Today's Puzzlers

Who said, "To enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride," and what was he referring to?
What was "one of the most politically significant reference books in history"?
What part of Roget's *Thesaurus* does McArthur describe as an "afterthought"?
"Knowledge" and "Information"
Shifting conceptions and forms of knowledge: 1500-1750
Representations of knowledge: Cabinets and museums
17th-c. reactions to "Information Overload"
The modern organization of knowledge: from theme to alphabet
The rise of the dictionary
where we are

Still becoming modern...
Many, if not most, of the cultural phenomena of the modern world derive from [the 18th century] -- the periodical, the newspaper, the novel, the journalist, the critic, the public library, the concert, the public museum [not to mention intellectual property, scientific societies, the dictionary and encyclopedia, etc.– GN]. Perhaps most important of all, it was then that 'public opinion' came to be recognized as the ultimate arbiter in matters of taste and politics."--Tim Blanning, *The Culture of Power*
"knowledge" and "information"

"human knowledge" vs. "human information"

OED: **knowledge**, 13: The sum of **what is known**.

Knowledge as a collective property:

"The Chinese of the third century had knowledge of porcelain."

"medical knowledge" vs "medical information": what is the difference?
II. Shifting conceptions and forms of knowledge: 1500-1750
The 15th-Century Curriculum

The *enkyklios paideia* ("circle of learning"):  
- **Trivium**: grammar, logic, rhetoric  
- **Quadrivium**: arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music  
- The three philosophies: ethics, metaphysics, "natural philosophy"  
- Higher faculties: theology, medicine, law
Changing Frames of Knowledge

Within 200 years, something like the mod, system emerges. Responses to influences that are:
- Pragmatic/material
- Philosophical/academic
- Symbolic/political
  (Not independent...)
The Representations of Knowledge

Knowledge and the role of the "trésor"

Libraries, anthologies, dictionaries, in a word "treasuries" [trésors], alongside of encyclopedic collections, delimit a vast territory on which are cast the signs required for knowledge, the expression of identities, and communication among the members of the group.

-Alain Rey, "Les trésors de la langue," 1986

i.e., The trésor doesn't simply inform; it represents.
Material Representations of Knowledge

Curriculum mirrored in form of library (bibliographies)

Leiden University Library, 1610
Material Representations of Knowledge

Curriculum mirrored in form of library (bibliographies)

Leiden University Library, 1610
"He Trafficks to all places, and has his Correspondents in every part of the World; yet his Merchandizes serve not to promote our Luxury, nor encrease our Trade, and neither enrich the Nation, nor himself. A Box or two of Pebbles or Shells, and a dozen of Wasps, Spiders and Caterpillers are his Cargo. He values a Camelion, or Salamander’s Egg, above all the Sugars and Spices of the West and East-Indies... He visits Mines, Cole-pits, and Quarries frequently, but not for that sordid end that other Men usually do, viz, gain; but for the sake of the fossil Shells and Teeth that are sometimes found there." (Mary Astell, "Character of a Virtuoso," 1696)
Representations of Knowledge: The Kunstkammer

Organization of knowledge mirrored in form of Kunstkammer, cabinets of curiosities, Wunderkammer, etc.

Museum Wormiamum, 1655
Representations of Knowledge: The Kunstkammer

Natural History Kabinet, Naples, 1599
The Kunstkammer of Rudolph II was a carefully organized "museum" articulated through an understanding of the world... Its contents were organised to exhibit a world picture, with objects that symbolised all aspects of nature and art, as conceptualized by the occult philosophers... This organisation depended on the concept of resemblance, where the objects and their proximities suggested macrocosmic/microcosmic links.

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Organisation of Knowledge*
Material Representations of Knowledge

Analogy... makes possible the marvellous confrontation of resemblances across space. It also speaks... of adjacencies, of bonds and joints. Its power is immense, for the similitudes of which it treats are not the visible, substantial ones between things themselves; they need only be the more subtle resemblances of relations.

