

Organising Fieldwork Footage

Organising your fieldwork footage is a crucial part of the research and filmmaking process. A detailed and well-organised footage loglist helps you take stock of what material you have; refreshes your memory of the detail, tone, quality, and scope of your footage before you start editing; and is an indispensable companion throughout the editing process.

My MA research was about a primary-school curriculum reform program in Timor-Leste, and my fieldwork footage was from various sites with a wide range of actors (6 principal characters but more than 20 others).

My footage organization system centred around 3 main components, all parts of the one **FOOTAGE LOGLIST** (an Excel spreadsheet):

- **FIELD LIST** (created and updated during fieldwork)
- **OVERVIEW** (created after fieldwork)
- **LOGLISTS** (created after fieldwork)

Some other things that are useful during this process, and covered in this info sheet, include:

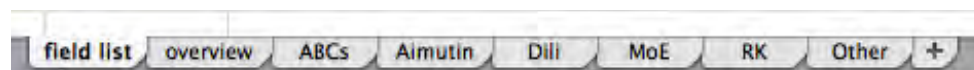
- **Hyperlinking transcripts and other fieldwork notes**
- **Storyboarding**

The programs I used to organise my footage were **Excel** and **Adobe Bridge**.

FOOTAGE LOGLIST

A single Excel spreadsheet was the motherboard of my footage organisation. The 3 main components mentioned above – field list, overview, and loglists – are all contained in this document.

These are the tabs in my **FOOTAGE LOGLIST**:



The two first components (and tabs) – ‘Field list’ and ‘Overview’ – provide broader overviews of the whole collection of footage, ordered chronologically and thematically, in that order. The other tabs – ‘ABCs’, ‘Aimutin’, etc. – are the loglists, categorised based on my fieldsites. Each tab includes detailed logging lists of the footage from that site. You could organise your tabs around other categories, such as people, themes, time periods (days or weeks), depending on the structure and focus of your research.

Let’s look at each component in turn.

You can use the sigma [Σ] function in Excel to keep a running total of the total **duration** of your fieldwork footage, which can be really handy for getting a sense of just how much material you have.

Coming up with a system for naming your clips on fieldwork is important, so you don't end up with 7 different files called '0001.MTS'! Every evening, I copied whatever I had filmed that day to folders on my hard-drive – one folder for each SD card – and batch renamed the clips to include the file number as generated by the video camera (e.g., '0001.MTS') plus an extension that matched the SD card name (e.g., 'A1_0001.MST'). My camera has two SD card slots, so I named my SD cards in lettered sets of 2 – e.g., A1 and A2, B1 and B2 – which served as general chronological guide (you can see the progression from A through E in the '**Clip no's**' column).

During the later stages of fieldwork, once it had become clear who my protagonists were, I added the '**Characters**' column, and indicated which protagonists were in each 'event' or group of footage. This helps you see whether you need to address any imbalances in how much footage you have of each character (depending, of course, on how central to your research each one is), and also helps you later when editing, because you can quickly and easily find scenes where each character appears, and where two or more characters appear together, which can be useful for finding transitions and helping decide on the order of your scenes.

By updating the field list whenever you film, you build a clear sense while on fieldwork of how much material you have in total and how much you have of each fieldsite, activity, person, etc., helping you keep track of any imbalances or gaps you need to fill.

OVERVIEW

Once you're back from fieldwork, the **OVERVIEW** is a comprehensive go-to list for all the sequences you've filmed – and later, edited.

The screenshot shows a spreadsheet with columns for sequence name, logged, edited, and various categories like VISIONS OF EDUCATION, PRACTICE, and Characters. Red brackets are placed above the spreadsheet to highlight specific areas: bracket 1 is over the 'sequence name' column; bracket 2 is over the 'logged' column; bracket 3 is over the 'edited' column; bracket 4 is over the 'VISIONS OF EDUCATION' and 'PRACTICE' columns; bracket 5 is over the 'Merry' and 'Coord. Rog' columns; bracket 6 is over the 'Characters' columns.

(See attached PDF for more detail.)

