InDigital: Latin America Conference 2015
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Conference Abstracts

Erica Wortham (George Washington University)
Going Digital: Building Community Media Archives

Dr. Wortham considers various aspects of contested value and materiality of visual cultural heritage as an indigenous media collective in Oaxaca, Mexico shifts from tape to file-based media. Local efforts to preserve and secure community access to visual material recorded in the 1990s are discussed in the context of a recent experimental documentary made from "found footage" recovered from the collective's archive that capture sentiments of loss and abandonment.

Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen (University of Helsinki)
Mundane Social Media among Young Indigenous People in Brazilian Amazonia

Young indigenous people are often the first ones to experience the use of social media and to study in urban areas in Brazilian Amazonia. This paper discusses how these two things are interrelated and how they create, motivate, foster and regulate social relations. It focuses on the Arawakan-speaking groups in the state of Acre and Amazonas, both in their villages and urban areas. In these two states, where I have been carrying out research since 2003, even the smallest towns have recently received fast-speed Internet connections. The use of Internet is no longer restricted to the "Cyber/Lan houses" (Internet cafés), but social media can be accessed from homes and cell phones. For indigenous peoples, social media has become a powerful tool for expressing opinions, organizing meetings, and to access the latest information. Furthermore, it is used almost daily to talk about family life, problems related to studying, spiritual things, and love life, as well as post images about these topics. Social media offer new ways of practicing and experiencing sociality in contrast to practices in villages where communication is often much more face-to-face based. This paper asks what are the consequences of these novel processes related to digital technology and to the traditional ways of producing sociality in Amazonia. Virtual relationships open up new communication with both indigenous people and non-Indians and add to knowledge production. I will address how this has influenced the way human relationships are constructed. Overall, as it will be argued in the paper, the use and appropriation of social media is not only reflected in generational and gender changes, but also in the way sociality and indigenous youthhood is lived in Amazonia.

Vanness Fajans-Turner (Avatar Alliance)

Jonathan Hill (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale)
"Then he started walking again": A Mytho-Historical Perspective on Indigenous Uses of New Media

This paper will explore new forms of indigenous self-representation that creatively translate between different cultural worldviews through the adoption and reinterpretation of new media technologies. Emphasis will be placed on indigenous uses of new media that are deeply rooted in

traditional discursive, musical, and other performative genres and that are rhetorically effective at capturing the attention of broader, non-indigenous audiences. New media technologies also open up novel opportunities for collaborative ethnographic research and for transforming digital web-based archives into powerful tools for indigenous researchers and educators. The paper will conclude on a cautionary note by arguing that the profound changes embodied in indigenous uses of new media are not completely without historical precedent. Specifically, I will explore the Yekuana mythic figure of Wanadi's action of "starting to walk again" in the 1770s as an indigenous expression of a historical transition that is in some ways comparable to the contemporary transformations set in motion by indigenous uses of new media.

Louis Forline (University of Nevada, Reno)
Imagineering Indigenous Futures: Some Reflecting on Amazonian Use of Media Technology

After first encounters transpired between Native Americans and Europeans, images of Amazonians were quickly disseminated throughout Europe. As Europeans engaged with indigenous peoples, images of these encounters flashed through Europe, depicting Neotropical indigenes as everything from cannibals to Amazon warriors. These images were transmitted through paintings, travelogues, missionary accounts and colonial authorities. Some observe that the dissemination of these images even inspired the "Brazilianization" of Native North Americans, such that some people's indigenous body art and plumage would be inaccurately represented as belonging to other indigenous people of this continent. Fast forwarding to the 21st Century, we are witness to a rapid transformation in media technology and images. Similarly, cross-currents in globalization have influenced the control and dissemination of indigenous portrayals. As digitally engaged indigenous players of the Amazon familiarize themselves with different forms of social media and technologies, we are witness to a reconstruction and (re)projection of images that characterize indigeneity. Notwithstanding the large digital and technological divide that exists between mainstream society and native Amazonians, cultural performances are being displayed through various media enabling indigenous peoples to recast themselves in a different light. While looks can and will alter indigeneity, in this paper I argue that native Amazonians have turned the game around through the inter-penetration of media. Cultural performances through the use of audio-visual media also hold a mirror up to mainstream society, calling on its members to reflect on its machinations. As the global communications network intensifies, renewed images of Amazonia reframe questions of its history and future.