Michel Foucault, The Order of Things
Representations of Knowledge: The Studiolo

Studiolo of Francesco I
Florence (1570)

Kunstkammer, 1636
Representations of Knowledge: The Kunstschrank

The Kunstschrank (art cabinet or art shrine)
Representations of Knowledge: The Kunstschrank

Presentation of the Pomeranian Kunstschrank to Duke Philip II of Pomerania-Stettin (Anton Mozart, 1615)
From Cabinets to Museums

Kunstkammers first made available for public viewing in mid-17th. C (Kunstmuseum Basel, 1661)

Public museums in 18th c:

British Museum, 1759, containing cabinet of curiosities assembled by Hans Sloan, ms collections, Royal Library. Later: collections of antiquities, etc.

Uffizi Gallery, Florence, 1765

Belvedere Palace, Vienna, 1781

Louvre Palace opened to public in 1793 with royal collections; augmented by Napoleon
17th c. Galleries

21 The Imperial Gallery in Prague, by Johann Bretschneider, 1714. The paintings are arranged according to the visual and decorative effect.
18th c. Galleries

Painting Galleries, Schloss Belvedere, Vienna, 1781

*Historical note:* Art historians are interested in how works of art were displayed in 18th-century galleries, and this plan of the paintings gallery at Schloss Belvedere in 1778, shows how the works were grouped by country, and within that, by (geographical) school, or by individual artist. This is a marked contrast to the form of display shown in Plate 23.
"We might well regard the information explosion as the dominant achievement and characteristic of our times." Smithsonian Secretary Robert McC. Adams

And while Mr. Reagan prospered in schools without libraries, I believe that the "information explosion" of more recent years has made school libraries necessary.

This is the information age! There is an information explosion. Some students will need a longer period of time to master mathematics, science, economics, world history...
Pragmatic Forces: Perceptions of "Information Overload"

We have reason to fear that the multitude of books which grows every day in a prodigious fashion will make the following centuries fall into a state as barbarous as that of the centuries that followed the fall of the Roman Empire. Unless we try to prevent this danger by separating those books which we must throw out or leave in oblivion from those which one should save and within the latter between what is useful and what is not. Adrien Baillet, 1685

“That horrible mass of books which keeps on growing, [until] the disorder will become nearly insurmountable." Gottfried Leibniz, 1680
The Reorganization of Libraries

Antonfrancesco Doni, 1550: there are “so many books that we do not have time to read even the titles.”

Gabriel Naudé proposes library organization scheme to “find books without labor, without trouble, and without confusion.”
Strategies for dealing with information overload

Compendia and reference books (*répertoires* or *trésors*)

As long as the centuries continue to unfold, the number of books will grow continually, and one can predict that a time will come when it will be almost as difficult to learn anything from books as from the direct study of the whole universe. It will be almost as convenient to search for some bit of truth concealed in nature as it will be to find it hidden away in an immense multitude of bound volumes.

—Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 1755
Strategies for dealing with information overload

Compendia and reference books (répertoires or trésors)

"I esteem these Collections extremely profitable and necessary, considering, the brevity of our life, and the multitude of things which we are now obliged to know, e’re one can be reckoned amongst the number of learned men, do not permit us to do all of ourselves." Gabriel Naudé, 1661 [librarian to Mazarin]

The Cyclopaedia will "answer all the Purposes of a Library, except Parade and Incumbrance.” Ephraim Chambers, 1728
Strategies for dealing with information overload

**BUT:**

“So many summaries, so many new methods, so many indexes, so many dictionaries have slowed the live ardor which made men learned.... All the sciences today are reduced to dictionaries and no one seeks other keys to enter them."

M. Huet, 1722
The most accomplished way of using books at present is twofold. Either, first, to serve them as men do Lords, learn their titles exactly and then brag of their acquaintance:—or, secondly, which is indeed the choicer, the profounder, and politer method, to get a thorough insight into the Index, by which the whole book is governed and turned, like fishes, by the tail. For to enter the palace of Learning at the great gate requires an expense of time and forms; therefore men of much haste and little ceremony are content to get in by the back-door. ... Thus men catch knowledge by throwing their wit on the posteriors of a book, as boys do sparrows by flinging salt upon the tail."

