THE HISTORY OF THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

THE FIRST EDITION 1857–1928[1]

IF there is any truth in the old Greek maxim that a large book is a great evil, English dictionaries have been steadily growing worse ever since their inception nearly four centuries ago. To set Cawdrey's slim small volume of 1604 beside the completed Oxford English Dictionary is like placing the original acorn beside the oak that has grown out of it.

The immensity of this growth is explained by the successive introduction of three new principles in lexicography. The earlier dictionary-makers followed in the line of the old glossaries, and directed their attention to such words as were likely to be unfamiliar to the ordinary person. The widening of this narrow range during the seventeenth century is made obvious by the steady increase in size through Bullokar, Cockeram, Blount, and Phillips, until in the eighteenth the principle of general inclusion was practically accepted by Kersey and Bailey. The next stage is marked by Johnson's systematic use of quotations to illustrate and justify the definitions, the many omissions still existing in the vocabulary being partly filled by later supplementary works on the same lines. When to all this was superadded the principle of historical illustration, introduced by Richardson, it became inevitable that any adequate dictionary of English must be one of the larger books of the world.

It is remarkable that Richardson's dictionary, perhaps through certain defects in his method, did not at once attract the attention it deserved. From the appearance of the first instalment in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* in 1819 to the full acceptance of the historical principle by the Philological Society almost forty years had passed, and the separate publication of his dictionary in 1836–7 did not affect to any appreciable extent the work of those lexicographers who followed in the wake of Johnson or Webster. Even his wealth of quotations remained unutilized, although they formed a natural storehouse for any who cared to search in it and bring forth 'treasures new and old' to add to those already available in the works of Johnson and his successors.

That a forward step was made towards the end of these forty years was due to the action taken by the Philological Society in the summer of 1857, apparently as the result of a suggestion made by F. J. Furnivall to Dean Trench in May. At the meeting held on 18 June 'the appointment of Messrs. Herbert Coleridge and Furnivall and Dean Trench by the Council, as a committee to collect unregistered words in English, was announced, and that they would report to the next Meeting of the Society in November'. At this stage the idea was to prepare and publish a volume supplementary to the later editions of Johnson, or to Richardson, and containing all words omitted in either of these dictionaries.

The committee did not report in November, but on the fifth of that month one of its members, Dean Trench, read the first part of a paper 'On some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries', while the report was postponed till 3 December. This interval allowed the second part of the paper to be read on 19 November, when the Society showed its appreciation by resolving 'That The Dean of Westminster be requested to publish his interesting and valuable Paper. To this request he kindly acceded.' Publication followed almost immediately, the first edition bearing the date 1857 and the title 'On some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries, being the substance of two papers read before the Philological Society, Nov. 5 and Nov. 19, 1857. By Richard Chenevix Trench, D.D., Dean of Westminster.'

Even at this day, after the lapse of a hundred and fifty years and the advance in English studies which has taken place during that time, Dean Trench's paper retains its value as a statement of what an English dictionary ought to be. No one who reads it can fail to see how clearly he anticipated the lines on which the Society's dictionary was ultimately compiled—all of them, indeed, a necessary result from the historical principle which he laid down as the only sound basis for the work.

At the meeting of 3 December 1857, a report from the 'Unregistered Words Committee was read by the Secretary to that Committee, Mr. H. Coleridge'. This was followed by the resolution 'That for the present this Report be received and laid on the table. This resolution was passed in consequence of a statement that a larger scheme, for a completely new English Dictionary, might shortly be submitted to the Society.' The Dean's paper had clearly convinced the Society of the inadequacy of its proposals, and had shown that nothing short of a 'completely new' work would suffice. In this natural way arose the epithet *New* which appeared on the title-page of the Dictionary when the time for publication arrived.

The Society lost no time in following up the new idea, little suspecting the magnitude of the task which lay before it, and the many years that would elapse before it would be completed, or even properly begun. On 7 January 1858, 'the following resolutions were passed relating to the undertaking of a New English Dictionary.

I. That instead of the Supplement to the Standard English Dictionaries now in course of preparation by the order of the Society, a New Dictionary of the English Language be prepared under the Authority of the Philological Society.

[1] This account is reproduced, with only minor modifications, from the 'Historical Introduction' to the *OED* published in 1933.

