Lecture Abstract

This talk will address the phenomenon of "Quake Poetry," a nationwide explosion of poetic fervor sparked by the Sichuan earthquake of May 2008, examining technology's role in the creation and rapid transmission of multimedia poetic works. After contextualizing the appearance of Quake Poetry and showing different versions of one much reproduced Quake poem, it will be asked whether the multimedia adaptations and circulation of this poetry might be understood using the notion of "cyber folk" culture – that is to say, digitally-enabled culture that finds itself subject to many of the same features of transmission and reception as pre-technological oral folk cultures. The audience will be invited to respond to the poetry presented, to discuss the impact of technology upon new forms of poetry, as well as argue for and against the possibility of a "folk" literature in contemporary cyber-savvy China.

Heather Inwood

Heather Inwood is assistant professor of Modern Chinese Cultural Studies in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. Her research investigates the relationship between new media and contemporary culture in China, especially the ways in which developing technologies and media practices are molding literary and cultural production. Her current book project, "On the Scene of Contemporary Chinese Poetry", analyzes cultural discourse on the "live scene" (xianchang), spanning different spaces of the media to investigate the functioning and conceptualization of the post-2000 poetry scene in mainland China. In addition to her academic work, Heather has published Chinese articles in newspapers and magazines in China and the UK, and has a much neglected Chinese blog on more lighthearted aspects of contemporary Chinese and British culture and society. She has studied at Cambridge University, Beijing University, and SOAS, the University of London.