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Review of *A Guide to American Indian Resource Materials in Great Plains Repositories* By Joseph G. Svoboda

Herbert T. Hoover

University of South Dakota

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A Guide to American Indian Resource Materials in Great Plains Repositories. By Joseph G. Svoboda. Lincoln, Nebraska: Center for Great Plains Studies, 1983. Index. 401 pp. \$16.75.

The frequent users of primary sources are ever grateful for any index, catalogue, guide, or list that can help direct them through manuscripts, published documents, oral histories, and other original materials. Here is no exception; they will appreciate the efforts of Joseph Svoboda and staff for a helpful tool, even though it is one with serious limitations.

It is the product of a questionnaire mailing to which less than one third of the recipients responded. Of these, less than two thirds submitted relevant information. More disconcerting than this, Svoboda's *Guide* lists not only materials on Great Plains Indian peoples, but also those pertaining to Indians situated elsewhere, and it makes no reference to sources available on the Plains tribes held by repositories outside of the region. Hence, it is presented to users as a partial guide to those sources on all Indians held by repositories in this region, and not as a definitive aid to the search for information about any particular tribe or federation situated here. For this reason, it will offer small assistance to a considerable number of users, but extensive direction to no individual scholars.

There is additional deficiency in its fragmentary nature. It is limited by the qualities of the responses of questionnaire recipients, which were "very uneven, depending . . . on the ability of repository personnel." Let a few examples illustrate the consequences. One small but important group of letters exchanged between the missionaries John P. Williamson and Alfred Riggs, preserved by the Dacotah Prairie Museum in Aberdeen, South Dakota, is not identified as such, and the entry about it con-

tains no suggestion regarding how the contents might fill gaps left in greater collections held by the Minnesota Historical Society or the Houghton Library in Massachusetts. The diverse qualities of the Doane Robinson collections in Pierre are barely mentioned in a brief note that does little more than indicate that they occupy some seven feet of space. The massive holdings at the Oral History Center in Vermillion are presented with quantitative notes but almost no qualitative judgments. Similar deficiencies so limit the entries on most collections included that the prospective user is advised to regard this as a mediocre, slightly annotated list, and not as a reliable, documentary guide.

The prospective user is urged, nevertheless, to acquire it for its merits. Svoboda's *Guide* covers a wide geographic range, from Texas to Alberta and from Montana to eastern Kansas. It represents a variety of materials from personal correspondence and taped interviews to published documents and newspapers. In a general way, it indexes materials available by tribe or federation. With few exceptions, it includes the principal repositories that preserve Indian records in this region. As a preliminary list it will be valuable to veteran scholars who understand how to employ it in concert with other aids in their pursuit of records held across the United States and Canada. These scholars, and all librarians who gather Indian-related materials, should add it to their reference collections.

HERBERT T. HOOVER
Department of History
University of South Dakota