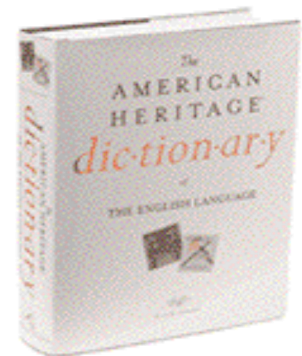
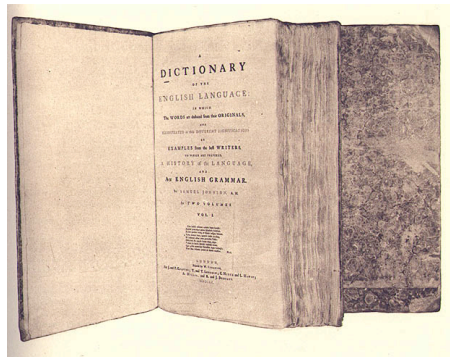


Dictionaries and the Organization of Knowledge



Geoff Nunberg
Infosys 103
History of Information
10/8/07



Wednesday Assignment

Reading for Wednesday's class is Thompson on time and Edwards on accounting.

1. Thompson, E.P. 1967. Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism. *Past & Present* 38 (Dec): 56-97.

2. Edwards, James Don. 1960. Early Bookkeeping and its Development into Accounting. *Business History Review* 34(4): 446-458.

Both are available online through the California Digital Library. If you want to get access to these papers from off campus, you need to configure the proxy settings of your web browser.

QUESTION: Thompson talks about the spread of the clock, the pocket watch, and timekeeping; Edwards about the spread of account books and double-entry bookkeeping. Alfred Crosby, in his book *The Measure of Reality*, says of one of these developments that it has "done more to shape the perceptions of more bright minds than any single innovation in philosophy or science."

Which of the two developments under discussion--double-entry bookkeeping or timekeeping--do you think this claim is better applied to. Give some evidence from the readings to support your claim.



The Emergence of the Modern "Informational System," Round 3

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. * 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*

* *Not to mention the dictionary and encyclopedia-- GN*



The Organization of Knowledge

Knowledge and the emergence 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



The Struggle to Refine the Language

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 tong, 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



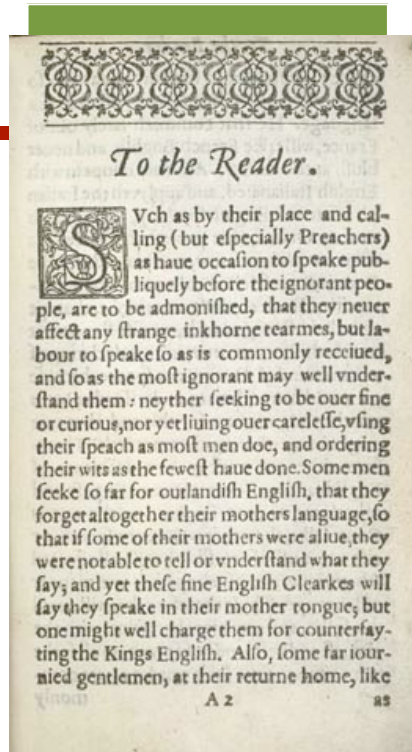
The Struggle to Refine the Language

"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



The Struggle to Refine & Codify the Language



Advertisement to
Cawdrey's Table
Alpabeticall

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 Clarkekes, 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 powder their talke with over-sea language.... Doth any wise man think, that wit resteth in strange words, or els standeth it not in wholsome 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 Wordbooks

A
Table Alphabeticall, con-
teyning and teaching the true
writing, and vnderstanding of hard
vsuall English wordes, borrowed from
the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine,
or French. &c.

With the interpretation thereof by
plaine English wordes, gathered for the benefit &
helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other
vnskillfull persons.

Whereby they may the more easlie
and better vnderstand many hard English
wordes, vvhich they shall heare or read in
Scriptures, Sermons, or elsewhere, and also
be made able to vse the same aptly
themselues.

