



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MEDICINE



INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY AND
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



ABSTRACTS

(IM) MATERIAL CULTURE: Health Collections in a Digital Era

Saturday, November 11, 2017 | 10:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
University of Toronto, Medical Sciences Building, 1 King's College Circle, Toronto
C. Naylor Student Commons Area

PANEL 1: Rethinking Health Collections | 11:05 a.m. to 12:35 p.m.

François DANSEREAU

Topic: *Beyond the Uniform: Gender, Science and Technology in the McGill University Health Centre Collection*

In 2015, several health institutions associated with the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) moved in a new building. This process led to an assessment and evaluation of historical artefacts and archives, including textual records, photographs, and medical instruments and objects that belonged to these hospitals. It ultimately led to the creation of the Art and Heritage Centre of the MUHC. This organization's objectives are directed toward the preservation, description, access, and diffusion of these records. The collection includes, among other things, artefacts, objects, and photographs related to the MUHC's founding institutions' nursing schools.

This presentation shows artefacts, medical instruments and other representations of nursing in the MUHC collection. The place reserved for nursing in the hospitals of the nineteenth and twentieth century emerges from particular institutional vision of health care. This presentation argues that administrative and medical authorities imposed a particular institutional culture that shaped the contours of nursing and the historical artefacts and visual representations associated with it. Despite the authorities' efforts in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century to define clear occupational boundaries between doctors and nurses, while emphasizing the caring aspect of nursing, nurses evolved in an environment where they had day-to-day encounters with science and technology. This presentation seeks to raise questions on nurses' place in health care and in collective memory. It looks beyond the traditional nurses' uniform and explores potential artefacts and other archives linking nursing with science and technology.

Shelley MCKELLAR

Topic: *Removing the Queasiness: The Value of Medical Artifact Collections*

Medical artifacts make people queasy. It might happen on a visceral level or a practical level or both. Instruments that cut, bleed, penetrate, and extract fluids or objects from the body can induce an understandable squeamishness in many individuals. As well, individuals may be uneasy or dubious about medical artifacts when it comes to working with objects as historical sources. By removing the queasiness, I encourage individuals to grasp the value of medical artifact collections as historical sources and to look for the history – sometimes a ‘hidden’ history – related to the use, ownership and social meaning of various medical objects.

In a digital era, the internet and social media link collections, resources and imagination in ways that are forging new uses and new audiences for health history collections. Within this context, a case for the value of medical artifact collections can be made. Medical artifact collections are overlooked and underutilized resources, and medical artifacts can be used as more than window dressing or illustrations or props. This presentation will demonstrate how medical objects may be used to recover the histories of past practitioner’s views, theories of disease, and contested procedures. In terms of current relevance, teaching and conducting research with medical artifact collections can serve two purposes: (1) it provides context to our current medical understanding and practices; and (2) it highlights the historical and cultural contingency of ideas and practices, prompting us to consider our own biases based on the framework within which we operate today. It underscores how time and place matter regarding what we think we know and how we practice medicine.

Lisa O’SULLIVAN

Topic: *When three-dimensions becomes two: new forms of anatomical circulation and their challenges*

Many significant anatomical collections owe their existence to a global enterprise of collecting and exchange. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the demands of institutions and researchers for material to undertake projects in disciplines including medicine, comparative anatomy, and physical anthropology led to collecting on a massive scale. These physical collections are now often relatively stable, with the only significant removal of materials being a return to source communities. At the same time the data generated by these collections and digital surrogates are in broad circulation.

This talk focuses on the proliferation of digital images relating to the history of medicine and in particular human remains, which has led to new cultures of transmission, exchange and interpretation. While new legislation, guidelines and approaches have been adopted within museums, medical schools and other institutions relating to the respectful treatment of human remains and an awareness of their significance beyond the strictly scientific, such guidelines cannot readily be applied once a digital surrogate is the public sphere. Social media has become a valuable tool for the custodians of health collections, allowing them to raise awareness of their collections and bring them to new and more diverse audiences. However, many professionals working with human remains are dismayed to discover that images of these remains circulated untethered from their institutional backgrounds, guidelines around respectful display, provenance or other contextual information. Indeed, they are in many cases situated in deliberately sensationalist ways as challenging or grotesque curiosities.

In this scenario, our ability to control the framing of digital content can be limited. What is the role of museum and library professionals in facilitating or gatekeeping the proliferation and circulation of images? And how can we make meaningful and non-exploitative use of images of our collections in this arena?

PANEL 2: Representing the invisible | 1:40 p.m. to 3:10 p.m.

Jennifer BAZAR

Topic: Representing mental illness through health collections

Nicholas MATTE

Topic: Addressing Trans Erasure and Marginalization in the Archives: How learning about past experiences can inform and improve today's medical and health realities

What today's health care professionals learn about trans people's health and well-being is directly related to the cultural and institutional contexts in which trans people live and in which medical professionals are trained and practice. Scholars in the medical humanities and a variety of other fields, such as transgender studies, sexuality studies, critical race studies and disability studies have extensively noted trans people's widespread erasure and marginalization, but efforts to directly address the effects marginalization has had on trans people's health and well-being have been limited in part because of widespread ongoing ignorance regarding the historical realities which informed the institutionalization of gender and sexuality norms in health care. Cultural norms, however, when taken as biological fact, can institutionalize and reproduce marginalizing social and clinical conditions.

This talk presents information-based learning strategies to combat cis-normative (trans marginalizing) ignorance and provides learning opportunities that can reduce trans erasure and marginalization while improving the quality of health care available to trans people. Drawing on several historical examples, I demonstrate that by learning and thinking critically about previous trans advocacy efforts, we can identify what factors might be important to (re)consider in health care delivery today. For example, we might ask: how did the time period and cultural context(s) in which a given person transitioned effect their experiences, their access to health care, their overall wellness and their current needs?

