

# Digital Humanities approaches to digitising, repatriating and exploring an historical Australian colonial archive

Rachel Hendery  
Western Sydney University

Intergener8 Lab / Digital Humanities Research Group / MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development /  
Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language / Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity and Heritage

Twitter: @RHendery | Slides at: [bit.ly/HowittFison2021](https://bit.ly/HowittFison2021)

Background: the Howitt & Fison papers



Tulaba, Howitt's main collaborator (left) with other Gunaikurnai men, names unknown, 1884



Howitt and Fison 1888,  
Bairnsdale, Victoria Centre for  
Gippsland Studies Pictures  
Collection, Monash University  
Research Repository

- over 7000 pages including correspondence, field-notes, circulars in Museum Victoria's Howitt Papers collection.
- 9 boxes of correspondence, articles, and primary data (13,200 manuscript pages including 400+ pages of images and postcards) in State Library Victoria's Howitt Papers.
- 6 Letterbooks, 800 pages each, in National Library of Australia The Papers of Lorimer Fison.
- approximately 800 pages of correspondence in Rochester University, USA.
- 2461 pages of Fison's correspondence together with 1000+ pages of drafts and primary data in St Marks Theological College Library in Canberra.

# Howitt and Fison Papers

Overview

Statistics

Subjects

**619**

Works

**4,479**

Pages

**513**

Notes

**4,981**

Subjects

**20,025**

References

**69**

Collaborators

**3,492**

Pages transcribed

**9,353**

Page edits

**2,510**

Pages indexed

**0**

Pages translated

**0**

OCR Corrections

## Last 7 Days Statistics

**4**

Collaborators

**7**

Pages transcribed

**49**

Page edits

**3**

Pages indexed

**6,694**

References

**16**

New subjects

**0**

Notes

**0**

Pages translated

**0**

OCR Corrections

Get involved at <https://fromthepage.com/tyay/howitt-and-fison-papers>



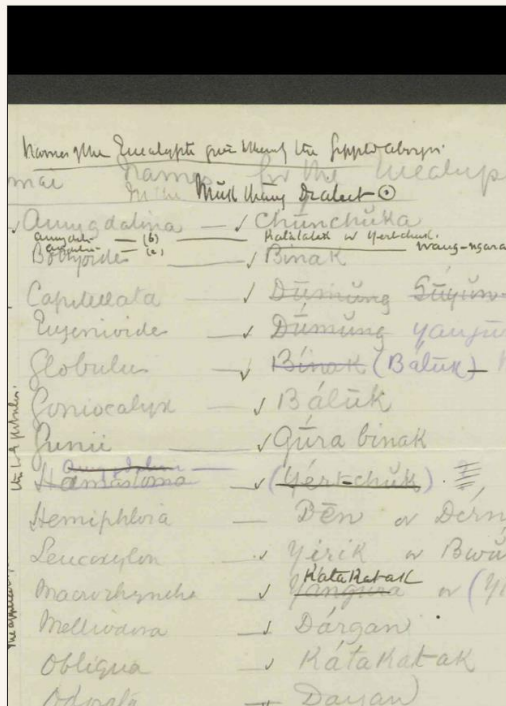
This project is a partnership between Museums Victoria, the Victoria State Library, First Nations Legal & Research Services, The Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, elders from a number of communities, Deakin University, La Trobe University, Western Sydney University, and ANU. We are especially thankful to Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation for recent collaboration and permissions.





**Project workshop 2019 with representatives from Gunaikurnai, Gunditjmara, Mukjarawaint, Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta, Dieri, Wurundjeri, and Dhudhuroa communities.**

Facsimile



Transcription

Names of the Eucalypts given to them by the Gippsland Aborigines

Kurnai names for the Eucalypts in the Mük thäng Dialect (2)

E. Amygdalina - [tick] Chunchüka

Amygdalina - (b) Katalalak or Yertchuk

amygdalina - (c) ----- wang-ngara (2)

Botryoides - [tick] Binak

Capitellata - [tick] [crossed out Dümung Güyün-güyün] [dümung?]

Eugenioides - [tick] [crossed out Dümung] yangüra

Globulus - [tick] [crossed out Binak] (Balük) - wang njara (2) (Brataua?)