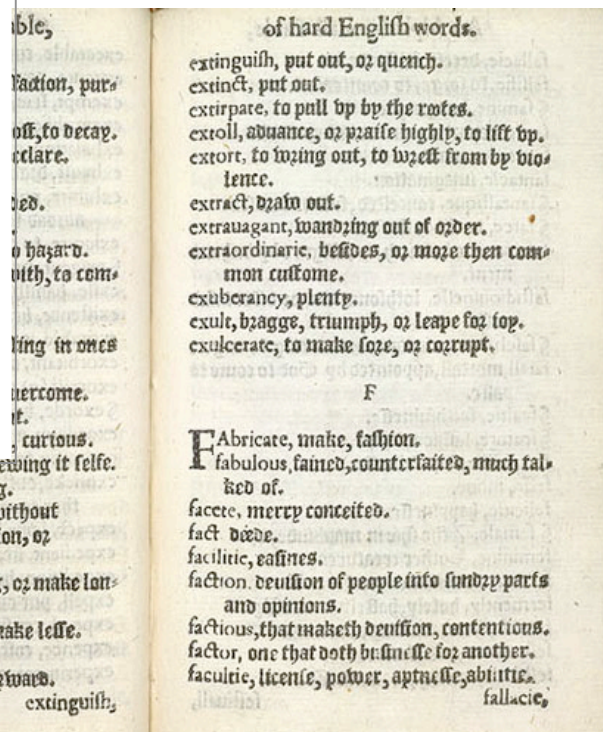
Legere, et non intelligere, neglegere est.
As good not read, as not to vnderstand.

AT LONDON,
Printed by I. R. for Edmund Wea-
uer, & are to be sold at his shop at the great
North doore of Paules Church.
1604.

Robert Cawdrey's Table Alphabeticall of 1604, the first English dictionary to explain the
exotic to the 'unskillfull'.

extrant, appearing abroad, throwing it selfe.
extasie, a trance, or swoynng.
extemporal, } suddaine, without
extempore, } premeditation, or
extemporarie, } study.
extende, spread forth, prolong, or make lon-
ger, to enlarge.
extenuate, lessen, minish, or make lesse.
externall, outward, strange.
extrimulate, prouoke, prick forwards.
extinguish,

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

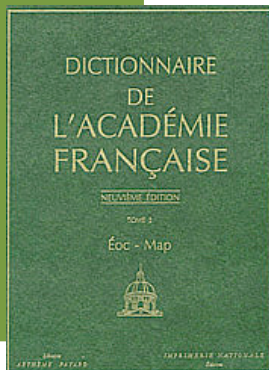
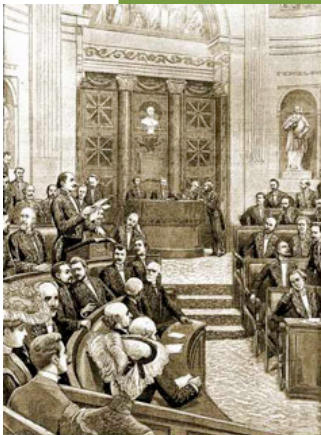


L'habit vert et l'épée.

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





The achievement of "clarté"



What distinguishes our language from the ancient and modern languages is the order and structure of the sentence. French names first of all the subject of the discourse, then the verb which is the action, and finally the object of the action: this is the natural logic for all human beings... This is what results in the admirable clarity which is the eternal basis of our language. What is not clear is not French; what is not clear is still English, Italian, Greek, or Latin.

Antoine de Rivarol, *De l'universalité de la langue française*, 1784.

The qualities of clarity, precision, and elegance gave the French language a position in Europe which no modern language had known since the middle Ages. W. von Wartburg, 1982

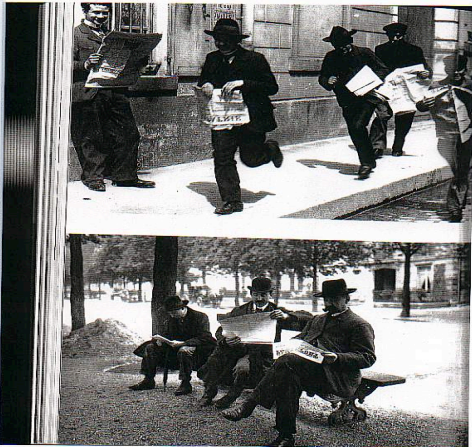


Print and the Creation of "Imagined Communities"



[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



Cf historical circumstances of emergence of modern form:

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."