1. Sequence name

Here, I separated my footage into sequences. They are first categorised by fieldsite (and hence correspond to the fieldsite tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet, see p.1), but then further by event. For example: ‘**Aimutin_class Rogério 2**’ is footage of my 2nd class observation of teacher Rogério at Aimutin school.

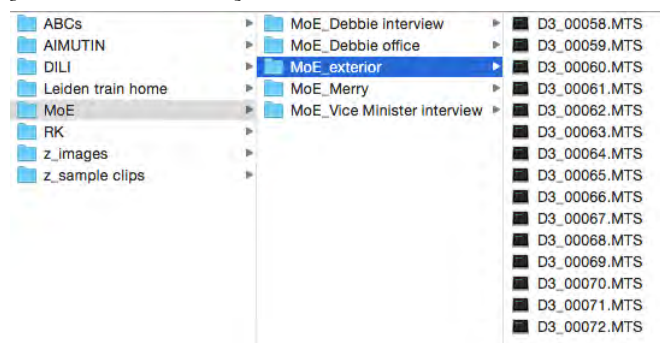
The colour-coding is another layer of categorization that relates to the type of footage: interviews, key observational scenes, and material for cutaways, ‘breathing space’, transitions between scenes, etc. The sequences *not* colour-coded were those that I decided (after logging) I would probably not use in the film.

The hyperlinks in this column are linked to the corresponding folder on my hard-drive (I replaced the original SD-card folder structure with this sequence structure. If you do this, be very careful to not delete clips during the process!). For example, the footage folder ‘MoE_exterior’ (external shots of the Ministry of Education) looks like this:

[in OVERVIEW LISTING]

| | |
|----|--|
| 40 | MoE Debbie interview/ |
| 41 | MoE Debbie office/ |
| 42 | MoE exterior/ |
| 43 | MoE Merry/ |
| 44 | MoE Vice Minister interview/ |

[on HARD-DRIVE]



Note: I kept the original clip names (as listed in the Field List). Some people prefer to batch rename their clips in Adobe Bridge so they can see a descriptive name when editing (e.g., ‘interview001.MTS’). But I preferred to keep the original names, to help me cross-reference between the Field List, Overview and Loglists (which I did often).

2. Logged & 3. Edited

These columns are checklists to see which sequences you've fully logged (in the detailed loglists in the fieldsite tabs) and edited. It helps you keep an eye on where you're at, but can also really help keep you motivated during the drudgery of logging, as you start filling up the columns with Xs.

Some sequences in the 'logged' column are struck through (-); this indicates footage purely of cutaways or unusable footage that didn't warrant the time and detail to log. The 'edited' column again uses colour-coding: pink for interviews, and grey for footage I didn't need to edit into discrete sequences (e.g., cutaways, or sequences I knew I wouldn't include in the film).

4. Thematic categorisations & 5. Characters (protagonists)

These columns provide a quick-glance overview of what footage contains which research themes and protagonists. It can be helpful to find relevant footage, to see where the emphasis falls in your footage and to note which scenes can fulfill a variety of functions (e.g., linking two or more protagonists or themes). The categories you choose here will depend on what organising principles your research and film are structured around.

6. Edited duration and notes

This column records the duration of each sequence, once edited. By using the sigma function [Σ] in Excel to add up all the individual cells in this column, you can keep an eye on the running total of all your edited footage. (This column uses the same colour-coding as the 'edited' column – see '3. Edited' above.) The 'notes' column is useful for reminders to yourself and other observations.

(See attached PDF for more detail.)

Using **Adobe Bridge**, you import the metadata for each clip in each footage folder/sequence into the fieldsite tab in the spreadsheet. Then, you add additional columns for the categories you want to capture; in my case, these were: duration, quality, shot type (CU = close-up, etc.), movement, characters, speech/sound, and content.