II. That the work be placed in the hands of two Committees, the one, Literary and Historical, consisting of The very Rev. The Dean of Westminster, F. J. Furnivall, Esq., and Herbert Coleridge, Esq. (Secretary), the other, Etymological, consisting of Hensleigh Wedgwood, Esq., and Prof. Malden, and that in questions of doubt as to the form which any article shall assume, the decision of the Literary and Historical Committee shall be final.

III. That the Society desires to express its thanks to the contributors who have kindly given their assistance to its Unregistered Words Committee, and to invite their assistance, and that of fresh volunteers, in the new undertaking.

IV. That Messrs. Furnivall and Coleridge be empowered to enter into such conditional agreement with Messrs. Nutt of London and Asher of Berlin, or such other Publishers as they think fit, to publish the Dictionary on such terms as they think fit.

V. That the Subscriptions of all Members who have joined or shall join the Society through the Unregistered Words Committee or the New Dictionary Committee, shall be placed, so far as required, at the disposal of the Committees now appointed, to defray their printing and other expenses.

VI. That the Philological Society will afford every assistance in its power to enable its Committees to make a Dictionary worthy of the English Language.'

As is indicated in the third of these resolutions, the Unregistered Words Committee had been remarkably successful, during its brief existence, in arousing interest in the Society's undertaking, and in enlisting willing helpers to aid in carrying it out. Towards the close of his paper as printed, Dean Trench had been able to make an encouraging statement on this head. 'Let me mention here that seventy-six volunteers have already come forward, claiming their shares in the task. A hundred and twenty-one works of English authors, in most cases the whole works of each author, have been taken in hand by them; and I may add that thirty-one contributions have already been sent in.' In this way began the system of voluntary readers, without whose help the material for the Society's dictionary could never have been collected at all, except at a prohibitive cost of time and money.

At the meeting on 21 January 1858, 'Mr. Furnivall read a circular which the New Dictionary Committee proposed to issue, stating the plan of the Dictionary and asking for help in carrying it out'. It does not appear whether the circular was actually issued, and further notices in the *Transactions* for that year are brief and unimportant. A glimpse of the progress that was being made is afforded by a passage in Coleridge's letter to Dean Trench (30 May 1860), which was printed in the second edition of the Dean's paper. 'More than a year passed away in combating various difficulties, and it was not till August 1858, that we felt ourselves in a position to announce the plan of a New Dictionary as a certainty, and to invite contributors to furnish us with assistance.' Negotiations with publishers had been carried on during the year, first with John Murray, and then with David Nutt; finally on 4 November, Furnivall 'stated that Messrs. Trübner & Co. had agreed to publish the Society's New English Dictionary'. The young co-workers, for both Furnivall and Coleridge were still in early manhood, had not only all the optimism of youth, but were embarking on an uncharted sea, quite unwitting of the long course which had to be sailed before the farther shore could even come into sight.

By 1859 the Committee was able to publish full details of the undertaking in the form of a 'Proposal for the Publication of a New English Dictionary by the Philological Society'. This document is a proof of the thoroughness and sound judgement with which the whole question had been considered. Opening with a review of the steps by which the idea of a 'new' dictionary had been reached, the authors of the Proposal went on to lay down certain principles as a basis for the work, of which the two most important are the first and fourth, viz.

I. The first requirement of every lexicon is that it should contain every word occurring in the literature of the language it professes to illustrate.

IV. In the treatment of individual words the historical principle will be uniformly adopted.

Other contents of the Proposal are 'Rules and Directions for Collectors' as agreed upon by the Literary, Historical, and Etymological Committees, and 'Mechanical and Practical Regulations'. These are 1. 'A list of the printed literature of England belonging to the period 1250–1526', with the added note, 'Those works marked with an asterisk are already undertaken'. 2. 'A list of works of the Second Period (1526–1674) already undertaken'. 3. A similar list of 'works of the Third Period (1674–1858) already undertaken'. This division of the literature into three periods, which originated with Coleridge and was maintained for some time as a basis of collecting, has a real foundation in fact. Although the dates 1526 and 1674 were chosen because the former was that of the first printed English New Testament, and the latter the year of Milton's death, they correspond very closely with significant epochs in the development of the English vocabulary. If arrived at by accident, they at the same time show a sound instinct for detecting the periods of essential change.