Goniocalyx - [tick] Bälük

Gunii - [tick] Güra binak

Hemiphloia - [tick] Dén or Dörn [word crossed out]

Leucoxyton - [tick] Yirik or Bwürawi

Macrorhyncha - [tick] [Káta katak?] or [(Yüroka)]

(3) [Thang quai?]

Melliodora - [tick] Dárgan

Obliqua - [tick] Káta katak

Odorata - [tick] Dargan

Pauciflora - [tick] Bündagra

3-Piperita - [tick] Yángüra

Polyanthema - [tick] Den (or Dörn)

10-Pulverulenta - Bindürk [(word crossed out)]

[on LHS Bindürk (Mukthang)

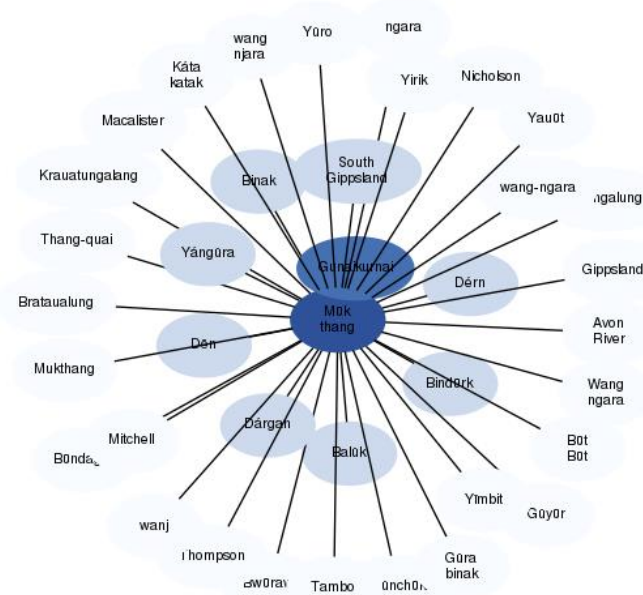
Sieberiana - Yauüt

Stellulata - Yimbit

Stuartiana - Büt Büt

Tereticornis - Yüro

5-Viminalis - Binak



Subjects Mentioned Frequently With Mük thäng



Some approaches  
to sound-based search  
(Research with Michael Falk)

# Approach 1: fuzzy search using 'soundex'

## Howitt-Fison Corpus

### Search for Australian Words

Enter Search Term:

### 111 results found for 'Gunnai':

#### **Kurnai,**

String distance score: 2

... each class are subdivisions" of the original (\*) Kamilaroi and **Kurnai**, p.35, and Note, pp. 70 - 72. 17 classes. "This ...

From: document XM226\_ICDMS\_lowres

#### **Kurnai,**

String distance score: 2

... if these groups were hostile, and would (\*) Kamilaroi and **Kurnai**, pp. 33-34 18 not exchange brides,) and might well shed ...