Swift's "Proposal" 1712



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 Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain":



What I had the Honour of mentioning to Your Lordship some time ago in Conversation, was not a new Thought, just then started by Accident or Occasion, but the Result of long Reflection; and I have been confirmed in my Sentiments by the Opinion of some very judicious Persons, with whom I consulted. They all agreed, That nothing would be of greater Use towards the Improvement of Knowledge and Politeness, than some effectual Method for Correcting, Enlarging, and Ascertaining our Language...



Swift's "Proposal" 1712



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. ...

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; and even then our best Writings might probably be preserved with Care, and grow into Esteem, and the Authors have a Chance of Immortality....

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 victims of bookworms." Thomas Sheridan

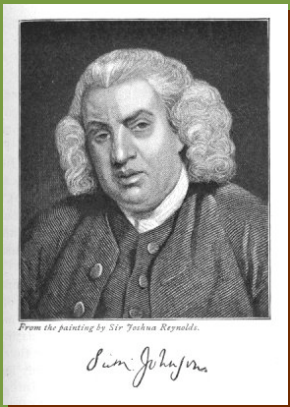


Cf Alexander Pope, "Essay on Criticism"

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 patriarck 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.



Johnson to the Rescue



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

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

1747: The "Plan of an English Dictionary" appears





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 atchieved 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

A true evaluation?



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....





The Success of the Dictionary?



A true evaluation?

Johnson rejects such words as *belabour*, *budge*, *cajole*, *coax*, *doff*, *gambler* and *job*.

"His condemnation was no death warrant."

Johnson recommends many "inkhorn" words like *arriolatry*, etc.

But J's dict fixes the form of the dictionary, and more....



Features of Johnson's Dictionary

Alphabetical listing of words -- the significance of alphabetic rather than thematic organization



The Classificatory Urge: Thematic Organization

Ibn Qutayba (9th c.): "Book of the Best Traditions"

1. Power
2. War
3. Nobility
4. Character
5. Learning and (
6. Asceticism
7. Friendship
8. Prayer
9. Food
10. Women

فقالوا: "بايع." فقال: "إن انا لم افعل فمه؟"

فقالوا: "أذاً و الله الذى لا اله الا هو، نضرب عنقك!"

فقال: "أذاً تقتلون عبد الله و اخا رسوله!"

فقال عمر: "أما عبد الله، فنعيم. أما اخو رسوله، فلا!"

وابو بكر ساكت لا يتكلم. فقال له عمر: "الآن تأمر فيه بامرك؟"

فقال: "لا اكرهه على شىء ما كانت فاطمة الى جنبه."



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...

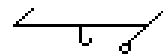
Speculum historiale: History
of the world...

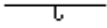




Wilkins' universal language

Explaining the symbol



The generic character  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 characters are divided into: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) pronounced, (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



Naturalizing the Dictionary

"The dictionary" like "the Periodic Table": Form answers to structure of represented domain + user needs...

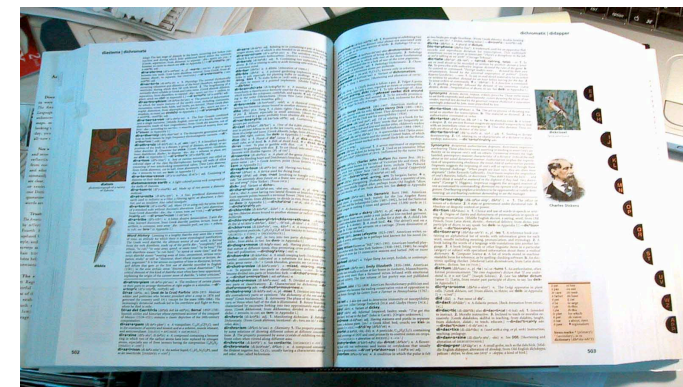
C. Barnhart: "it is the function of a popular dictionary to answer the questions that the user of the dictionary asks."

