Sociotextual Identities: Class and Ethnicity in a Family History Document

Lori Kendall

This talk draws on an ethnography of a document to discuss ethnic identity in the U.S. I situate this research in the area of personal archiving: the study of people’s creation, accumulation, preservation, and use of personal photos and documents. Personal archiving practices increasingly involve both digital and analog materials, blending traditional practices such as photo albums and scrapbooks with new online tools for photo distribution and genealogical research. Using the example of Czech-American identity as expressed in a multi-media family history document, I discuss the creation, expression, and constraints of ethnic identities as those occur within and through documents.

Lori Kendall’s research focuses on online identities, cultures, and communities. Her ethnographic book “Hanging Out in the Virtual Pub” analyzes race and gender online. She has written about nerds, online animated video, and blogs as well as several pieces on qualitative methods. Her current research bridges social science and humanities approaches in the area of personal archiving: the study of people’s creation, accumulation, preservation, and use of personal and family photos and documents.