



PETER WALL INSTITUTE PRESENTS: INTERNATIONAL VISITING RESEARCH SCHOLAR

# PRESERVING THE ENDANGERED

Tuesday,  
April 9, 2013  
4:00 pm - 5:00pm

Museum of Anthropology  
Michael Arms Theatre  
University of British Columbia,  
6393 N.W. Marine Drive,  
Vancouver, BC

**What are the relationships between cultures and languages characterized as 'endangered' and the techniques aimed at preserving them? To what extent are the practices of documentation and preservation central in identifying some entities as endangered? Cultural and linguistic notions of endangerment, often taken to be self-evident, have permeated the constitution of various documentary devices - archives, catalogues, inventories, museum collections and databases - as tools for producing knowledge and for enacting policies.**

Focusing on museum collections and on databases, the talk will examine, first, how technologies of documentation shape the construction of data deemed significant, the kind of knowledge such data constitutes and the structures into which it is organized. Secondly, the talk questions the extent to which the notion of endangerment is an exclusively Western and late modern culturally particular phenomenon, inquiring the dual valuation – of the endangered entities themselves and of the practices of preserving and documenting those entities - inherent to the endangerment process.

**Dr. Nélia Dias** is Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology (ISCTE-IUL Lisbon). She received her undergraduate degree in Ethnology at the University of Paris V - Sorbonne and her PhD in Modern and Contemporary History at the EHESS (Paris).

Currently she is developing research on two projects. In 'Endangerment and its Consequences', (co-authored with F. Vidal and financed by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin), she focuses on the techniques, instruments and procedures for preservation and the implications of their application to the 'endangered objects' they are intended to preserve. In 'Museums, Field, and Colony', (coordinated by T. Bennett and financed by the Australian Research Council), she examines the changing relations between museum practices and the governance of metropolitan and colonial populations in former French Indochina.

She has recently held appointments as Andrew W. Mellon Visiting Professor in the Humanities at Tulane University and as Visiting Scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin).



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