Claudia Augustat (Weltmuseum Wien)
Notes from the Contact Zone

James Clifford´s concept of the contact zone characterized ethnographic museums as spaces of dialogue and collaborative work with indigenous communities. Here, museums in the United States (along with Australia and New Zealand) have done pioneering work, not in the least because geographic proximity of collections and their heritage communities allowed to overcome logistic obstacles more easily. European museums are facing a lot of problems to invite representatives of indigenous communities even for consultation and community based exhibitions are still unthinkable. In my paper I would like to discuss if and how digital media can make a substantial contribution to collaborative work, especially in European museums. One aim of collaborative work is to include the indigenous voice in the story telling of the museum. Indigenous filmmakers

have strong voices and the different options a museum can offer can be part of a dissemination strategy to present the material to the general public. Could this be a win-win situation or is there a conflict between the needs of curatorial work and artistic creativity and autonomy? But digital media are not only a possibility to bring indigenous voices in the museums of the metropolis, they are also an important tool in the other direction. Historic film material and photography and object photography are lying at the core of virtual repatriation and they are the material for virtual museums. So using digital media is of course important in an inclusive museum practice, but is it possible to get further: Can we create a social network between museums and indigenous communities?

Laurel C. Smith (University of Oklahoma)
Suturing Transborder Communities: A Story about Art, Advocacy, and Visualizations of Place

In this presentation I tell a geographical story about a video by Yolanda Cruz, a Chatina filmmaker from Oaxaca, Mexico. I begin by introducing Yolanda and her video *2,501 Migrants: A Journey* (2009). Identifying institutions that enable(d) this video's production and—to a lesser degree—its circulation, I embed this video within transnational currents of artistic and academic advocacy. I also discuss its reception by some very specific audiences. On the basis of my textual, institutional, and audience analyses, I argue that this video's spaces of representation visually suture far-flung places together. It offers viewers insight into some of the transborder communities currently characterizing Indigenous regions of Oaxaca

Suzanne Oakdale (University of New Mexico)
Kawaiwete Memories of Film and Photography in Brazilian "Pacification" Missions

Historians have noted that film and photography were central to early twentieth century Brazilian expeditions to the western interior and served as a means of connecting these territories, making their presence visible, to those in the urban east and south as well as a means to encourage financial support for "pacification" missions—a process whereby teams of government workers would establish "contact" with a "hostile" or remote indigenous group. The Tupi-speaking Kawaiwete (formerly Kayabi) were involved in this process both as the targets of "pacification" in the 1920s and later as members of the teams sent out to "pacify" others. Drawing on Terence Turner's work on transformations in social consciousness and on representation, this paper examines several Kawaiwete narratives about the role of film and photography in these expeditions. How these processes of media representation were registered by some of the indigenous individuals involved reveals the historical depth of these people's participation and agency in broader social fields, including global fields of mediated self-representation.

Mario Murillo   (Hofstra University)
National Culture, Indigenous Voice: Coming Full Circle in Colombian Radio

One of the historical functions of radio within Colombia, and what its earliest practitioners were hoping to instill within the broader population through the proliferation of the medium during its infancy, was a sense of Colombian "nationhood" that celebrates the commonalities of a very diverse populace. This collective embrace of Colombianness, an essential ingredient to

nationality, was elusive, given the country's complex geographical landscape, its intense regional divisions, and the extremely diverse cultural underpinnings that have always characterized Colombia since its independence. However, Colombia's early radio broadcasters looked to impose a hegemonic cultural product, in many respects alien to a broad cross section of the population, ranging from highly commercial formats imported from the United States, to the highbrow vision of the cultural and political elite, which sought to "educate the masses" through its supposedly more refined content transmitted on the public airwaves. Tragically, for the country's indigenous communities, with very few exceptions, radio had locked them out rather than bring them into this national dialogue. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the emergence of indigenous radio in the last 15 to 20 years is an open rejection of the top-down, homogenous conception of the Colombian nation that was represented for years in the broadcast media, first radio and later television. Ironically, indigenous radio's unifying function in local and regional settings is similar to how the early national broadcasters saw their role on a national level: to create and promote a strong sense of indigenous identity, unity and awareness, through communication that was essentially Nasa, Embera, Guambiano, or any of the many other native communities who are now transmitting over the airwaves throughout Colombia. At the same time, indigenous radio considers itself to be in constant communication with the broader, non-indigenous sectors of Colombian society, presenting a counter-narrative to the dominant media. This paper examines the parallels in the development of national and indigenous radio in Colombia, and argues that the most successful radio stations fulfilling their dual mandates today are those associated with indigenous communities with strong organizational structures.