Jonathan Swift, "Tale of a Tub," 1704
Strategies for dealing with information overload

The most accomplished way of using books at present is twofold. Either, first, to serve them as men do Lords, learn their titles exactly and then brag of their acquaintance:—or, secondly, which is indeed the choicer, the profounder, and politer method, to get a thorough insight into the Index, by which the whole book is governed and turned, like fishes, by the tail. For to enter the palace of Learning at the great gate requires an expense of time and forms; therefore men of much haste and little ceremony are content to get in by the back-door. ... Thus men catch knowledge by throwing their wit on the posteriors of a book, as boys do sparrows by flinging salt upon the tail.

Jonathan Swift, "Tale of a Tub," 1704

...How Index-learning turns no student pale, Yet holds the eel of Science by the tail.

Pope, "The Dunciad," 1728
Strategies for Dealing with Information Overload

Note-taking system of Vincent Placcius, from *De arte excerpendi*, 1689
Strategies for dealing with information overload

Compendia and reference books (*Répertoires* or *Trésors*). Growth of alphabetical organization (presumes reading in parts.)

"I esteem these Collections extreamly profitable and necessary, considering, the brevity of our life, and the multitude of things which we are now obliged to know, e’re one can be reckoned amongst the number of learned men, do not permit us to do all of ourselves." Gabriel Naudé, 1661 [librarian to Mazarin]

The *Cyclopaedia* will "answer all the Purposes of a Library, except Parade and Incumbrance." Ephraim Chambers, 1728
Ibn Qutayba (9th c.): "Book of the Best Traditions"

1. Power
2. War
3. Nobility
4. Character
5. Learning and eloquence
6. Asceticism
7. Friendship
8. Prayer
9. Food
10. Women
The Classificatory Urge: Thematic Organization

Vincent de Beauvais, Speculum triplex, 1244, in 3 divisions:

Speculum naturale: God, angels & devils, man, the creation, and natural history
Speculum doctrinale: Grammar, logic, ethics, medicine, crafts…
Speculum historiale: History of the world…
Wilkins' universal language

Explaining the symbol

The generic character $\overline{b}$ doth signify the genus of space. The acute angle on the left side doth denote the first difference, which is Time. The other affix signifies the ninth species under the differences, which is Everness. The Loop at the end of this affix denotes the word is to be used adverbially; so that the sense of it must be the same which we express by the phrase, For Ever and Ever.

John Wilkins "An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language' 1668

de, an element

deb, the first of the elements, fire

deba, a part of the element fire, a flame

"children would be able to learn this language without knowing it be artificial; afterwards, at school, they would discover it being an universal code and a secret encyclopaedia." Borges
Wilkins’ universal language

... a certain Chinese encyclopaedia entitled 'Celestial Empire of benevolent Knowledge'. In its remote pages it is written that the animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.

there is no classification of the Universe not being arbitrary and full of conjectures

Jorge Luis Borges
New Schemes of Organization: Philosophical Influences

Francis Bacon's scheme puts man at the center:
  - Nature (astronomy, meteorology, etc.).
  - Man (anatomy, powers, actions),
  - Man acting on nature (medicine, visual arts, arithmetic),
The Tree of Bacon
The Tree of Bacon

DIVINE OR NATURAL THEOLOGY
- Physics
- Metaphysics
- Pure Mathematics
- Geometry
- Astronomy
- Cosmography
- Architecture
- Engineering

PHILOSOPHY
- Natural
  - Experimental
  - Speculative
- Experimental
- Speculative
  - Physical
  - Natural
- Human
  - Rational
    - Faculty
      - Nature of the soul
      - Nature of the good
    - Moral
    - Cultural
      - Science
      - Prose
      - Oratory
      - Government
      - War
      - Law of nations
      - Theology
      - Ethical
      - Political
      - Of the Church
New Schemes of Organization: Didactic Objectives

Comenius (Amos Komensky), Orbis sensualium pictus, 1658

1. Elements, firmament, fire, meteors
2. Waters, earths, stones, metals,
3. Trees, fruits, herbs, shrubs
4. Animals
5. Man and his body…
20. Providence, God and the angels…
Comenius's Descendants
Comenius's Descendants

Peter Marc Roget: 1779-1869
Comenius's Descendants

Peter Marc Roget: 1779-1869
Alphabetical order already in use

Catholic index of prohibited books; Erasmus's proverbs, etc.