The volunteers were also beginning to play their part, and to provide the Committee with material to work upon. 'In April 1859 a paper containing queries respecting etymologies and several difficult passages from Early English books was circulated among members of the Society and contributors to the Dictionary, and conjectures in answer were invited ... So much of the results of this appeal as the Dictionary Committee consider sufficiently valuable, and sufficiently certain to be worth printing' was reported to the Society by Coleridge in a paper entitled 'Hints towards the explanation of some hard words and passages in English writers'. On 10 November of the same year, Coleridge, now formally appointed as editor, presented a 'report on the Society's proposed Dictionary'.

The following month saw another forward step, when on 8 December the Society resolved:

I. That a Committee be appointed to draw up a set of Rules for the guidance of the Editor of the Society's new English Dictionary.

II. That the Committee consist of:

The Very Rev. The Dean of Westminster	Thomas Watts, Esq.
	F. Pulszky, Esq.
Professor Key.	H. Wedgwood, Esq.
F. J. Furnivall, Esq.	Professor Goldstücker.

III. That the Committee be authorized to print the Rules drawn up by them, to circulate the printed Copies among

all the Members of the Society, and to appoint one of the Society's nights of Meeting for a special discussion of the Rules by Members.

The Committee, or Coleridge himself on its behalf, set to work at once and prepared a draft of the rules, which was discussed, enlarged, and modified, at meetings held in December 1859 and January 1860, further considered and revised in April and May, and finally printed with the title of 'Canones Lexicographici, or rules to be observed in editing the New English Dictionary of the Philological Society'. Continued interest in the work is also shown by a paper read on 10 May, 'Observations on the plan of the Society's proposed new English Dictionary, by the Revd Derwent Coleridge', and by the appearance of a second edition of Dean Trench's two papers 'revised and enlarged. To which is added a letter to the author from Herbert Coleridge, Esq., on the progress and prospects of the Society's New English Dictionary.'

This letter is interesting as a survey of what had so far been accomplished, and closes on a confident note. 'I believe that the scheme is now firmly established, and I confidently expect ... that in about two years we shall be able to give our first number to the world. Indeed, were it not for the dilatoriness of many contributors ... I should not hesitate to name an earlier period.' Here also comes the first mention of co-operation from the English-speaking nation on the other side of the Atlantic. 'The Hon. G. P. Marsh of Burlington, Vermont, having kindly offered to act as secretary in America, I at once suggested that the Americans should make themselves responsible for the whole of the eighteenth-century literature, which probably would have a less chance of finding as many readers in England. This was agreed to, ... and contributors are, as I understand, coming in, but no results of their labours have reached us yet.' The suggestion was not a fortunate one, and was never seriously taken up.

By this time, on the basis of the material already sent in by contributors and of the existing dictionaries, Coleridge was hard at work preparing word-lists to serve as a guide in further collecting. The 'Third Period' was selected for this purpose, and by 14 February 1861, he was able to lay before the Society the first part of this 'Basis of Comparison', covering the letters A to D. The preliminary notice to this in its printed form is signed by Coleridge, and its publication was unfortunately the last of his valuable contributions to the progress of the work. On Thursday, 25 April, 'Mr. Furnivall announced the death on the preceding Tuesday of Herbert Coleridge, Esq., the Editor of the Society's New English Dictionary'. When the second part of the 'Basis of Comparison' (E to L) appeared later in the year, the prefatory note, dated 25 September, and signed by Furnivall, opened with these words: 'Since the publication of the First Part of this Basis, our proposed Dictionary has received a severe blow by the death of its first Editor, the able and accomplished Herbert Coleridge. In its service he caught the cold which resulted in his death. All through his illness he worked for it whenever leisure and strength allowed; and his last attempt at work—two days before he died—was to arrange some of its papers.'

