EARLY ENCOUNTERS IN NORTH AMERICA

PEOPLES, CULTURES, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment

"A masterful product… the presentation here is elegant, and the database design and indexing are thorough and imaginative. Highly recommended for all academic libraries." –*Library Journal*

"An excellent resource for teaching research methods." –*Reference Reviews*

Painstakingly assembled from hundreds of sources, *Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment* is an online database that documents the relationships among peoples in North America from 1534 to 1850. The collection focuses on personal accounts and provides unique perspectives from all of the protagonists, including traders, slaves, missionaries, explorers, soldiers, native peoples, and officials, both men and women. The project brings coherence to a wide range of published and unpublished accounts, including narratives, diaries, journals, and letters.

Content

The variety of cultures in early North America was unprecedented. Dutch, English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, African, and a host of Indian peoples developed a complex history of interactions. This collection allows scholars to see the effect of European cultures on Indians and equally to explore the Indians' contributions to the Europeans.

The Indian perspective is recorded in a wide variety of sources, including oral accounts written down by Europeans at the time of contact and afterward, speeches, correspondence, and publications produced by Indians, such as Cusick's *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations* and Copway's *Life, History and Travels.* Alexander Street's unique semantic indexing lets the user identify instances where Indian views are being relayed by European writers.

The database presents the first Europeans' impressions of North America, the language they used to capture new visual and emotional experiences, their descriptions of the animals and plants that they were seeing for the first time, their views of what they called the New World, and the propaganda they wrote in an effort to persuade potential colonists to emigrate. A specially developed controlled vocabulary enables researchers to find materials pertaining to cultural issues, such as kinship, Indian ceremonies, dress, religious practices, and more.

The "literature of place" unfolds clearly through these narratives. Users interested in finding accounts from a particular geographic region will be able to easily locate materials specific to that area thanks to a standardized vocabulary of geographic terms. So, for example, a search for material pertaining to Chicago will retrieve accounts of that city even before it was named.

Students of natural history will have instantaneous access to hundreds of years of recorded observations. Within the collection are thousands of descriptions of lands, fauna, and flora. In some cases these descriptions and drawings are now the only source we have for studying species that are extinct.

Alexander Street's Semantic Indexing

Early Encounters in North America is much more than a collection of digitized texts. With unique semantic indexing and dozens of newly created controlled vocabularies, previously hidden details can be extracted in seconds. There are subject terms for peoples, for customs and behavior, and for environmental terms, as well as for standardized places and dates. Semantic indexing lets researchers answer questions like these in seconds:

- Show me all descriptions of the British by American Indians.
- Give me all descriptions of fatal encounters with the Huron that occurred between 1640 and 1660.
- Show me all descriptions of fauna in North Carolina between 1700 and 1750.
- Explore the vocabularies used when particular explorers first encountered Native American settlements.
- Show me all writings showing Christopher Columbus using negotiation tactics in exchanges with Indians.

Publication Details

Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment is available on the Web, through annual subscription or as a one-time purchase of perpetual rights. It contains 100,000 pages of text along with associated maps and images.

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