Practical advantages:

- Facilitates access to particular entries (assuming a certain mode of reading)
- Philosophically modest

"It might be more for the general interest of learning, to have the partitions thrown down, and the whole laid in common again, under one undistinguished name." Ephraim Chambers
Chamber's Cyclopædia,
The Encyclopédie

First vol. appears in 1751; last in 1772

Denis Diderot
Mixing Theme and Alphabet

[The encyclopedic arrangement of our knowledge ... consists of collecting knowledge into the smallest area possible and of placing the philosopher at a vantage point, so to speak, high above this vast labyrinth, whence he can perceive the principle sciences and the arts simultaneously. From there he can see at a glance the objects of their speculations and the operations which can be made on these objects; he can discern the general branches of human knowledge, the points that separate or unite them; and sometimes he can even glimpse the secrets that relate them to one another. It is a kind of world map which is to show the principle countries, their position and their mutual dependence, the road that leads directly from one to the other.]

Jean d'Alembert
"The tree of human knowledge could be formed in several ways, either by relating different knowledge to the diverse faculties of our mind or by relating it to the things that it has as its object. The difficulty was greatest where it involved the most arbitrariness. But how could there not be arbitrariness? Nature presents us only with particular things, infinite in number and without firmly established divisions. Everything shades off into everything else by imperceptible nuances"
ESSAI D'UNE DISTRIBUTION GÉNÉALOGIQUE DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS PRINCIPAUX.

Selon l'Explication détaillée du Système des Connaissances Humaines dans le Discours préliminaire des Editeurs de l'Encyclopédie publiée par M. Diderot et M. d'Alembert, À Paris en 1751

Reduit en cette forme pour découvrir la connaissance Humaine d'un coup d'oeil.
Par Chrétien Frederic Guillaume Roth, À Weimar, 1769
The Tree of Diderot & D'Alembert

MAP of the SYSTEM of HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

UNDERSTANDING

MEMORY
- Sacred (History of the Prophets)
- Ecclesiastical
- Civil, Ancient, & Modern
- Civil history, properly so
- Literary history
- Memoirs
- Anecdotes
- Graphs Historiae

REASON
- General metaphysics, or Ontology, or Science of being in general, of Possibility, of Existence, of Duration, etc.
- Science
  - Natural Theology
  - Revealed Theology
  - Theology of God
  - Science of good and evil spirits
- Religion
  - Belief
  - Meditations
  - Dogmas
  - Black magic
- Mathematics
  - Algebra
  - Geometry
  - Natural

IMAGINATION
- Poetry
  - Narrative
  - Poetry
  - Epic
  - Sonnet
  - Ballad
  - Ode
  - Epistle
  - Divine
  - Moral
- Art
  - Music
  - Painting
  - Architecture
  - Civil engineering
- Imagination
Method, therefore, becomes natural to the mind which has been accustomed to contemplate not things only, or for their own sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the relations of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyze these relations, with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable, is to teach the science of method.
S.T. Coleridge, *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, 1817-35. Four Sections:

I. Pure Sciences, 2 vols., 1,813 pages, 16 plates, 28 treatises, includes grammar, law and theology;

II. Mixed and Applied Sciences, 6 vols., 5,391 pages, 437 plates, 42 treatises, including fine arts, useful arts, natural history and its application, the medical sciences;

III. History and Biography, 5 vols., 4,458 pages, 7 maps, containing biography (135 essays) chronologically arranged, interspersed with (210) chapters on history (to 1815), as the most philosophical, interesting and natural form.

