

Documenting folklife in the digital age

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The proliferation of smart phones, tablets and other networked technologies has revolutionized how the cultural record is written. For the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, which is mandated to preserve and present folk culture, the implications are profound. A new mobile app has taken oral history collecting efforts global, yielding nearly 100,000 submissions to the archives in the app's inaugural year. As folk expression proliferates across the web, the Library is harvesting a selected set of exemplar vernacular websites. Meanwhile, the task of making analog multi-format ethnographic collections accessible at digital scale creates significant challenges, including the need for tools that enable Indigenous communities to manage their intellectual property and cultural heritage. In this talk, the audience will be asked to work through such curatorial issues that impact digital humanities inquiry. They will be asked to consider ways in which collaboration between digital humanities scholars and cultural heritage workers can lead to mutually beneficial innovation and knowledge creation.