How can archival collections contribute to both the erasure and the highlighting of trans medical and health histories, and what can medical professionals, historians of medicine, and other interested advocates, archivists, activists and scholars do about it? How can we integrate new learning about the past with present aims, objectives and understanding, given the ongoing

Jaipreet VIRDI

Topic: *Uncovering Disability Histories*

Disability is both a personal, individual experience as well as a collective one. But disability is also unique in the extent to which it is bonded with technology, tools, and machines as a medium of social interaction. Things from tele-touch technology or hearing aids used by deaf persons, wheelchairs of all kinds, canes, prosthetic limbs, even, to some extent, 3D printing of body parts—they all reveal the multitude of interactions with disability. In some cases, these technologies even define disability experience.

This presentation outlines a study of museums, libraries, and archives primarily in Ontario that contain collections of objects of disabilities, and some of the methodological difficulties encountered in finding and archiving objects in a database. Shifting from a “diagnostic-centric” version of disability through the lens of medicine was challenged by the fact most museums categorize prosthetic and assistive devices as medical objects, reducing the lived experiences of users to their medical diagnosis. Using examples from Ontario collections, this paper focuses on how the elucidation of objects of disability allows us to trace different interpretive frameworks by which users addressed their physical/mental impairments, including how social, cultural, and medical factors shaped their identities, or signified their social positions.

PANEL 3: Living Collections (Biobanks and human tissue) | 3:40 p.m. to 5:10 p.m.

OmiSoore DRYDEN

Topic: *The Politics of Blood (Donation)*

In order to effectively and sufficiently address the concerns that have arisen regarding “gay-blood” donor deferral, it is necessary to acknowledge the diverse nature of the men who have sex with men (cis and trans) community in Canada. Sexuality, race, sexual identity, gender identity, and geography are not separately occurring identity markers in the lives of men who have sex with men. I argue that in order to protect the blood supply from another tainted blood scandal, it is imperative that we explore how the ideal blood donor is understood and subsequently constructed. This requires an interrogation into the practice of singular and separately occurring identity categories reflected in the donor questionnaire. In other words, I set-aside the bio-materiality of blood while I explore the symbols and symbolic meanings of blood that are attributed to blood safety. I am interested with what happens with the category of blood donation and gay blood when it becomes routed through the logics and power lines of blackness. This paper explores how the discussions regarding blood donation participates in the politics of place making. Through the application of a Black queer diasporic analytic, I explore the social construction of the ideal blood donor and how anti-Black racism, colonialism and racist-homophobia frames this construction.

Susan PFEIFFER

Topic: *Paleoanthropology and the repatriation of Wendat ancestors*

Each country follows unique paths to repatriation; Canadians focus on negotiation. In September, 2013, the Huron-Wendat Nation reburied the remains of over 1700 ancestors at a sacred site now designated as a cemetery. The ancestors had been curated by the Department of Anthropology, subsequent to archaeological research excavations by past faculty (1946-1975). The multi-year preparations for repatriation required creativity and perseverance on the part of curators,

researchers, government representatives and descendants. At our request, the Huron-Wendat Nation has allowed the retention of one tooth from each ancestor, so that small amounts of dental tissue and adhering bone can be studied. The U of Toronto Department of Anthropology curates the materials on behalf of the Nation, to which researchers apply for permission to study. The resulting collaborative environment has formed a basis for new discoveries about the ancestors, based on chemical and genetic study of the retained tissues. My talk will be an exploration into how scholars can ask questions that descendants care about, and how we can frame our work in accessible ways.

New radiocarbon dates have been generated, so that changes over time can be considered, from the 14th to 17th centuries. This paper will provide a summary of new discoveries that have been made possible through isotopic studies. New, clear isotopic evidence documents patterns in ancestral Wendat reliance on maize, and the very diverse sources of protein that were exploited. New evidence also provides information on when mothers weaned their babies and the nature of childhood diets.

James SCOTT

Topic: *Living cellular collections*

The prevailing concept of a biological collection is one conspicuously and ironically devoid of life: stuffed birds, pressed plants, rock castings ranging from trilobites to dinosaur bones, and so on. Living collections are generally conceived of as restricted to botanical and zoological gardens where “specimens” are propagated continuously, or seed banks like the glacial caverns of Svalbard intended to forestall extinctions of economically important crop plants. The reality of modern biological collections, however, is much different. The cryogenic preservation of delicate living cells ranging from microbes to animals has been practiced for nearly a century and is an essential tool in modern biological and biomedical research that allows investigators to manipulate organisms in a traceable and repeatable manner. Living cellular collections support research that would be impossible using non-living materials in emerging scientific domains such as biotechnology, genetic engineering, drug discovery, evolutionary biology, metabolomics, pathobiology, experimental ecology, etc. In this presentation I shall discuss the organization, scope and use of these types of important archives with an emphasis on the case example of the biomedical and environmental microfungus collection housed in the UAMH Centre for Global Microfungal Biodiversity at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto. This collection contains 12,000 living biospecimens, associated archival materials and provenance representing over 3,200 species. It is the largest and most important repository of biomedically important fungi in the western hemisphere and one of only two top-level collections of these organisms in the world. The majority of the collection is unique and not replicated elsewhere. The collection is the rich legacy of nearly 80 years of research begun under the auspices of the Alberta Public Health Laboratory and expanded substantially since by submissions from innumerable Canadian and international public health scientists.