IV. Miscellaneous and lexicographical, 13 vols., 10,338 pages, 105 plates, including geography, a dictionary of English and descriptive natural history.
Revisiting Thematic Organization

1974: 15th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* divided the Micropædia (short articles) the Macropædia (major articles) and the Propædia (Outline of Knowledge).
Ilma Julieta Urrutia Chang was Guatemala’s national representative for the major beauty pageants in 1984.

The N battery is a type of battery. It has a battery. It has a diameter of 12 mm and a height of 30.2 mm. For a typical alkaline battery, the N size weighs 9 grams.

A System Requirements Specification (SRS) is a document where the requirements of a system that is planned to be developed are listed.

Protestants in Eritrea are about 91,232, which are 2% of the population.
III. The Emergence of the Modern Dictionary
The Emergence of the Vernacular

Concerns that the vernacular (i.e., ordinary spoken) language is not an adequate vehicle for philosophy, history, etc.

Besyde Latyne, our langage is imperfite, Quhilk in sum part, is the cause and the wyte [fault], Quhy that Virgillis vers, the ornate bewte In till our toung, may not obseruit be For that bene Latyne wordes, mony ane That in our leid ganand [suitable language], translation has nane....

Gawin Douglas, 1553

For I to no other ende removed hym from his naturall and loftye Style to our own corrput and base, or as al men affyrme it: most barbarous Language: but onely to satisfye the instant requestes of a few my familiar frendes.

Alex. Neville, preface to translation of Seneca, 1563

Shall English be so poore, and rudely-base As not be able (through mere penury) To tell what French hath said with gallant grace, And most tongues else of less facunditie?

John Davies, 1618
"Inkhorn words" -- learned words coined from Greek or Latin: *absurdity, dismiss, celebrate, encyclopedia, habitual, ingenious* (but also *eximious, "excellent"; obstetate, "bear witness"; adnichilate, "reduce to nothing")

Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that wee never affect any strange ynkehorse terms, but to speake as is commonly received: neither seeking to be over fine or yet living over-carelesse, using our speeche as most men doe, and ordering our wittes as the fewest have done. Thomas Wilson, *Arte of Rhetorique*, 1553
Refining & Codifying the Language

Cawdrey, 1604:

Some men seek so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language, so that if some of their mothers were alive, they were not able to tell, or understand what they say, and yet these fine English Clerks, will say they speak in their mother tongue; but one might well charge them, for counterfeitying the Kings English. Also, some far journied gentlemen, at their returne home, like as they love to go in forraine apparrell, so they will pouder their talke with over-sea language.... Doth any wise man think, that wit resteth in strange words, or els standeth it not in wholesome matter, and apt declaring of a mans mind? Do we not speak, because we would have other to understand us? or is not the tongue given for this end, that one might know what another meaneth?
Early dictionaries are usually bilingual (e.g., Latin-Cornish), organized thematically.

First monolingual dictionaries appear in early c. 17. with Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall of Hard Usual English Words*, 1604 ("for the benefit and helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or other unskillful persons")
The desire for "illustration" in France

Would to God that some noble heart could employ himself in setting out rules for our French language... If it is not given rules, we will find that every fifty years the French language will have been changed and perverted in very large measure. G. Tory, 1529
Formation of the Académie Française

Modeled on the accademia della Crusca, Florence (1583), which published 1st dict. In 1612
Formed in 1635 by Cardinal Richlieu; 40 members ("les immortels")
1st ed. of dictionary appears in 1694 (6 or 7 others since then).

Small direct effect on the language.

Model for other language academies in Sweden, Spain, Romania, Portugal, Russia, etc. with varying degrees of influence
[Britain] has become a nation of readers. --Samuel Johnson, 1781

The newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbors, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life…creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations. --Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. 
Linguistic anxiety and the public sphere

How to coordinate public opinion via an impersonal print discourse between people who are anonymous to one another, in the absence of context...
The Growing Sense of Crisis

John Dryden (1693): "we have yet no prosodia, not so much as a tolerable dictionary, or a grammar, so that our language is in a manner barbarous.

