



The Indian Question Version 1.00. Objective Computing,

Reviewed by Marc Becker

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Although *The Indian Question* is over two years old, it is still well worth serious consideration for anyone who has research or teaching interests which relate to Native North American issues, especially for those who focus on the nineteenth century. The combination of material which can be difficult to find with the search power of computer technology makes this CD-ROM disk a winner. This disk contains primary source material related to indigenous issues in North America. The core "showcase" item on the disk is Henry Schoolcraft's six-volume encyclopedia *Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge* (AOAK) which he compiled in the 1850s. Together with other works such as George Catlin's 1842 *Letters and Notes on the Manners and Customs of North American Indians*, this disk provides a wealth of information on the lifestyles, languages, religions, cultures, etc. of North American Indians in the nineteenth century. For the researcher, there are also other gems on this disk. There are two guides to materials available in the National Archives related to North American Indians. Also included is Charles Kappler's volume *Indian Treaties* which contains the full texts of 370 treaties between the United States and Indian nations from 1787 to 1876. There is also more contemporary information from the 1970s and 1980s, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) statistics and a list of reservations from the Commerce Department which includes addresses, statistics, and brief de-

scriptions of each reservation. From the main screen of this program, users can access five categories of materials: Language, Art Gallery, Myths, Maps, and Text. These categories provide convenient indices to the material on the disk. The Language option primarily includes pointers to various sections within Schoolcraft's AOAK as well as brief vocabulary tables which Catlin developed and a book on Indian sign language. The "Art Gallery" allows users to scroll through hundreds of color and black & white photographs and drawings which accompanied the texts in Schoolcraft, Catlin, and two other books on the disk. Likewise, the "Maps" section contains an index to the maps in the various books on the disk. "Myths" includes pointers to various myths included on the disk, most significantly Lewis Spence's "The Myths of the North American Indians," and the "Text" option simply lists the books included on the disk in chronological order. Although this disk is packed with information, most of it is from the nineteenth century. The disk includes a short section of "Modern Publications" which almost appear to be appended to the disk as if it were an afterthought. Many people tend to think of Native Americans as something from the past rather than vibrant cultures which will continue to exist into the future. This emphasis on the nineteenth century tends to reinforce this stereotype. An almost necessary corollary of this imbalance are the resulting huge gaps in the material which is included on the disk. There are almost no Native

voices on this disk; most of the material is either from governmental sources or from white outsiders who studied the Indians. Many historical themes such as pan-Indianism, protest, etc. are absent from the disk. Although the information included is good, it is only part of the story. As it stands, nineteenth-century scholars will find this disk most useful. It may be, however, that this focus is fully intentional. Objective Computing explicitly states that this disk intends to help fill a gap in "a lack of readily available material on the 'early' history of native Americans" and that this is "hopefully only the first of a series from Objective Computing on the subject of native North Americans." If that is indeed the case, I anxiously await future releases from Objective Computing which, by all indications, should fill in the gaps which this disk leaves. <p> Installation of this disk is easy and straightforward. It requires nothing more than placing the disk in the drive and running a SETUP.EXE file. Likewise, it is easy to maneuver through the program. Color-coded hypertext jumps are thoughtfully laid out. A menu bar which remains on top of the screen includes buttons which bring up an index of all the material on the disk as well as a history list so that users can retrace their steps back through the program. A powerful full-text search engine with boolean logic capabilities means that the user can quickly jump to specific material. The disk lacks extensive help menus, but the disk is so user-friendly that few users will even have to refer to the limited help topics. <p> The largest technical problem with this CD-ROM is that it <cite>requires</cite> a SuperVGA 256 color 800x600 screen resolution. Apparently this is so that the graphics display on the computer screen is of a higher quality. This requirement, however, unnecessarily limits the usefulness of the CD-ROM. Many people have their computer's screen resolution set to 640 x 480, which means reconfiguring and rebooting the computer before this CD-ROM can be used. <p> More critical, however, are the problems which this could create for instructors who wish to uti-

lize this disk in a classroom setting. Before you take a portable CD-ROM, your laptop, and this disk into the classroom, make sure that your computer is capable of displaying 800 x 600 pixels. Many laptops cannot do this, and many that can, only do it by virtue of "panning" the screen back and forth as you move the mouse from one side to another. What this means is that you cannot view maps, photographs, and drawings in their entirety on the computer screen, nor as projected images on a movie screen in a classroom. This is unfortunate considering the possibilities which searching the treaties and other material on the disk could provide in the classroom. <p> Another limitation is that while you can copy text from the various books on the disk to a word processor, there is no easy way (short of utilizing screen shots) to copy or export the pictures and maps to another program. Many of these graphics would be excellent material which instructors could include in computer presentation programs to illustrate classroom lectures. Disks such as this open the possibility of plagiarism. Objective Computing warns against copyright violations and states that "Potential violators should note that sophisticated means have been used to trace material copied from our discs." But it would seem that occasional use of selected images from the disk in a classroom setting would fall within the "fair use" clause. In future releases, Objective Computing should allow for images to be exported to be used in presentation programs such as WordPerfect Presentations or Microsoft Power Point. <p> The following is a list of the material included on the disk: <p> * Black Hawk, Black Hawk's Autobiography (1833) <p> * George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the North American Indians: Vol. 1, Vol. 2 (1842) <p> * Henry Schoolcraft (ed.), Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States (Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge) (1850) <p> * Henry Schoolcraft, Personal Memoirs of 30 years ... (1851) <p> * "Right Hand Thunder" (possibly a pseudonym), The Indian and White Man, or, The

Indian in Self-Defense (1880) <p> * J. D. Patterson, History of the Black Hawk War (1882) <p> * W. P. Clark, The Indian Sign Language (1885) <p> * Lucien Carr, The Food of Certain American Indians and their Means of Preparing It (1895) <p> * Charles Kappler (ed.), Indian Treaties, 1778-1883 (1904) <p> * Norman Wood, Lives of Famous Indian Chiefs (1906) <p> * Katharine Berry Judson, Myths and Legends of the Pacific Northwest (1910) <p> * Encyclopedia Brit. (11th Ed.), The Indians of North America (1910) <p> * L.H. Bailey (ed.), Aboriginal Agriculture (1912) <p> * Lewis Spence, Myths of the North American Indians (1914) <p> * Bureau of Indian Affairs, Miscellaneous documents (>1970) <p> * Commerce Department, Indian Reservations (1974) <p> * U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Civil Rights Report (1981) <p> * National Archives (Edward Hill), Guide to records in the National Archives relating to American Indians (1981) <p> * National Archives, Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications (related to American Indians) (1984) <p> * Wellpinit School (Spokane Reservation), Pamphlet from Spring 1993 (1993) <p>

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