

Samoan dictionary: A much needed update

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A Victoria University academic aims to use his newly acquired skills to create an updated Samoan language dictionary on the web, as well as a larger collection of work documenting the language.

In February, Galumalemana Alfred Hunkin, Senior Lecturer in Samoan Studies, Va'aomanu Pasifika, was sponsored by Victoria to attend an intensive five-day workshop where he gained new skills in preparing a body of text using the web and in writing [dictionary](#) entries.

As a result, his collection of 300,000 words of spoken and written Samoan, collated for his Victoria University Master's degree in 2001, was loaded onto internationally renowned website Sketch Engine (www.sketchengine.co.uk/), alongside other world languages.

He now plans to use this database to build a larger collection, or corpus, of one million Samoan words with the assistance of other scholars and Sketch Engine in England.

"Samoan is a threatened [language](#), and it needs all the help it can get to survive," says Mr Hunkin.

"The real possibility of producing dictionaries in this way is not only exciting, but it would be a very useful tool for [learners](#) who use the web regularly to learn languages."

Mr Hunkin says dictionaries are central to learning and understanding a language.

"It is particularly important for Samoan to have a modern and easily accessible dictionary for people around the globe who want to learn the language, and also for [translation](#) purposes.

"It will also help to retain and maintain the language, outside as well as inside [Samoa](#)."

Provided by Victoria University

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