Glenn H. Shepard, Jr.
Kaya-Pop: Digital Media, Modernity and the Warrior Ethos among the Mebengokre-Kayapó of Brazil.

At first glance, the swaying, sexy gait of Kayapó girls participating in gaudy "Miss Kayapó" beauty contests or the crooning lyrics of emergent Kayapó pop stars performing forró and other popular Brazilian dance rhythms would appear to be a perversion of traditional Kayapó aesthetics, music and ceremonial dance forms. However a deeper look at Kayapó culture reveals a central preoccupation with the capture, through warfare, of enemy weapons, adornments, ceremonial names, songs and other goods, all of which convey prestige and power to the victors. Yet how far can this process of symbolic incorporation, transformation and resignification be pushed before symbolic warfare fades into capitulation?: This is is a question Kayapó elders themselves sometimes ask of the media savvy youth whose contact with traditional warrior culture seems ever more distant. This paper examines the surprising ways Kayapó engagement with modernity may reflect their fundamental warrior ethos, while also pointing out the emerging fault lines and ironies that this new-new-hybridity poses in a frontier zone full of competing interests, hazards and temptations.

Laura R. Graham (University of Iowa)
Transformations of Indigenous Media: The Life and Work of David Hernández Palmar

Reflecting on the OWNERS OF THE WATER PROJECT, this presentation directs attention to individuals involved in indigenous media and ways these projects affect lives and subjectivities. I consider ways that the OWNERS project influenced the life of one participant, David Hernández

Palmar, showing how the project influenced Hernández's sense of himself as a participant in the indigenous media scene and as a media activist. I also explore ways that the project opened David to a world of political activism. Hernández's case is important because his experience exemplifies ways that involvement in collaborative indigenous media can impact, even transform an individual's life and also because, as an educated, urban Indian, Hernández represents an important sector of contemporary indigenous reality.

Ingrid Ramón Parra (Purdue University), Laura Zanotti (Purdue University), and Diego Soares (Universidade Federal de Uberlândia)
Making media: Gendered and Generational Shifts in Kayapó Digital Worlds.

This paper will introduce the current state and the future directions of a collaborative ethnographic research program that analyzes the centrality of digital "media worlds" in one Kayapó village, paying attention to the production, consumption, and reception of digital media technologies. From an approach that combines the strengths of feminist political ecology, Science and Technology Studies, and decolonizing research methodologies we offer an intersectional analysis of different generational and gendered conceptualizations of and engagements with digital media technologies as well as their circulations across time and space. More specifically, this paper will hone in on one doctoral project under the broad research program. This project, scheduled to begin in summer of 2015, will make use of ethnographic, participatory, and visual methods to inquire on Kayapó women's conceptualization, use, and engagement with audiovisual media and its production. A perspective of audiovisual media production as both a social process and a cultural product frames this project, thus inquiring on whether Kayapó women's media endeavors speak about cultural practice and/or self-determination. The choice to work with women is purposeful as this video project is committed to engaging with Kayapó women and facilitating their use of video technology to present their experiences in audiovisual form. This project adds to already existing engagements with media at the village of Aukre, but privileges participatory work with women. Working principally with Kayapó women provides rich opportunities to inquire on gendered practices and allows for analysis of gendered conceptualizations of media engagement. Past media projects among the Kayapó have tended to focus on men's media engagement, and this project attempts to broaden the purview of this engagement by inquiring on gender and Kayapó "media worlds".