Notice how the entries match up between the overview, the hyperlinked hard-drive folder, and the loglist. For example, the MoE_exterior folder looks like this:

[in OVERVIEW LISTING]

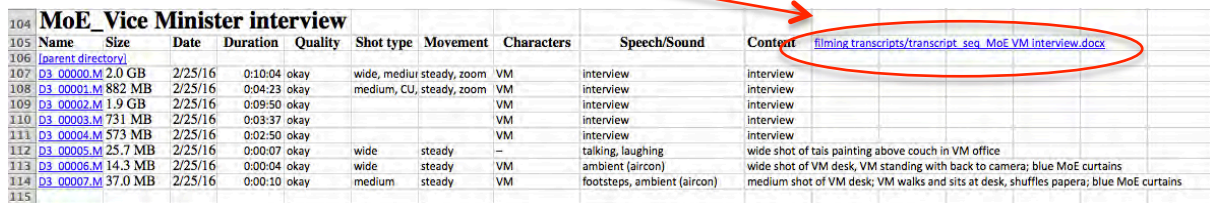
| | |
|----|--|
| 40 | MoE Debbie interview/ |
| 41 | MoE Debbie office/ |
| 42 | MoE exterior/ |
| 43 | MoE Merry/ |
| 44 | MoE Vice Minister interview/ |

[on HARD-DRIVE]

[in LOGLIST]

| MoE_exterior | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Name | Size | Date | Duration | Quality | Shot type | Movement | Characters | Speech/Sound | Content | |
| parent directory/ | | | | | | | | | | |
| D3_00058.M | 112 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:33 | good | wide | steady | - | birds, music, talking | Wide shot of carpark full of Kareta Estadu, as people walk past. | |
| D3_00059.M | 106 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:31 | good | wide | steady, pan | - | ambient | pan of whole MoE carpark, including TL flag, tree, Biblioteca Itinerante | |
| D3_00060.M | 78.9 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:23 | good | wide | steady | - | birds, footsteps, ambient | People walking through carpark, tree / leaves line top of frame | |
| D3_00061.M | 70.6 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:21 | good | medium | tilt | - | footsteps, cocks crowing, birds | Edge of building, TL flag, Kareta Estadu | |
| D3_00062.M | 17.3 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:05 | good | medium | steady | - | birds, car horns | Butterfly in the grass | |
| D3_00063.M | 23.2 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:07 | good | medium | steady | - | cocks crowing | Butterfly in the grass | |
| D3_00064.M | 80.2 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:23 | good | CU | steady | - | car horns, cocks crowing, traffic | Butterfly in the grass | |
| D3_00065.M | 53.0 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:15 | okay | medium | moving | - | traffic/motorbikes | Butterfly in the grass | |
| D3_00066.M | 125 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:37 | good | wide | steady | - | birds, cars starting, car horns | Edge of MoE entrance and Kareta Estadu | |
| D3_00067.M | 82.0 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:24 | good | wide | steady | - | car engines idle, conversation | Staff entering and leaving MoE entrance next to motorbike parking lot | |
| D3_00068.M | 70.7 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:21 | good | wide | steady | - | car engines idle | Motorbike parking lot at MoE, edge of building with paper notice, people walking through | |
| D3_00069.M | 28.8 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:08 | good | CU | steady | - | ambient | close-up of paper notice on wall near motorbikes saying where different people can park in the MoE | |
| D3_00070.M | 75.4 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:22 | okay | wide | steady | - | motorbikes passing, footsteps, | MoE entrance and road, TL flag; dark clouds (on slight angle) | |
| D3_00071.M | 90.0 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:26 | good | wide | pan | - | motorbikes, traffic | pan right from MoE entrance to road and Cathedral and kios | |
| D3_00072.M | 80.3 MB | 2/29/16 | 0:00:24 | good | wide | steady | - | motorbikes, traffic, conversation | road on left half of frame; MoE fence, TL flag and electricity wires on right side; dark clouds in sky | |