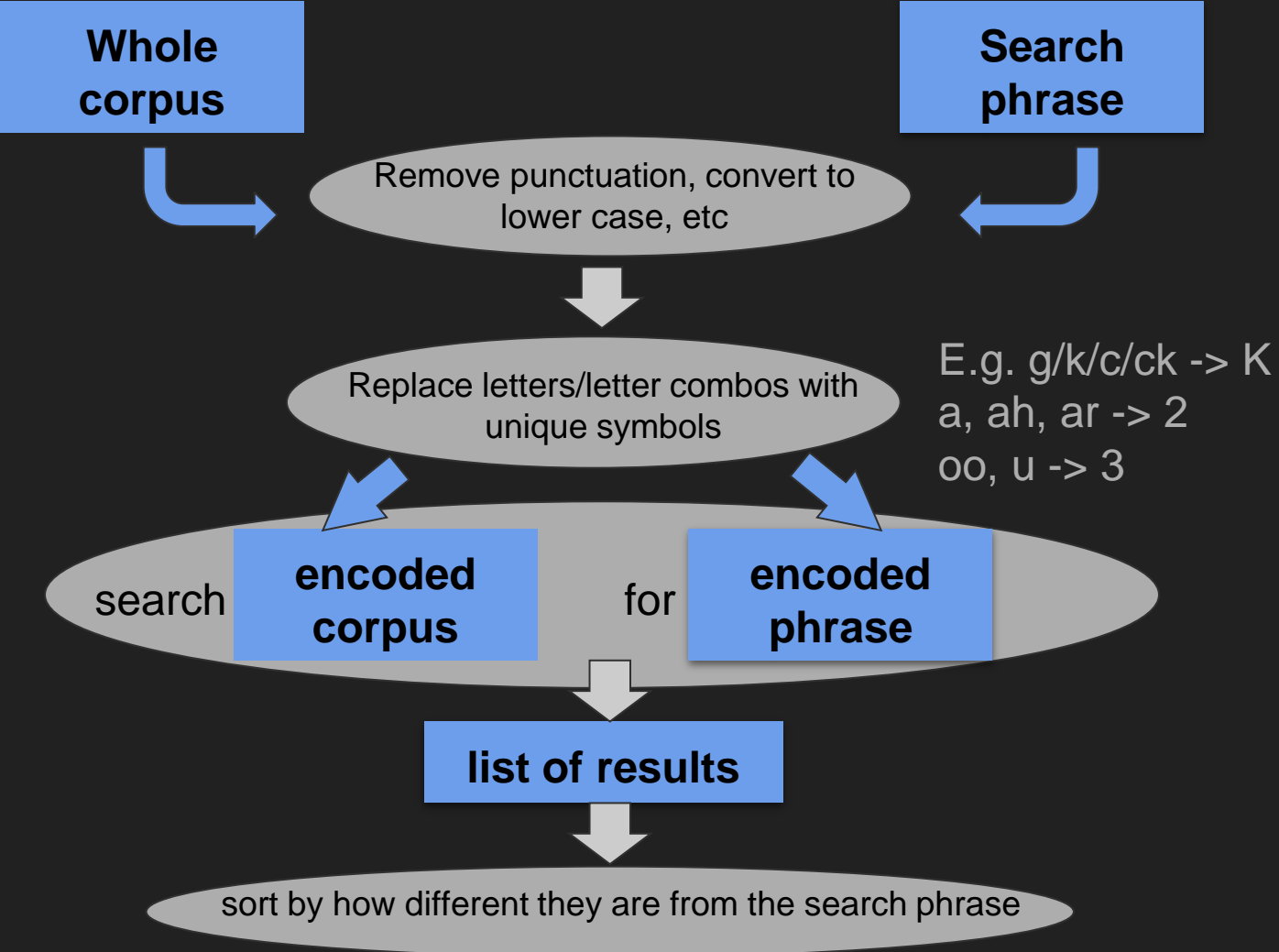
From: document XM226\_ICDMS\_lowres

#### **Kurnai,**

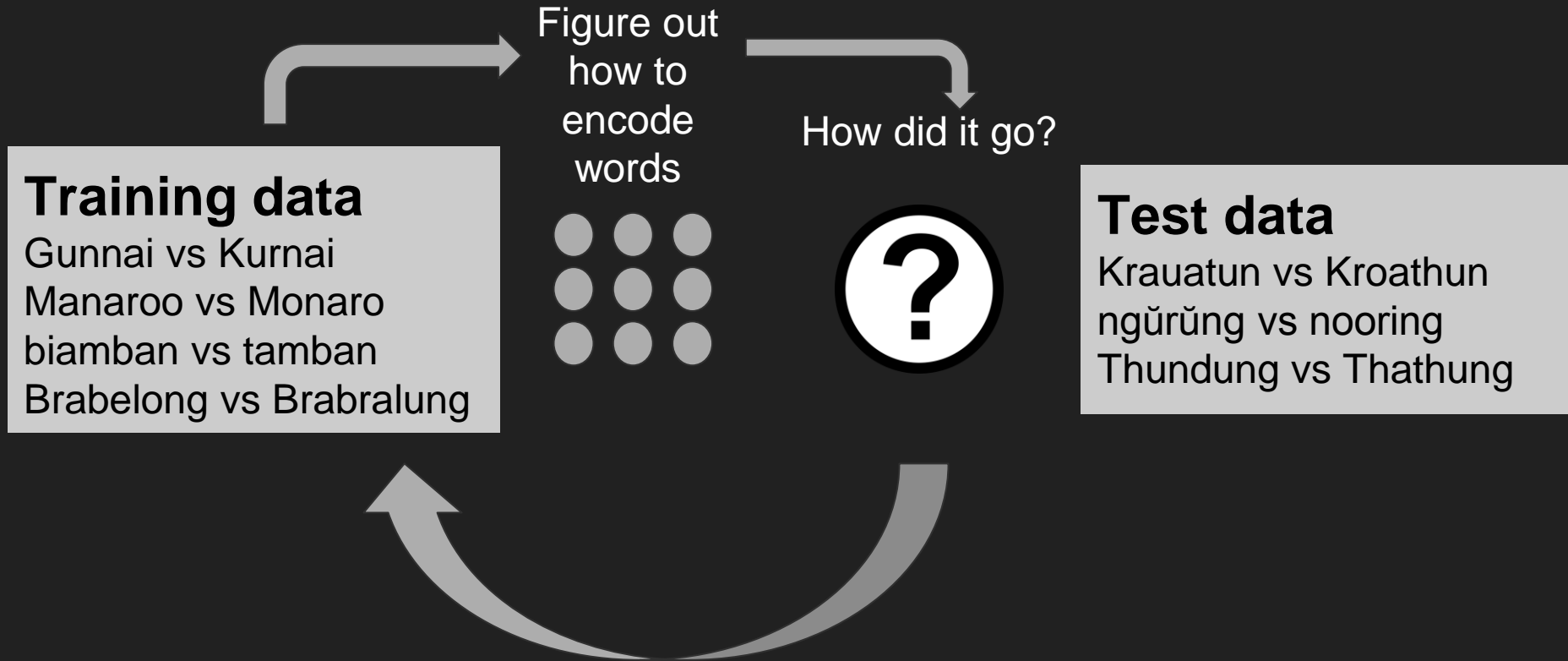
String distance score: 2

... p.136, Note. Gaion, the Dieyri Tribe, p.13. Fison, Kamilaroi and **Kurnai**, p.25. ...

