The Organization of Knowledge, 2

History of Information i218
Geoff Nunberg

Feb. 24, 2011
Where We Are
For Tuesday, 3/1

Dan Brownstein, guest lecturer


Conrad, J. 1899. *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 1-17 (ending with “Dash it all!”)
Students can submit a 5-7 page paper instead of a midterm exam. We think you'll get a lot out of the exercise, but be warned it will probably involve more work than preparation for the exam will. If opt to do the paper and then decide at the last minute that you can't, you can always take the midterm.

Students who want to do a paper in place of a midterm should send us a one-paragraph note by March 3 indicating what topic they'll be taking on so that we can sign off on it. A 3/4-page outline of the paper, with a list of sources, will be due on March 11. The paper itself will be due on March 17 by 8 AM. In addition to the readings, the paper should draw on at least three scholarly sources (books or journal articles) not on the readings.
Itinerary: 2/24

Rise of the vernacular

The creation of the modern dictionary

The circles of knowledge

The material representations of knowledge: libraries, museums, encyclopedias, dictionaries
The Emergence of the Vernacular

The decline of Latin

1661 Boyle publishes New Experiments Physico-Mechanical, followed by The Sceptical Chymist in 1661. Later arranges for Latin translations of works to counter piracy.

Pct of Latin titles in German-speaking world:
- 1650: 67%
- 1700: 38%
- 1750: 28%
- 1800: 4%

Newton's Opticks, 1704
Out of the shadow of Latin

Emergence of standard dialects (London English, Parisian French, Tuscan Italian)

Printing

The Reformation

Proto-nationalism

("this sceptered isle...")
Out of the shadow of Latin

Rise of the commercial class/Growth of cities

Growth from 1500-1600:
- Paris 100m-200m
- London 60m-200m

Growth of literacy & schooling

French literacy rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>men</th>
<th>women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1680</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"une France double"
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

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 straunge ynkehorne termes, 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

Robert Cawdrey, Table Alphabeticall, 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 Clearks, will say they speak in their mother tongue; but one might well charge them, for counterfeyting the Kings English. Also, some far journied gentlemen, at their returne home, like as they love to go in forraine apparrell, so they will poudre their talke with over-sea language....
The Creation of the Modern Dictionary
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")
Alphabetical Order

If thou be desirous (gentle Reader) rightly and readily to understand, and to profit by this Table, and such like, then thou must learne the Alphabet, to wit, the order of the Letters as they stand, perfecty without booke, and where euery Letter standeth: as (b) neere the beginning, (n) about the middest, and (t) toward the end. Nowe if the word, which thou art desirous to finde, begin with (a) then looke in the beginning of this Table, but if with (v) looke towards the end. Againe, if thy word beginne with (ca) looke in the beginning of the letter (c) but if with (cu) then looke toward the end of that letter. And so of all the rest. &c.
If thou be desirous (gentle Reader) rightly and readily to vnderstand, and to profit by this Table, and such like, then thou must learne the Alphabet, to wit, the order of the Letters as they stand, perfecty without booke, and where euery Letter standethe: as (b) neere the beginning, (n) about the middest, and (t) toward the end. Nowe if the word, which thou art desirous to finde, begin with (a) then looke in the beginning of this Table, but if with (v) looke towards the end. Againe, if thy word beginne with (ca) looke in the beginning of the letter (c) but if with (cu) then looke toward the end of that letter. **And so of all the rest. &c.**
The desire for "illustration" in France

1530: Founding of Collège de France, with French admitted as language of higher education
1539: Ordonnonces de Villers-Cotteret (1539) establish use of French in law courts

Percentage of book titles published in Paris in French:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1501</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1528</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1549</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1575</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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).
Model for other language academies in Sweden, Spain, Romania, Portugal, Russia, etc.
The "Reading Revolution"

Book titles published in Britain:
1500-1509: 400
1630's: 6000
1710's: 21,000
1790's: 56,000

Growth of newspapers & periodicals, lending libraries, reading clubs
"Sixty years ago the only people who bought books were scholars, but today there is hardly a woman with some claim to education who does not read. Readers are to be found in every class, both in the towns and the country, even the common soldiers... take out books from the lending libraries." Deutsches Museum, 1780

"I cannot help observing that the sale of books in general has increase prodigiously within the last twenty years. The poorer sort of farmers who before that period spent their winter evenings in relating stories of witches, ghosts, hobgoblins, etc. now shorten the winter nights by hearing their sons and daughters read tales, romances, etc. and on entering their homes you may see Tom Jones, Roderick Random, and other entertaining books stuck up on their bacon-racks." James Lackington, 1783
Print, the Public, and Linguistic Anxiety

[ Britain ] has become a nation of readers. --Samuel Johnson, 1781

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."
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 victims 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 partiarch 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.
An academy to "ascertain" the language?

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

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...
The Rejection of an Academy

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 amensense in Gough Square to begin work on the Dictionary
1747: The "Plan of an English Dictionary" appears
Johnson to the Rescue

1755: Appearance of Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language.