The death of Coleridge at the age of 31 deprived the Dictionary, almost at the outset, of an editor of great promise. In addition to the activities already mentioned, he had compiled and published a Glossarial Index to the printed literature of the thirteenth century, rightly estimating the value of this as a basis for the early history of the language. He had also faced the problem of editing, and 'had prepared a few of the A words for printing, so far as the material sent in to him allowed'; this had been carried as far as the printing of a specimen page containing *affect–affection*. If this was premature, as it proved to be, it was because the magnitude of the work had not yet become apparent. Clear evidence of this is furnished by the set of specially made pigeon-holes which he considered would be large enough to contain the materials required at the outset. These provide about 260 inches of linear space, which would take no more than about 85,000 'slips'. As many as this were ultimately required for even one of the minor letters of the alphabet. Specimens of the articles prepared by Coleridge were printed in 1862, at the end of Part III of the 'Basis of Comparison', and extracts from others were read at a meeting of the Society on 24 April of the same year.

With Coleridge's death, the editorship passed to Furnivall, then in his thirty-sixth year. He immediately took up the duties, and on 23 May 'made a statement as to the present condition of the collections for the Society's Dictionary, and the course he proposed to pursue with regard to the scheme'. The lines of that course are clearly indicated in the 'Preliminary Notice' mentioned above. He was convinced that the time for editing was still at a distance. 'I have determined to put aside all idea of printing the first part of the Dictionary for four or five years unless some great unexpected help is forthcoming; and I propose, if all go well, to finish this Third-Period Basis early next year; then to compile Two Concise Dictionaries of Early and Middle English, which shall include severally all the materials sent in for the First and Second Periods.'

The magnitude of the task was thus becoming clearer, but in some points its extent was still under-rated. 'Meantime,' Furnivall wrote, 'the etymological material will, I trust, be ready.' This was to be done by Dr Carl Lottner on the basis of Worcester's Dictionary, with the precaution that 'his work will be submitted to the Etymological Committee, perhaps before it is printed'. It had not yet become obvious that in many instances only the accumulation of material for the particular word could enable the editor to suggest or establish its real origin.

Another of Furnivall's first tasks was the compilation of a 'List of Books already read, or now (12 July 1861) being read for the Philological Society's New English Dictionary', covering 24 pages and published as an appendix to the *Transactions* for 1860–1. The numbers given here are: First Period, 143 Works and Authors; Second Period, 486; Third Period, 81. Among the principal readers are Furnivall and Coleridge, Revd J. Eastwood, H. H. Gibbs, E. S. Jackson, Revd Dr Stocker, W. C. Hazlitt, Mr Sprange, etc. The last page contains an intimation 'that the reading of any books not named in the foregoing List will be of service to the Dictionary. A list of those specially recommended to the notice of contributors is in preparation.'

Meanwhile, the Third Part of the 'Basis of Comparison', containing the letters M to Z, was on the way, and was issued in the third week of March 1862. Shortly before its appearance, on 27 February, Furnivall proposed the following resolutions, which were accepted by the Society.

1. That a concise Dictionary be prepared as a preliminary to the Society's proposed new English Dictionary and as a new basis of comparison for all the other periods.

2. That the concise Dictionary shall be as far as possible an abstract of what the large Dictionary should be, and shall contain—the Pronunciation, Critical marks, Etymologies, Roots, Prefixes, Suffixes, Definitions, and Homonyms of the words registered in it, with short quotations (a few words long) and the date and name of the Author for all words for which passages have been sent in to the Editor, and that all words, senses of words, idioms &c. known to exist, but for which authority has not yet been sent to the Editor, be supplied from any other available source and be marked with a * or other sign to denote the want of an authority.

3. That the Editor be authorised to entrust the quotations in his possession, and the sub-editing of any parts of the concise Dictionary to such of the contributors to the Dictionary or other Volunteers as he shall think fit.

It was also resolved:

That Mr. Furnivall be authorised to announce his plan to the contributors in the next part of the Third Period basis to sort the contributions and entrust them to the care of such sub-editors as he thinks fit, and that he be requested to print off at the expense of the Society a specimen of the concise dictionary which he proposes, and to lay it before the Society for their final decision before proceeding further with the printing of such dictionary.

In accordance with this the Third Part of the 'Basis' announced that 'the next step to be taken is to get out the Concise Dictionary hinted at in Part II'. Even this, it was clear, would take time, and 'nothing but the continuous labour of many years can make our Book anything like complete.—Let us then persevere.'