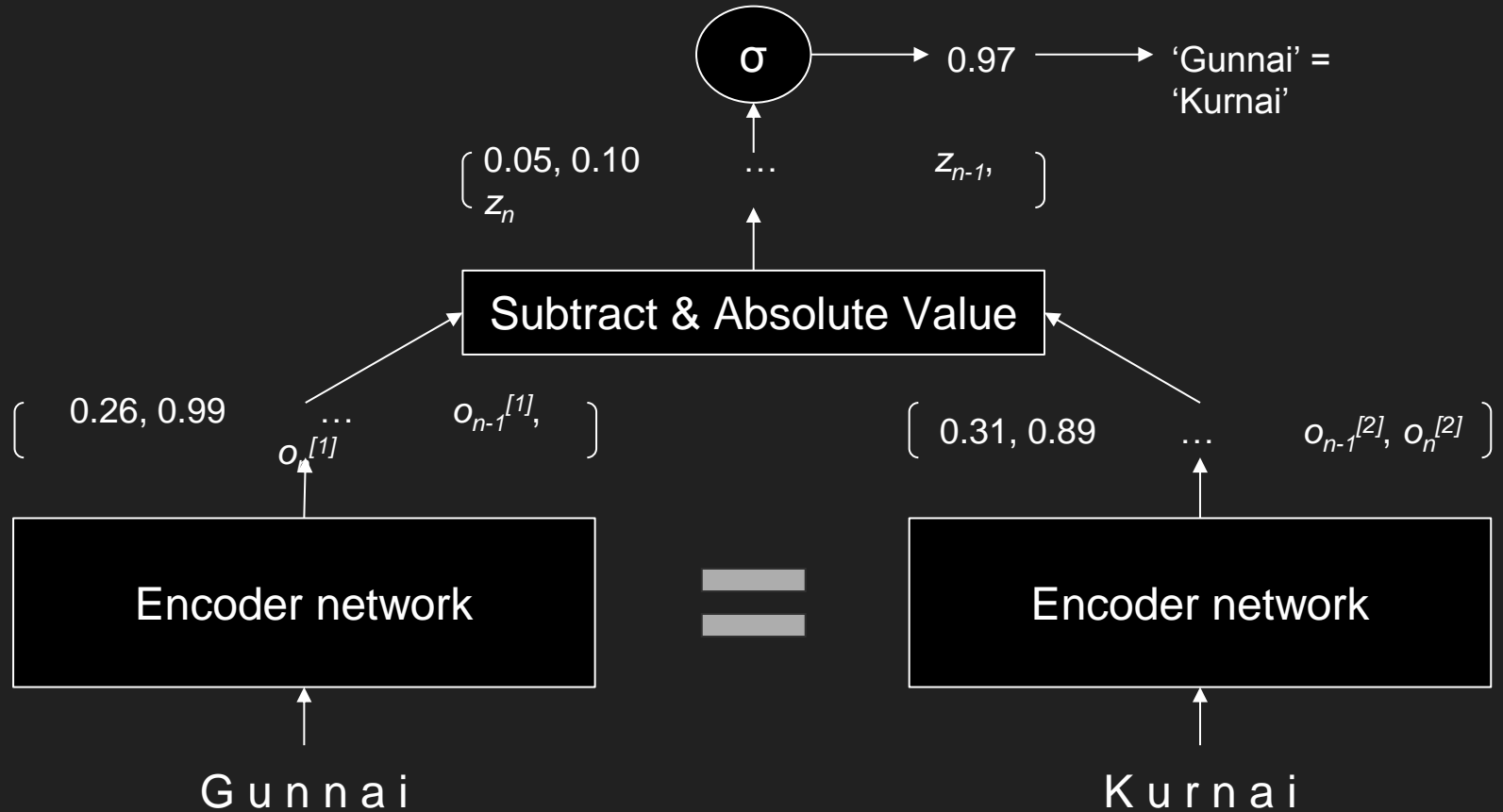
From: document XM226\_ICDMS\_lowres



# Approach 2: fuzzy string match using machine learning



# Siamese RNN architecture





# Results of the mini-project

Advantages and disadvantages of both

Could use a combination of the two

The machine learning approach could help us discover further sound 'correspondences' we should include in the sound-ex approach

Either way, it looks like it will be possible to allow people to find what they are looking for, without creating a potentially controversial 'standardised orthography'

# Some mini-projects involving the project's API

Using Google colab notebooks (like Jupyter notebooks but more Googley)

```
Burwood
Castlereagh River
Gulgandra
Macquarie
N.S.W.
Youlbung
Adelaide
Cayr Allyn
Clarence Town
Dungog
Eccleston
Gosford
London
Nait Land
Naitland
Nanning
Nanning River
...
```

Let's try to geocode these:

```
[ ] In[ ]
while i < len(placenames['Results']):
    place = placenames['Results'][i]['Title']
    geosearchterm = place.replace(" ", "+").encode("UTF-8").decode("UTF-8")
    geocodingurl = 'https://geocode.xyz/' + geosearchterm + '?json=1&region=AU&auth=125839689227871244352x4827'
    print(geocodingurl)

    try:
        with urllib.request.urlopen(geocodingurl) as url:
            if url:
                try:
                    georesponse = json.loads(url.read()).decode("utf-8", "replace")

                    longitude = georesponse['longt']
                    print(longitude)

                    latitude = georesponse['latt']
                    print(latitude)

                    folium.Marker([latitude, longitude], popup=place, tooltip=tooltip).add_to(m)
                    time.sleep(2)
                except:
                    print("broken")

            except:
                print("no luck")
            i=i+1

https://geocode.xyz/Bool+Booltison+1&region=AU&auth=125839689227871244352x4827
0.00000
0.00000
https://geocode.xyz/Fraemlingham?json=1&region=AU&auth=125839689227871244352x4827
142.69611
-38.24736
https://geocode.xyz/Wanqarratta?json=1&region=AU&auth=125839689227871244352x4827
0.00000
0.00000
https://geocode.xyz/Westernport?json=1&region=AU&auth=125839689227871244352x4827
0.00000
0.00000
https://geocode.xyz/Bunquilly?json=1&region=AU&auth=125839689227871244352x4827
0.00000
0.00000
```