William Warburton (1747): the English language is "destitute of a Test or Standard to apply to, in cases of doubt or difficulty.... For we have neither Grammar nor Dictionary, neither Chart nor Compass, to guide us through this wide sea of Words."
An academy for English?

1697 Daniel Defoe proposes establishing an academy to be "wholly composed of gentlemen, whereof twelve to be of the nobility, if possible, and twelve private gentlemen, and a class of twelve to be left open for mere merit….The voice of this society should be sufficient authority for the use of words."
Desire to "ascertain" (fix) the language:
A major concern among writers -- cf involvement of Addison, Swift, Pope, Johnson, etc.

1712: Swift writes "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue in a Letter to …

My Lord; I do here in the Name of all the Learned and Polite Persons of the Nation, complain to your Lordship, as First Minister, the our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions; and the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and, that in many Instances, it offends against every Part of Grammar. ..
Desire to "ascertain" (fix) the language:
A major concern among writers -- cf involvement of
Addison, Swift, Pope, Johnson, etc.

1712: Swift writes "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and
Ascertaining the English Tongue in a Letter to the Most
Honourable Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and Mortimer,
Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain":

My Lord; I do here in the Name of all the Learned and Polite
Persons of the Nation, complain to your Lordship, as First
Minister, the our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily
Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily
Corruptions; and the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have
chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and, that in many
Instances, it offends against every Part of Grammar. ..
Swift's "Proposal" 1712

if [the language] were once refined to a certain Standard, perhaps there might be Ways found out to fix it for ever; or at least till we are invaded and made a Conquest by some other State...

In order to reform our Language, I conceive, My Lord, that a free, judicious Choice should be made of such Persons, as are generally allowed to be best qualified for such a Work, without any regard to Quality, Party, or Profession. These, to a certain Number at least, should assemble at some appointed Time and Place, and fix on Rules by which they design to proceed.
Reactions to Swift's Proposal

I should rejoice with him [Swift] if a way could be found out to *fix our language for ever*, that like the *Spanish* cloak, it might always be in fashion.

John Oldmixon, on Swift's Proposal...
The Growing Sense of Crisis

Continuing desire to fix the language:

"Suffer not our Shakespear, and our Milton, to become two or three centuries hence what Chaucer is at present, the study only of a few poring antiquarians, and in an age or two more the victimts of bookworms." Thomas Sheridan

Cf Alexander Pope, "Essay on Criticism"
Short is the date, alas! of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.
No longer now that Golden Age appears,
When partiahrch wits survived a thousand years:
Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare threescore is all ev'n that can boast:
Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is shall Dryden be.
If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our stile, which I, who can never wish to see dependance multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy...

Johnson, Preface to the Dictionary

As to a publick academy... I think it not only unsuitable to the genius of a free nation., but in itself ill calculated to reform and fix a language. We need make no doubt but that the best forms of speech will, in time, establish themselves by their own superior excellence...

Joseph Priestly, Rudiments of Grammar, 1761

Contrast the role of the state in French....
Johnson to the Rescue

1746: J. approached by "conger" of booksellers to make dict. for 1500 guineas

Johnson installs himself and his amusesenses in Gough Square to begin work on the Dictionary

1747: The "Plan of an English Dictionary" appears
1755 appearance of Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language.
Johnson to the Rescue

1755 appearance of Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language.
Some Johnsonian Definitions

Excise: A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.
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Excise: A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

Lexicographer: A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.
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Oats: A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland appears to support the people.
Some Johnsonian Definitions

Excise: A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

Lexicographer: A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.

Oats: A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland appears to support the people.

Patron: One who countenances, supports or protects. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery.
The Success of the *Dictionary*

The Dictionary, with a Grammar and History of the English Language, being now at length published, in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies.

James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*. 
The Success of the *Dictionary*

Talk of war with a Briton, he’ll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France,
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men . . .
First Shakspeare and Milton, like Gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epick to flight;
In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And Johnson, well-arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more!"