The idea of compiling a concise dictionary as a preliminary to the greater task was adopted by Furnivall on practical grounds; the agreement made with Trübner in 1858 had lapsed in course of time, and he saw no chance of finding another publisher for the larger work. In the expectation that the smaller task could be accomplished in a few years, he even entered into a personal contract with John Murray to have the manuscript ready for the press by the end of 1865. This view of the situation was natural while the material was still comparatively limited in amount. It became more and more unpractical as this continued to accumulate, for it involved the handling and arranging of all the slips for each word before the 'concise' article could be written, and consequently would have taken almost as much time as the preparation of the work on a more ample scale. This must, in time, have become obvious to the few volunteers who actually prepared portions of the Concise Dictionary, and it is not surprising that in the end the idea had to be given up, at considerable pecuniary loss to its originator. Apart from this, the employment of sub-editors was an idea which proved of great value for the later progress of the Dictionary, and to Dr Furnivall belongs the credit of originating the scheme and of issuing instructions for the guidance of these helpers in printed

form, on 15 September 1862. Within the next year or two several of them prepared lists of the words coming under the letters which they had undertaken to sub-edit, and these were printed separately when ready, beginning in 1863 with that for B, 'compiled by W. Gee, Esq., sub-editor of the B words for the Concise Dictionary'. This contained no less than 93 pages in triple columns, giving the date of the earliest example of each word in the material, and the latest date for obsolete words, while each word is provided with numbers to indicate the periods (1, 2, and 3) for which there were quotations. Similar lists for N and U–V were issued in 1865. The latter contains a prefatory notice by Furnivall on the progress made in sub-editing, and lists of 'books now in hand for cutting up'. These words indicate a method of collecting material extensively employed from this time onward, by which the reader for the Dictionary was saved much time and labour by being freed from copying the quotations, while the Editor had the advantages of the original print and a fuller context. The defects of the method were that two copies of each book were required to give the full text, and that many early printed works were dealt with in this way which would have been of greater value in the hands of the editors.

From 1862 to 1872 the progress of the Dictionary in Furnivall's hands can be clearly traced in the annual circulars which he sent out to the members of the Philological Society. Portions of these are quoted in the 'Appeal to the English-Speaking Public on behalf of a New English Dictionary', issued by the Revd G. Wheelwright in 1875. A study of them shows considerable activity on the part of readers and sub-editors for the first three or four years, followed by a gradual slackening off, partly due to Furnivall's own increasing absorption in other interests. That for 1872 admitted that 'the progress in the Dictionary work has been so slight that no fresh report in detail is needed'.

These circulars were not included in the printed *Transactions* of the Philological Society, and in the pages of these there is remarkably little mention of the Dictionary during this period. On 6 November 1868, 'the Hon. Secretary [i.e. Furnivall] made a statement as to the progress of the Society's proposed new English Dictionary, together with a calculation by the Rev. G. Wheelwright, showing that about one-third of the work had been sub-edited'. A still briefer mention occurs under the date of 21 May 1869, and after this the subject does not recur until, in the annual presidential address by Alexander J. Ellis on 15 May 1874, it is included in a survey of the Society's work:

One of our works, for which great collections have been already made, remains, and may for some time remain, merely one of the things we have tried to do,—of course I allude to our projected dictionary. Several things, indeed, make me inclined to think that a Society is less fitted to compile a dictionary than to get the materials collected.

In the words that follow on this, Ellis clearly indicates that in his opinion the scholar best qualified to edit the Dictionary was Henry Sweet. The Revd Mr Wheelwright's 'Appeal' of the following year is in a more hopeful tone, and indicated the richness of the Dictionary material by giving a specimen of the letter F, which

he had sub-edited; this extends to eight pages in triple columns and contains the words from *fa* to *face*.

During these years, Furnivall had of course not been idle. Not only had he continued to direct the collecting and sub-editing, but he had immensely increased the possibilities of the Dictionary by the foundation of the Early English Text Society in 1864, and the Chaucer Society in 1868. Without the former of these, the collecting of sufficient Middle English material would have presented almost insuperable difficulties, and in consequence the historical basis for many words would have been defective or altogether lacking. Although he took no part in the actual editing of the Dictionary in its ultimate form, he never ceased to contribute liberally to its stores, both from the publications of these societies and from other sources, including his daily morning and evening paper. If the Dictionary at one period quotes the *Daily News* and at another the *Daily Chronicle*, it is because Furnivall had changed his paper in the meanwhile. Through his early organization of the collecting and sub-editing, and his lifelong contributions, the work of Furnivall pervades every page of the Dictionary, and has helped in a great degree to make it what it is. He was fortunate in living long enough to see assured the completion of the work to which he had given so much of his busy life. Almost down to the time of his death in 1910 he still gave evidence of the unremitting activity, and interest in English studies, which had enabled him to achieve so much, while his genial disposition and constant readiness for new friendships explained his success in enlisting the help of others.

