



Data Mining the Deceased: Ancestry and the Business of Family

Julia Creet Director, Producer (2016, 55 mins. HD)

Data Mining the Deceased is an essay doc that starts with a wry but accepting look at individual and industry stakes in the phenomenon of family history. More than half of North Americans are fascinated by genealogy. Some gain a sense of identity by uncovering their ancestors, their culture, and their country of origin. Others find it disorienting when they discover that their history differs from what they have always believed. But there is another side to the rise in genealogy that goes beyond human interest. It is arguably the largest historical enterprise in the world, and one of the largest data mining operations, driven by big religion, big business and big technology.

Shot in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Iceland, the divergent aims of the stakeholders become evident as the Mormons (who hold 33 times the number of records than the Library of Congress) claim they will create the genealogical record back to Adam and Eve. Steven Pinker and Alondra Nelson provide the counter balance to this scientific silliness, but no one underestimates the drive to know where we come from, or the ownership and privacy concerns about personal and DNA data in the international flow and aggregation of vital information about the living and the dead.

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