The periodic table of the elements

	1A	2A	3A	4A	5A	6A	7A	8	1B	2B	3B	4B	5B	6B	7B	0		
1	H															He		
2	Li	Be									B	C	N	O	F	Ne		
3	Na	Mg									Al	Si	P	S	Cl	Ar		
4	K	Ca	Sc	Ti	V	Cr	Mn	Fe	Co	Ni	Cu	Zn	Ga	Ge	As	Se	Br	Kr
5	Rb	Sr	Y	Zr	Nb	Mo	Tc	Ru	Rh	Pd	Ag	Cd	In	Sn	Sb	Te	I	Xe
6	Cs	Ba	L	Hf	Ta	W	Re	Os	Ir	Pt	Au	Hg	Tl	Pb	Bi	Po	At	Rn
7	Fr	Ra	A															
	L	La	Ce	Pr	Nd	Pm	Sm	Eu	Gd	Tb	Dy	Ho	Er	Tm	Yb	Lu		
	A	Ac	Th	Pa	U	Np	Pu	Am	Cm	Bk	Cf	Es	Fm	Md	No	Lr		

Legend:

- Metals
- Metalloids
- Non-metals
- Transition Metals
- Gases





Features of Johnson's Dictionary

Meanings illustrated by citations from English writers: "The book written by books"

He *adulter*s still: his thoughts lye with a whore. *B. Johns.*
ADU'LTERANT. *n. f.* [*adulterans*, Lat.] The person or thing which adulterates.
To ADU'LTERATE. *v. a.* [*adulterer*, Fr. *adultero*, Lat.]
1. To commit adultery.
But fortune, oh!
Adulterates hourly with thine uncle John;
And with her golden hand hath pluckt on France.
Shakesp. King John.
2. To corrupt by some foreign admixture; to contaminate.
Common pot-ashes, bought of them that sell it in shops, who are not so foolishly knavish, as to *adulterate* them with salt-petre, which is much dearer than pot-ashes. *Boyle.*
Could a man be compos'd to such an advantage of constitution,
L tion,



Features of Johnson's Dictionary

Modularity of Knowledge:

Tries to distinguish lexical from encyclopedic information (though not always successfully)

shrewmouse A mouse of which the bite is generally supposed venomous, and to which vulgar tradition assigns such malignity, that she is said to lame the foot over which she runs. I am informed that these reports are calumnious, and that her feet and teeth are equally harmless with those of any other little mouse. Our ancestors however looked on her with such terrour, that they are supposed to have given her name to a scolding woman, whom for her venom they call a shrew.

oats a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people

lexicographer a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge...

Omits proper names



The Didactic Uselessness of Definitions

J. provides definitions in genus-differentia format, generally substitutable for definiens (word defined)

Information that D. provides isn't exceptionally accessible or comprehensible.

Cf Miller & Gildea: "The cook stimulated the soup."

Dicts are good on names of concrete categories (*marquis*, *marionette*)

But def's of abstract terms are didactically useless:

circumstance (MW10) 1. a condition, fact, or event accompanying, conditioning, or determining another: an essential or inevitable concomitant.

structure (OED) 2. The mutual relation of the constituent parts or elements of a whole as determining its peculiar nature or character.



The Didactic Uselessness of Definitions

Weakness of genus-differential definitions

disappointment: the state or emotion of being disappointed

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



Responses to Deficiencies

- "We need more public instruction in 'dictionary skills'"



The dictionary and the rise of the public sphere

"A nation of readers" -- the Book Written by Books

"[Johnson's] *Dictionary* was a typical achievement of print, a language book made out of still other books that would determine the language of books still to be written." Alvin Kernan

How can an autonomous and anonymous public discourse regulate and reproduce itself?

Need to interpret language in absence of knowledge of context, speaker, etc.

Need for a methodology to determine, regulate, and stabilize meanings.