II

Before the Dictionary again becomes prominent in the *Transactions* of the Philological Society, a new and important element had entered into its history. James A. H. Murray, who had been a master at Mill Hill School from 1870, and had already made his mark in philological studies, had been approached in April 1876 by the firm of Macmillan with regard to a new dictionary. The idea of this, a dictionary to rival those of Webster and Worcester, had originated with Harper and Brothers of New York, who wished Macmillan to take part in the enterprise. Acting on the advice of Dr Richard Morris, who had consulted Furnivall in the matter, Macmillan proposed to Murray that he should undertake the editorship. Murray was not prepared to agree to this, unless the new dictionary was to be a great advance on the existing ones in respect of scholarship. Macmillan had heard of the intentions of the Philological Society, and asked whether the material already collected for it might not be available. Having, as the result of this suggestion, obtained some portions of the material, Murray prepared specimens of the kind of dictionary which he considered would be worth doing, and these were put into type. His ideas went far beyond those of the publishers, and a considerable time was spent in trying various modifications, till these reached the lowest point which in his opinion would have any real value. The divergent views of the publishers on this head were capable of adjustment, but difficulties arose in connection with the terms for the use of the Society's materials, and the negotiations came to an end.

The exhibition of the specimens produced from the material already collected, however, had the effect of again interesting the Philological Society in its old project. By May 1877 matters had begun to move; a letter from Furnivall written in that month tells where the various letters of the alphabet were to be found in the hands of the sub-editors. It was fortunate that the scattered material was, with the exception of one small portion, actually recoverable; one sub-editor, sending part of what he had, promised 'to search for the rest, which had been disposed by his wife in a lumber-room'.

Encouraged by these signs of new life, the Society again began to look round for a publisher, but at first without result, for with its small membership and limited funds the Society itself had nothing to offer but the material for the Dictionary, and no publisher was prepared to face the expenditure that would be required. Early in 1877, however, there were already foreshadowings of the ultimate connection with the Oxford University Press. Details of the scheme were submitted on behalf of the Society, and at the request of the Delegates a specimen of the proposed work was prepared by Murray. This was ultimately approved to such an extent that 'in the Spring of 1878, the then President of the Society, Mr H. Sweet, was authorized to open negotiations with the Delegates for the publication of the Dictionary'. As the prime mover in this new development, Murray also had a meeting with the Delegates at Oxford on 26 April, and 'thought there was good hope that the issue would be favourable'. This impression was confirmed by a letter (communicated to the Society on May 17) 'from the Secretary of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, Prof. Bartholomew Price, saying that the Delegates had authorized him to enter into negotiations with the Society for the publication of the Dictionary on the basis of the terms submitted by the President to the Delegacy. The Council had accordingly directed the Dictionary Committee to meet Prof. Price, and try to come to terms with him.' Two such meetings were held before 21 June, and a basis of agreement was arrived at in the following October.

'The substance of the proposals' made by the Society as a basis for negotiation 'was, that the Delegates should advance the capital required for completing and publishing the work, that the gross profits should in the first place be applied exclusively to repaying their advances with interest, the net profits being then divided equally between the Delegates and the Society, that Dr J. A. H. Murray should be the Editor, and that he should be allowed ten years to complete the work in'. Various alterations were made in these proposals before the terms were finally embodied in two contracts, one between the Delegates and the Society, and the other between them and Dr Murray. In order to enter into this contract the Society had to be incorporated on a legal basis, and was registered in proper form on 2 January 1879. The contract, which is dated 1 March 1879, is printed in an Appendix to the Society's *Transactions* for 1877–9, where it occupies ten pages, with the addition of a specimen page of the proposed Dictionary, containing the words *castle* and *persuade*, and some subordinate entries based on these. At that stage the Dictionary contemplated was one estimated 'to occupy not less than 6,000 nor more than 7,000 pages, . . . and the said Dictionary shall be edited and prepared on the