David Garrick
The Success of the Dictionary

At length, what many had wished, and many had attempted in vain, what seemed indeed to demand the united efforts of a number, the diligence and acuteness of a single man performed. The English Dictionary appeared; and, as the weight of truth and reason is irresistible, its authority has nearly fixed the external form of our language; and from its decisions few appeals have yet been made. Robert Nares, 1782

An accurate evaluation?

Johnson condemns words like *bully*, *coax*, and *job*. 
The Persistence of Form

The dictionary: the most conservative and conventionalized of literary genres.

Cf Adam Makkai: "Nothing significantly new has happened in lexicography since the first printed dictionaries after Gutenberg invented the printing of books."
"The dictionary" like "the Periodic Table": Form answers to structure of represented domain + user needs…
Features of Johnson's Dictionary

Meanings illustrated by citations from English writers:
"The book written by books"
The Didactic Uselessness of Definitions

Weakness of genus-differential definitions

**disappointed** MW: defeated in expectation or hope
The Didactic Uselessness of Definitions

Weakness of genus-differentia definitions

**disappointed** MW: defeated in expectation or hope

**disappointment** is when you expect something to happen
The Didactic Uselessness of Definitions

Weakness of genus-differentia definitions

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**disappointment** is when you expect something to happen
And you want it to happen
And when the time comes for it to happen
It doesn’t happen
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Weakness of genus-differentia definitions

**Disappointed** MW: defeated in expectation or hope

**disappointment** is when you expect something to happen
And you want it to happen
And when the time comes for it to happen
It doesn’t happen
And you feel bad
The Symbolic Function of the Dictionary
Defining "The Language"

Why include 'all the words'? Why bother to define simple words?

Cf defs in Nathan Bailey's dict., 1721:

cat: "a creature well known"
black: "a colour"
strawberry: "a well known fruit"
Defining the Compass of the Language

Let any man of correct taste cast his eye on such words as *denominable*, *opionatry*, *ariolation*, *assation*, *clancular*, and *commuinuable*, and let him say whether a dictionary which gives *thousands* of such items, as *authorized English words*, is a safe standard of writing. Noah Webster on Johnson’s *Dictionary*

Words have been admitted in the language that are not only disreputable in origin, not only offensive in all their associations, not only vulgar in essence, but unfit at all points for survival. The *New York Herald* (1890) on Funk & Wagnall's inclusion of *chesty* "bold"

"...that most monstrous of non-words." *Life Magazine* on Webster's *Third International*'s inclusion of *irregardless*
A monument, like a folio dictionary, is immovable and huge, inviolable and absolute in its expression of authority and its solidification of public memory; it exercises its authority as it represents it." (A. Reddick)

There is in [Johnson's *Dictionary*] a kind of architectural nobleness; it stands there like a great solid square-built edifice; you judge that a true builder did it." (Thos. Carlyle)
You have corrected the dangerous doctrines of European powers, correct now the languages you have imported... The American language will thus be as distinct as the government, free from all the follies of unphilosophical fashion, and resting upon truth as its only regulator. William Thornton, 1793.

From the changes in civil policy, manners, arts of life, and other circumstances attending the settlement of English colonies in America, most of the language of heraldry, hawking, hunting, and especially that of the old feudal and hierarchical establishments of England will become utterly extinct in this country; much of it already forms part of the neglected rubbish of antiquity. Noah Webster, 1806
Cf Webster’s Spelling reforms: *honor, theater*, etc., but also *tung, iz*...

"A capital advantage of this [spelling] reform in these States would be, that it would make a difference between the English orthography and the American.... I am confident that such an event is an object of vast political consequence."
Development of the Dictionary

1857-1928: Preparation of the OED; historical record of the entire language...

James Murray
We could scarcely have a lesson on the growth of our English tongue, we could scarcely follow upon one of its significant words, without having unawares a lesson in English history as well, without not merely falling upon some curious fact illustrative of our national life, but learning also how the great heart which is beating at the centre of that life, was being gradually shaped and moulded.

Richard Chevenix Trench