

Lisa Dillon (Université de Montréal)

Footprints in the manuscript: Reflections on the linkage of Canadian historical census data

This keynote talk addresses the uniquely Canadian challenges of linking across historical censuses. The 19th-century Canadian censuses describe a largely rural population fractured by ethno-religious differences. Given the divergent administrative practices from census to census, name homogeneity of the French Canadian population, messy data such as spelling variations and age rounding, attrition resulting from high infant mortality and high rates of emigration to the United States, record linkers face an uphill battle to trace lives from census to census. To what extent do these challenges impede record linkage? Dillon will discuss what lessons are to be learned from recent linkage initiatives, and the potential of these data for understanding social and geographic mobility, as well as changes in household composition over time. This illustrated talk will be sure to spark comparisons to the challenges of contemporary record linkage.