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## This Necklace Contains All of the World's Languages

### Because cultural preservation never goes out of fashion

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It's been said that [a language dies every 14 days](#)—a loss that can wipe out an entire culture's collective wisdom. Those losses are accelerating as globalization becomes more common and [languages like English and Mandarin](#) supersede more local forms of communication. But what if you could help preserve those dying languages with something you wear? Thanks to nanotechnology and a bit of fashion, it's now possible, [reports Ephrat Livni for Quartz](#), with a piece of jewelry that lets you wear all of the world's languages around your neck.

[The Rosetta Wearable Disk](#) is a wearable archive of more than 1,000 languages compressed into a pendant less than an inch wide. It's the brainchild of the Rosetta Project, a language library initiative of the [Long Now Foundation](#), a non-profit that fosters long-term thinking.

Embedded on the tiny disk within the necklace are over 1,000 microscopic "pages" printed on nickel using nanotechnology. The disk contains the preamble to the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) in 327 languages and [basic vocabulary lists](#) for 719 languages. The disk also includes a book about time that serves as the foundation's manifesto and diagrams for the foundation's other initiative, [a clock](#) designed to run continuously for 10,000 years.

As Livni notes, the archive contained within the necklace doesn't offer instant gratification. Rather, it's only readable by someone with a microscope. It'll cost you, too: The disk can't be purchased, but rather is only available to people willing to donate \$1,000 to the foundation.

The concept of preserving all of the world's languages in a single place isn't new. It's been centuries since the Rosetta Stone, the ancient object inscribed with text that [helped scholars decipher](#) the languages of the ancient world and after which the project is named, changed the way humans think about language. Since then, other people have tried their hands at translating the same phrases into a variety of different languages to help preserve them, and today multiple language archives compiled by linguists and other professionals can be found around the world.

But a wearable disk can't stem the disappearance of spoken languages that has picked up speed in recent years. [Endangered languages are dying more quickly than ever before](#), especially in a variety of "hot spots" like Northern Australia and the Southwest United States and among languages that have no written form. But the disk can be a reminder of the importance of preserving language—and perhaps help recover languages in the future. Who knows—maybe in the future, wearing gigantic archives of human knowledge will become a fashion statement in and of itself. Committing yourself to documenting and saving the basis of entire cultures' contributions is *so* hot this season.

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Erin Blakemore is a Boulder, Colorado-based journalist. Her work has appeared in publications like *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, *mental\_floss*, *Popular Science* and *JSTOR Daily*. Learn more at [.](#)

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