

It is a vastly important addition to the international history of photography, a necessary corrective to the narrowly provincial ethnocentrism of some historical surveys, and a visual treasury that will undoubtedly be enriched as research continues.

Estelle Jussim
Simmons College
Boston

Guide to Canadian Photographic Archives. CHRISTOPHER SEIFRIED, ed. Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada, 1984. xxvi, 727 p. ISBN 0-660-52274-8. Canada: \$35.00. Other countries: \$42.00.

The most amazing thing about the *Guide to Canadian Photographic Archives* is that it exists! With today's consuming passion for electronic information in "byte" size portions, it's marvelous that the Public Archives of Canada still recognizes the ultimate practicality, portability, and ease of using the basic reference book — and the *Guide* is a basic reference book of the first order. It's an absolutely essential gateway to the labyrinth of Canadian photography collections. In the short time it has been available I've drawn on it heavily and successfully; I've also recommended it a number of times to researchers in other countries who have been looking for Canadian material.

Picture research is always subjective and therefore problematical. Knowing that there are thousands of pictures of Sir John A. Macdonald or Aunt Tilly, the researcher is still looking for *THE* picture — the image that sums up the totality of the subject in one succinct and emotive glance. This is the stuff of which indexes are not made. Given that there is no substitute for looking at some visual form of the picture, the *Guide* is an excellent starting point to bring the researcher to the logical institution and the specific collection which would be, hopefully, of most value.

The *Guide* is as successful as can be expected. It contains descriptions of most of the processed collections in virtually every public collection in the country. Any deficiencies in content are more a reflection of the staggering amount of work that still has to be done on all of our collections. So far we can only see the meniscus on the visual pool. As collections are processed, it is to be hoped that they will be added to an updated *Guide*. As it stands, the *Guide* is a valuable starting point for any picture search. The index appears to be comprehensive and well cross-referenced. The descriptions are generally complete and informative.

On every glowing review a little rain must fall. One frustrating aspect of the *Guide* is the double, translated entries for federal records with separate collection numbers. When checking a lot of references it's bothersome to find you are looking at the same collection twice. There also appear to be many discrepancies in the translations, which makes it difficult to quickly determine whether or not the reference is duplicated. I suggest that the language of the descriptions is generally so simple that they could be entered equally in English or French.

A helpful addition to the *Guide* would be a brief description of the institutions whose collections are listed, along with a phone number and the name of the responsible individual. Knowing the basic size and orientation of a particular collection, operating hours, facilities, and availability of a photoduplicating service can be very helpful in determining whether a research inquiry will be worthwhile.

Last — but of course not least — it would have been truly wonderful if one or more photographs had been reproduced in the *Guide* to remind us that this impressive tome is really all about glorious, delightful, informative, intriguing, beautiful photographs.

Edward Cavell
Curator of Photography
Whyte Foundation

Voices: A Guide to Oral History. DEREK REIMER, ed., assisted by DAVID MATTISON and ALLEN SPECHT. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1984. vi, 72 p. ISBN 0-7718-8396-X \$4.50.

Traditional histories, until quite recently, rejected the methods of Herodotus who patiently collected the reports of eyewitnesses before writing. Instead, they slavishly followed the written word. Archivists fell obediently in line with this approach and consequently our archives bulge with manuscripts, newspapers, and other evidence of our catering to the needs of the textual historian. In the past twenty-five years, however, and in many cases on their own, archivists have begun to collect the spoken word. This has been especially true of small archives which did not or could not collect bulky written records or which served areas or people with strong oral traditions. This was often done despite the criticism of historians who distrusted the written accounts of the interviews and consequently ignored them.

As a result of such attitudes, few practical books on oral history were published; thus a good deal of the interviewing done up to now has been both mechanically and intellectually faulty. With *Voices: A Guide To Oral History*, we have a fine practical guidebook which tries to overcome these problems. The book deals with practical questions such as which recorders to use and the advantages of cassettes *versus* reel-to-reel tapes. It then investigates the relationship between the interviewer and informant, giving advice concisely without belabouring points. It is obvious that archivists prepared the book as it contains a detailed section concerning archival procedures with tapes in which indexing, copying, and transcribing are clearly dealt with.

Anyone setting out to form an oral history collection will treasure this book. I only feel sorry for collectors who began this kind of work years ago and have had to learn by trial and error what *Voices* clarifies so readily. Take, for example, the questions regarding copyright which have always plagued archivists with oral history collections. This work explains American and Canadian copyright laws succinctly, showing that in Canada the interview is owned by the person or organization responsible for making the recording; release forms are signs of good faith but are not essential. Examples of release forms, index cards, and other written records of the taped interview are given.

The guide would have been improved by a section dealing with the problem of archives and their relationship with the CBC and local radio stations, since their cooperation has the potential to be most helpful in any collecting programme. I do not care for the little boxed quotes which appear throughout the text. They are distracting and