Livia K. Stone (Illinois State University)
Romper el Cerco: An Ethnography of Transnational Collaborative Film

This paper asks what the production and distribution of one exceptional Mexican social documentary, *Romper el Cerco* (Canalseisdejulio & Promedios 2006) can tell us about the changing relationship between professional filmmaking and the alternative economies of practice of collaborative and indigenous video. *Romper el Cerco* is largely a human rights documentary that argues Mexican police forces and commercial televised media conspired to justify horrific acts of police violence against a pueblo originario (San Salvador Atenco in the state of Mexico). According to the film, the national media, especially televised news, purposefully portrayed the local activists as dangerous criminals so that there would not be a public outcry when the police brutalized and arrested scores of people who were suspected of being part of a local social movement. This paper argues that *Romper el Cerco* represents a vector of influence that is a

reversal of how indigenous media practices have converged with the conventions of professional filmmaking in the past. In this case, an independent professional production company (Canalseisdejulio) collaborated with a foreign professionally-trained filmmaker involved in an indigenous media association (Promedios) and utilized the open, collaborative production practices of community media to produce their film. Furthermore, an association that historically had reserved copyright restrictions on their work and distributed their products commercially (albeit independently without a corporate distributor), utilized an open, non-copyrighted, and non-capitalist distribution strategy generally associated with indigenous and collaborative media. *Romper el Cerco* demonstrates that the seemingly localized production practices innovated over the past thirty years of Mexico's indigenous media centers have created a transnational diaspora of media-makers that have integrated alternative economies of practice into their repertoires of professional production practice. In short, I argue that the vector of influence between commercial/professional film and community/indigenous video production practices operates in both directions. Furthermore, rather than being a liability in the case of *Romper el Cerco*, the open, collaborative process through which the film was produced (inspired by indigenous filmmaking practices in Chiapas) deeply improved the language, content, distribution, and lasting influence of the film.

Antonio C. La Pastina (Texas A&M University)
The Indigenous as Other in Mainstream Brazilian TV

In this paper presentation I discuss the ways in which indigenous cultures have been constructed and represented in Brazilian mainstream media. I focus particularly on telenovelas, but also address some other representations, such as news, that circulate in local media and inform the ways Indigenous cultures and individuals are constructed and addressed in Brazil. I also discuss briefly how these representations are received and interpreted by viewers, particularly in rural northeast Brazil. As indigenous communities claim a greater space within media production, it is important to think how these productions present a radically alternative representation when compared to mainstream media. How can these new representations enter a dialogue and challenge preconceived ideas circulating in mainstream media, informs the analysis in this presentation.

Richard Pace (Middle Tennessee State University)
Electronic and Digital Media among the Kayapó of Turedjam: An Audience Ethnography in Amazônia

This paper analyzes Kayapó engagement with traditional and new forms of electronic and digital media in the village of Turedjam, Pará, Brazil. The focus is on sociocultural changes associated with the recent introduction of television, cell phones, digital cameras, CDs/DVDs, and the Internet. The study captures the crucial phasing-in and spread of electronic and digital media viewing/use over a three year period. Through audience ethnography the research identifies alterations in social interaction, talk, identity formation, world view, and cultural traditions, as well as interactions with other Kayapó and non-Kayapó groups. The information collected provides important cross-cultural detail on the scope and degree of sociocultural changes produced through viewer/user engagement with media in daily life.

Jamie E. Shenton (Vanderbilt University)
(Tele)Visions of the Future: Individualism versus Intimacy in Emerging Kichwa Media Markets

This paper will elaborate the dynamics of foreign media's mediation in Sacha Loma—a small, rural, indigenous community in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In a gendered and generational analysis, I explore what women in Sacha Loma do, say, and say they think about television stars as they form relationships with them that both work through and succumb to the oft-asymmetrical power dynamics between the televised and the tele-viewer. This paper fleshes out Kichwa women's own analyses of how media may shape their bodies, relationships, and futures. The study finds that, more and more, young women in Sacha Loma desire the thin and white bodies they see in the media, which they often stereotype as "successful." Media consumption is one way young women develop the skills and appearance to succeed in the world beyond the community and produce new (tele)visions of the future. Yet, their individual projects of self-development are consistent with patterns of Kichwa production and sociality through reinvestment of personal gains into the community.