The English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow: and it may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed.
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.

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

The Dictionary being now at length published... 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 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

*Did the Dictionary really fix the language?*
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."
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

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

**disappointment** is when you expect something to happen
And you want it to happen
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
And you want it to happen
And when the time comes for it to happen
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
And you want it to happen
And when the time comes for it to happen
It doesn’t happen
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
And you want it to happen
And when the time comes for it to happen
It doesn’t happen
And you feel bad
The Methodology of Lexicography

Method for isolation & circumscription of relevant precedents (identification of “the language” in terms of public discourse)

Method for isolating and abstracting contributions of individual words to interpretation, independent of both linguistic and extralinguistic contexts

Method of reducing use of word to a "mechanical" rule that determines correct application of word.
The Symbolic Function of the Dictionary
The Americanization of the Dictionary

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
The Americanization of the Dictionary

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...

**Abbreviate** (əˈbrɛvɪət), v., also ˈəbrɛvɪeɪt. [L. abbreviare, abrēvium, a short burst; abbrevia, a short time; abbrevia, a short period; abbreviated; see abbreviate] A direct representative of L. abbreviāre; as abbrevi, and the obs. abbrev, represent it indirectly, through OFr. abrègier and mid. Fr. abrèvier. Like the latter, abbreviate, was often spelt a-abbreviate in s-7.] To make shorter, shorten, cut short in any way.

1593. *Palmer.* I abbreviate I make a thing shorter; *abridge.*
1662. *Bacon.* Essay xxiv. 99 (1866) But it is one thing to abbreviate by Contracting, another by cutting off.

+1. trans. To make a discourse shorter by omitting details and preserving the substance; to abridge, condense. Obs.

a 1436. *Chester Pl. I.* 2 (Sh. Soc.) This matter he abbreviated into twelve and four.
1566. *Greene.* Comus. 80 (Sh.) The question abbreviated her discourse.

+ 2. To make an abstract or brief of, to epitomize. Obs.

c 1450. *Tavies.* *Higden’s Polychron.* I. 91 (Rolls Ser.) Togus Pompeius, in his 3rd. iii. book, almenone of all the stories of the world, whom fustinus his disciple did abbreviate.
1568. *Ficino.* Monastic. (1866) 455. To make, to write, and to abbreviate Polibus.
1826. *Kingsley.* *Weekly *Intellegencer.* Jan. 16 (1826) The high court of Justice did this day sit again concerning the trial of the King. The charge was brought in and abbreviated.

+ 3. trans. To reduce (a fraction) to lower terms. Obs.

1766. *Mathem. Dict.* I. 2. To abbreviate fractions in arithmetic and algebra, is to lessen proportionally their terms, or the numerator and denominator.
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
[The dictionary] is the national key to human knowledge…. It behooves all those who are concerned in the education of the young to place this book on the same plane as the churchmen of old placed the English Bible. The dictionary should be placed on a lectern in every school throughout the land. Frank Vizetelly, 1898
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"

To explain, requires the use of terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained, and such terms cannot always be found; for as nothing can be proved but by supposing something intuitively known, and evident without proof, so nothing can be defined but by the use of words too plain to admit a definition.
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 *comminuable,* 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*
Symbolism of the dictionary's form

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)
Material Representations of knowledge
The Form of Collections, 1

Library of the Escorial, 1543

E-L. Boulée, plan for the Bibliothèque du Roi, 1785

Labrouste, Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève, 1851
The Form of Collections, 2: The classical version

- Smirke, British Museum Reading Room, 1851
- Labrouste, Bibliothèque Nationale 1868
- Pelz/Casey Reading Room, LOC, ca 1898
- Asplund, Stockholm City Library, 1928
Circumscription of Knowledge: Modern Interpretations

D. Perrault, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1994
Material Representations of Knowledge

Curriculum mirrored in form of library (bibliographies)

"Il faut qu'une bibliothèque soit une encyclopédie" Leibniz

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 Cargoe. He values a Camelion, or Salamander’s Egg, above all the Sugars and Spices of the West and East-Indies. (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 Wormianum, 1655
Representations of Knowledge: The Kunstkammer

This organisation depended on the concept of resemblance, where the objects and their proximities suggested macrocosmic microcosmic links.

Natural History Kabinet, Naples, 1599
Representations of Knowledge: The Studiolo

Studiolo of Francesco I
Florence (1570)

Kunstkammer, 1636
Representations of Knowledge: The Studiolo

Studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro Urbino (ca. 1460) with wood intarsia (inlay)
Representations of Knowledge: The Kunstschrank

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

The Kunstschank

Presentation of the Pomeranian Kunstschrank to Duke Philip II of Pomerania-Stettin, 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

23. The Imperial Gallery in Prague, by Johann Bretschneider, 1714. The paintings are arranged according to the visual and decorative effect.
Rationalizing the organization of the trésor
For Tuesday, 3/1

Dan Brownstein, guest lecturer


Conrad, J. 1899. *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 1-17 (ending with “Dash it all!”)