

Family history in the 21st century

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Overview

This presentation is intended to be a 'provocation', and will challenge the audience to think about the changes in family history over the last two decades and where we go from here. There are no learning outcomes or research techniques – instead, some guidance about how we can apply our research and associated methodology in meaningful ways.

Introduction

A review of the two key 'game changers' for family history and genealogy, focusing on the impact of broadcast media (and in particular *Who Do You Think You Are*) and the rise of the digital age – combining to create an emphasis on 'personal heritage'.

Section 1: Data and technology

A critique on the impact of online data as a commodity, and what this means for individuals in an age where our personal data is under threat. Will legislation make genealogy more or less easy in the digital age? How has this affected the way we search or research? What impact has this had on access to non-digital archive material, particularly outside the US? What is the future of the data providers?

Section 2: Genetic genealogy

A look at how DNA testing has enhanced the concept of global connectivity and ethno-ancestry as a valid part of our research. Where will this lead? Are there any practical or ethical concerns we should consider? How might this help us reconnect with our roots, or view our place in the world today?

Section 3: Ancestral tourism

Applied personal heritage means a deeper understanding of one's place in the world; this often translates into a journey of discovery away from one's home community. The phenomenon is known as 'ancestral tourism' and can make an important impact on local or indeed national economies, as anyone from a migrant background who has travelled to their ancestral 'homeland' will attest.

Section 4: Education and wellbeing

Using several case studies, a review of some of the inspirational ways that applied family history research techniques can help individuals and communities improve their lives in surprising and enriching ways. Emerging evidence suggests that pastimes such as family history that combine mental activity with social interaction can play an important role in preventing certain types of dementia, whilst undertaking personal research into the past at school can provide a pathway to a brighter future.

Conclusion

Drawing all these strands together, some practical steps we can all take to pass on a legacy to future generations whilst making a difference in the present.