop with them. It seems to me that to repay this trust we need to critically engage with the possibilities and limitations of the knowledge system that this collaboration compels us all into. Recognising Indigenous collaborators’ prior rights over their own knowledge and intellectual property, and their active contribution to the new works, is a way to do this. Likewise, interrogating the knowledge management paradigm is also an emerging field of research practice. Critically engaging with this reification of knowledge — that is, as transcribed data and the objectified notions of ‘ownership’ — is a space where it seems to me social anthropologists are well placed to engage innovatively.

As Wolf (1999:3) noted, in Australia, ‘where survival was a matter of not being assimilated, positionality is not just central to the issue — it is the issue’. In this settler-colonial context, the question of who speaks goes far beyond liberal concerns with equity, dialogue or access to the academy. It also concerns mobilising the Indigenous voice as an equal or independent voice in the IP knowledge domain that is currently the dominant paradigm.

NOTES
1. The term ‘traditional knowledge’ is problematic as it suggests an unchanged and unchanging knowledge. All knowledge, like culture, is emergent, but we soon forget the source of creativity.
2. In some cases, variously with colleagues Terri Janke and Michael Davis.
3. Mrs T Dixon, a senior Luritja women of Papunya community, and a key contributor to the AKIPP Community Guide, passed away at the end of October 2010. Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation and staff of the then DKCRC who worked with her acknowledge the contribution that Mrs Dixon made to two-way
learning and teaching about Aboriginal culture throughout her life. We will miss her greatly.
4. See also the resources by Janke (2009b) and Davis (2009) on the NRMB NT website at <www.nrmnt.org.au/iek.shtml>; they can be found under ‘ICIP documents’.
6. There will, of course, be instances when joint publications are not relevant and nor is attribution, but the argument here is that consideration should always turn to possibilities when they might be relevant.
7. See the Ara Irititja website at <www.irititja.com/>.
8. See the Mukurtu Archive website at <www.mukurtuarchive.org/>.
9. Indeed, I reviewed a 2005 ethnography and was critical then about the lack of due credit and attribution to the knowledge holders (Holcombe 2006).
10. I have adapted the concept of these ‘notices’ from Janke’s (2009b) report on the current status of Indigenous intellectual property, which was commissioned by the NRMB NT as one of three components of the Indigenous Ecological Knowledge program, the other two being a handbook by Davis (2009) and guidelines by Holcombe (2009).
13. Meaning ‘of its own kind’.
14. I would like to acknowledge Michael Christie for referring me to Maffie’s research.

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