Need for a test to tell which words are "in" the language -- acceptable to use. (which discourses need to be attended to)



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 Methodology of Lexicography

Note that application of lexicographical argument isn't limited to use of Dictionary... method is most important for cases where Dict's actual authority is limited -- cf discussions of *obscene*, *terrorism*, *torture*, etc.



The Use of the Dictionary

The screenshot shows a Netscape browser window displaying the LexisNexis Academic search results page. The browser's address bar shows the URL: http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/doclist?_m=4b565948c6ab272708a32cc2df1a97f3&wchp=. The page title is "LexisNexis(TM) Academic - Document List - Netscape".

The search results are for the term "FOCUS™". The search interface includes a search bar with the text "Search Terms: according to webster's FOCUS™", a "Search Within Results" button, and an "Edit Search" link. Below the search bar, there is a "Jump to Documents" dropdown menu set to "1-25", and buttons for "Print" and "Email".

The search results are displayed in a list format, with the following items:

- 1. [St. Petersburg Times](#), March 3, 2003 Monday, CITRUS TIMES; Pg. 2, 1344 words, Board's sudden opposition to toll road reveals favoritism
- 2. [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#), February 9, 2003 Sunday, TWO STAR EDITION, Pg.B-7, 800 words, TOP OF THE CHARTS; TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OF CONSISTENT ADVICE FOR WRITERS

Additional features on the page include a "Tag for delivery" section with a "Clear" button, and sorting options: "Sorted by Date" and "Sort by: Relevance". The page also shows "Documents 1 - 25 of 599" and a "next" link.



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 *comminuible*, 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*



The Organization of Knowledge

Knowledge and the emergence 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



The Spatialization of the Language



That vast aggregate of words and phrases which constitutes the Vocabulary of English-speaking men presents... the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but to lose itself imperceptibly in the surrounding darkness....

James Murray, "General Explanation" to the OED



The "canonicity" of knowledge.

Canonicity: All elements of all subdomains are ordered with regard to "centrality" of membership (i.e., discursive space is metrical, not just topological)

What defines a "reference book"

words: *civet* > *panther* > *cat*

authors: Michael Crichton > John Updike > Herman Melville

news events: rescued cat > school budget vote > earthquake

Also: tourist attractions (travel guides), artists (national collections), etc.

Buf cf. world records: ??Most hot dogs eaten > largest waistline > longest kiss



Canonicity, cont.

Canonicity permits "essentialist" abridgement:

"[M]en of good will have extracted the substance of a thousand volumes and passed it in its entirety into a single small duodecimo, a bit like skillful chemists who press out the essence of flowers to concentrate it in a phial while throwing the dregs away." L-S. Mercier, *L'An 2440*, 1771

Cf sense of "library" and "bibliothèque" to denote comprehensive publication series & catalogues

"If the lexicon of a language is indeed something like that of a circle, then... if one moves away from the center in concentric circles, the result should be a faithful image of the total lexicon." Henri Béjoint, *Tradition and Innovation in English Dictionaries*, 1992

i.e., In theory, every large dictionary contains every small dictionary



Spatialization and the Forms of Print Discourse

Spatialization of discourse rests on the modes of print circulation

Topology presumes the distinction between public
and private

Metricality presumes a correlation between
spatiotemporal accessibility/diffusion &
reputation...

Cf George Campbell, 1776: "The authors of reputation [provide us
with a] certain, steady, and well-known standard to recur to, a
standard which every one hath access to canvass and examine."

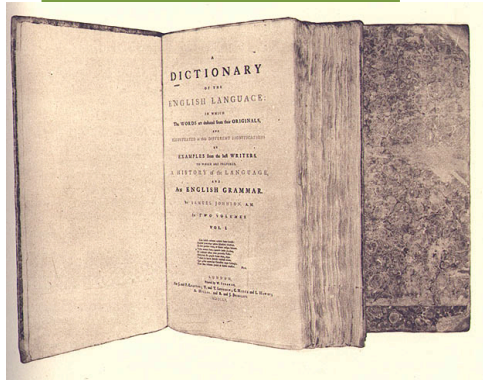
...and between reputation and quality:

Cf Hume, Campbell: "reputation and merit go generally together."
Cf also citation indexes...