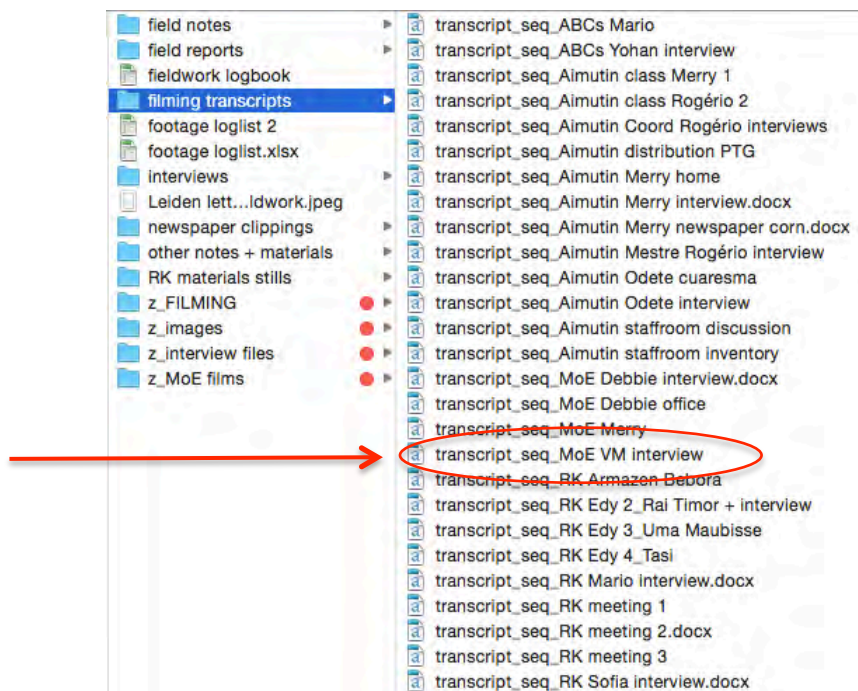
For interviews or any other sequences where you transcribe interviews, dialogue or make additional notes in Word, you can also hyperlink these to the loglist. For example:



A screenshot of a loglist table titled "MoE_Vice Minister interview". The table has columns for Name, Size, Date, Duration, Quality, Shot type, Movement, Characters, Speech/Sound, and Content. A red arrow points from the text above to a blue hyperlink in the Content column of row 106, which reads "filming transcripts/transcript_seq_MoE VM interview.docx".

| | Name | Size | Date | Duration | Quality | Shot type | Movement | Characters | Speech/Sound | Content |
|-----|------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 104 | MoE_Vice Minister interview | | | | | | | | | |
| 105 | parent directory | | | | | | | | | filming transcripts/transcript_seq_MoE VM interview.docx |
| 106 | 03_00000.M | 2.0 GB | 2/25/16 | 0:10:04 | okay | wide, mediu | steady, zoom | VM | interview | interview |
| 107 | 03_00001.M | 882 MB | 2/25/16 | 0:04:23 | okay | medium, CU, | steady, zoom | VM | interview | interview |
| 108 | 03_00002.M | 1.9 GB | 2/25/16 | 0:09:50 | okay | | | VM | interview | interview |
| 109 | 03_00003.M | 731 MB | 2/25/16 | 0:03:37 | okay | | | VM | interview | interview |
| 110 | 03_00004.M | 573 MB | 2/25/16 | 0:02:50 | okay | | | VM | interview | interview |
| 111 | 03_00005.M | 25.7 MB | 2/25/16 | 0:00:07 | okay | wide | steady | - | talking, laughing | wide shot of tals painting above couch in VM office |
| 112 | 03_00006.M | 14.3 MB | 2/25/16 | 0:00:04 | okay | wide | steady | VM | ambient (aircon) | wide shot of VM desk, VM standing with back to camera; blue MoE curtains |
| 113 | 03_00007.M | 37.0 MB | 2/25/16 | 0:00:10 | okay | medium | steady | VM | footsteps, ambient (aircon) | medium shot of VM desk; VM walks and sits at desk, shuffles papera; blue MoE curtains |
| 114 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 115 | | | | | | | | | | |

Here is the hyperlinked transcript file on my hard-drive:



Note how the files names are kept consistent throughout to make it easier to find and catalogue things, including footage clips, word files, etc.

STORYBOARDING

By exporting a still (or stills) from each sequence, you can create image cards that are very useful for storyboarding your film.

Here, for example, I laid out all the scenes that touch on language issues in the curriculum reform, and played with their order or 'flow' in the film. The handwritten notes at the bottom of each card include key quotes or dialogue, or references to other themes also present in each scene (e.g., pedagogy, history).



Each image represents one sequence listed in the overview (and detailed in the loglist). Note how the names remain consistent with those used in the overview, hard-drive folders, and loglist.