Symbolism of the dictionary's form

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)



The Dict. as an "Inscription in Space": "Is X a word?"



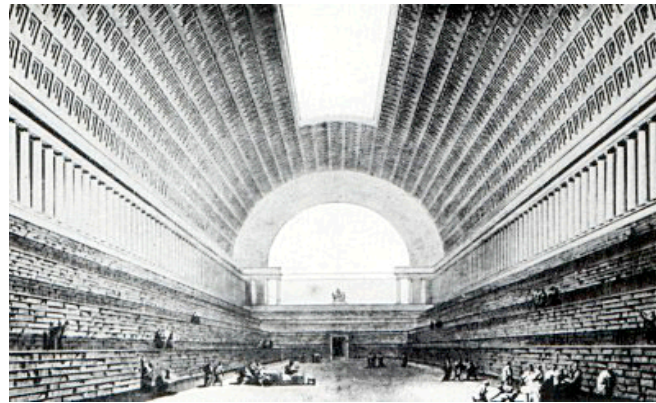
(Note also the importance of visible compression...)



The Form of Collections, 1



Library of the
Escorial, 1543

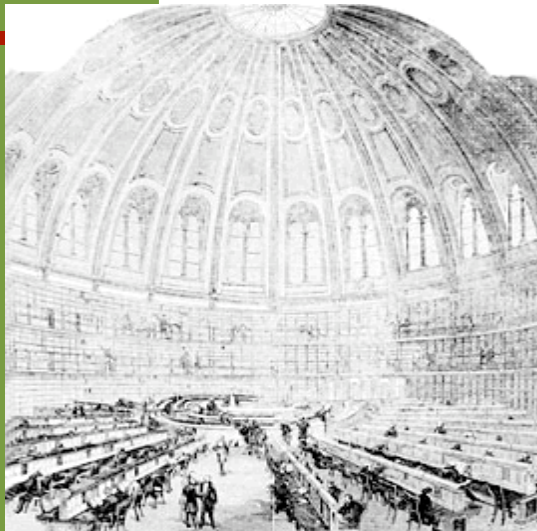


E-L. Boulée, plan for the
Bibliothèque du Roi, 1785



Labrouste, Bibliothèque
Ste. Geneviève, 1851

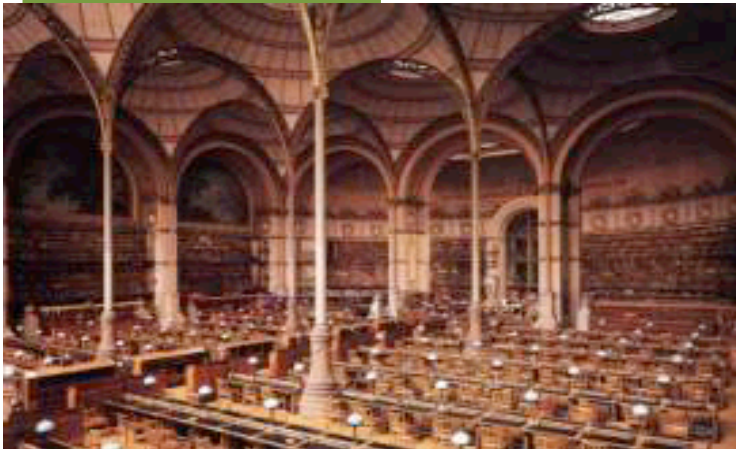
The Form of Collections, 2: The classical version



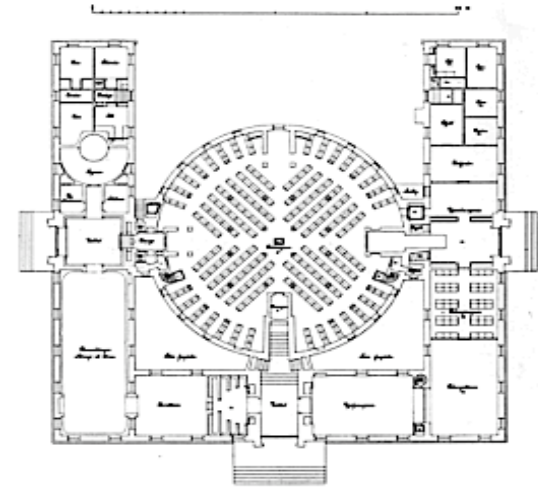
Smirke, British
Museum Reading
Room, 1851



Pelz/Casey Reading Room,
LOC, ca 1898



Labrouste, Bibliothèque
Nationale 1868



Asplund, Stockholm City
Library, 1928



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...



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Abbreviate (ăbrĭ'vi,ēt), *v.*, also 5-7 **abbreviate**. [f. ABBREVIATE *ppl. a.*; or on the analogy of *vbs.* so formed; see -ATE. A direct representative of L. *abbreviāre*; as ABRIDGE, and the obs. ABBREVI, represent it indirectly, through OFr. *abregier* and mid. Fr. *abrĕvier*. Like the latter, *abbreviate*, was often spelt *a-breviate* in 5-7.] To make shorter, shorten, cut short in any way.

1530 PALSGR., *I abrevyate*: I make a thyngheshorte, *Je abreges*. 1625 BACON *Essays* xxiv. 99 (1862) 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.*

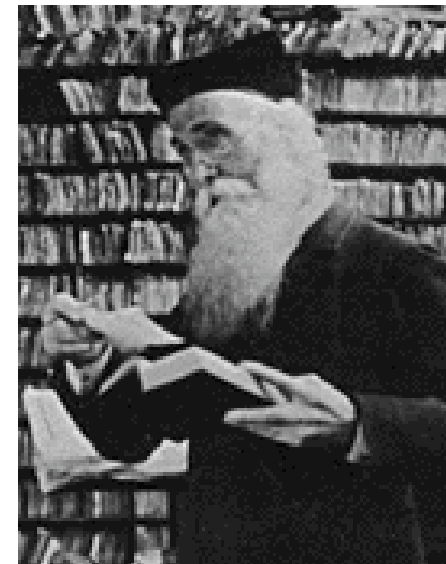
a 1450 *Chester Pl.* I. 2 (Sh. Soc.) This matter he abbreviated into playes twenty-foure. 1592 GREENE *Conny catching* III. 16 The queane abreviated her discourse. 1637 RALEIGH *Mahomet* 34 Abreviated out of two Arabique writers translated into Spanish. 1672 MANLEY *Interpreter* pref., I have omitted several Matters . . . contracted and abbreviated Others.

† b. To make an abstract or brief of, to epitomize. *Obs.*

c 1450 *TREVISIA Higden's Polychr.* I. 21 (Rolls Ser.) Trogus Pompeius, in hys xl^{iv} iij. bookes, allemoste of alle the storyes of the worlde, whom Iustinus his disciple did abreviate. 1603 FLORIO *Montaigne* (1634) 627 To reade, to note, and to abreviate Polibius. 1648-9 *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* Jan. 16 to 23 The high court of Justice did this day sit again concerning the triall of the King. The charge was brought in and abreviated.

† c. *Math.* To reduce (a fraction) to lower terms. *Obs.*

1796 *Mathem. Dict.* I. 2 To abbreviate fractions in arithmetic and algebra, is to lessen proportionally their terms, or the numerator and denominator.





Political Significance of the OED

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 English language] is like the English constitution... and perhaps also the English Church, full of inconsistencies and anomalies, yet flourishing in defiance of theory. It is like the English nation, the most orderly in the world, but withal the most loyal, orderly, and free.



The Social Setting of the Dict.

Characteristic function, role: ("reference book" from 1859; *œuvre de référence* from 1879)

Published under imprimatur of publishing house, compiled by committees, etc.

Cf "She works for a dictionary." (newspaper, travel guide, *cookbook, *novel)

Surrounded/supported by specific institutions, tropes, etc.

Supported by classroom instruction, surrounded by official pieties:

[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, 1915

In America, best predictor of D. ownership is presence of children... of any age.