same principles and on the same lines of historical and linguistic evidence as to the forms and meanings of its words, as are shown in the Specimen page, and shall contain on its title page "Founded mainly on the materials collected by the Philological Society"'. This work is referred to in the contract as the 'principal dictionary', but provision was made for either party at a later date proceeding to compile and publish 'a larger dictionary containing not fewer than ten volumes, each containing not less than 1,600 pages of the size of the said Specimen page'. This was, in fact, a pretty close estimate of the size to which the Dictionary ultimately grew, and as early as November 1881 there was some anticipation of this growth, when the Delegates agreed to an increase in the number of pages from 6,400 to 8,400.

There are many other details in the contract which are interesting in themselves, or in the light of the later fortunes of the Dictionary, but on which it is not necessary to enlarge. The great facts which it embodied were that the Society had at last found its publisher, the Delegates had undertaken a task more magnificent than they knew of, and the Dictionary had found an editor capable of converting its latent possibilities into a great reality.

During the earlier part of these negotiations, however, Dr Murray had not definitely contemplated undertaking the editorship of the Dictionary, although he had taken a leading part in furthering the idea that it was something to be done. It was only when the necessity for a decision was forced upon him, by his being assured that the fate of the Dictionary depended on his acceptance, that he reluctantly agreed to assume the responsibility for a task which was even then formidable enough, though its full weight was not yet apparent. Several serious questions had to be faced in making this decision. It would be necessary to do the editing in addition to his work at Mill Hill School, even if he might be relieved of part of this. The housing of so great a mass of material could be satisfactorily accomplished only by providing special accommodation for it, and this and other necessary aids to the work involved at the outset the expenditure of private means in addition to the provision made by the Delegates. In spite of all these deterrents, he boldly faced the task, and set about providing the Dictionary with a home, and making it possible for himself to work at it. By the middle of February (he told the Society in May 1879) 'I had commenced the erection of an iron building, detached from my dwelling-house, to serve as a *Scriptorium*, and to accommodate safely and conveniently the materials. This has been fitted with blocks of pigeon-holes, 1,029 in number, for the reception of the alphabetically arranged slips, and with writing desks, reference desks, and other conveniences for the extensive apparatus required. On Lady Day . . . I received from Mr. Furnivall some ton and three-quarters of materials which had accumulated under his roof as sub-editor after sub-editor fell off in his labours. With a considerable body of assistants I have been engaged since that date, as to all appearance I must be for many months to come, in turning out, examining, sorting, and bestowing these materials.'

By the tenth of May, with a few exceptions, all the material in the hands of the sub-editors had either been sent in, or satisfactorily accounted for. It had, indeed, been widely scattered, and not only in Britain; the letter H came back all the way from Florence. Although so much of it was still in an undigested state, it was soon obvious that even all this mass was inadequate for the production of a satisfactory Dictionary on the lines that had been laid down. The material for many words, especially the commoner words, was obviously defective, and required to be augmented as rapidly as possible. A fresh appeal was made for voluntary readers, and even in April 1879 a number had come forward to help. At the end of that month, the Clarendon Press printed a thousand copies of 'An Appeal to the English-speaking and English-reading public to read books and make extracts for the Philological Society's *New English Dictionary*'. This appeal covers four pages, of which the first two summarize the history of the Dictionary from 1857 to 1879, the third explains the reading still required, and the fourth contains the statement 'A thousand readers are wanted, and confidently asked for, to complete the work as far as possible within the next three years'. To this are added four pages of book lists, and a set of directions to readers. This appeal, of which another five hundred copies were issued later, met with a gratifying response, and enabled the compilation of the Dictionary to be undertaken with confidence in the result.

The arranging of the old material in the Scriptorium, the organizing of the fresh collecting, and extensive correspondence with readers and sub-editors, were tasks which at first left but little time for the actual preparation of the Dictionary, or even for consideration of the many points which had to be settled before a real beginning could be made. For many of these there was no model which could be followed; they involved totally new principles in English lexicography, and required both scholarship and practical judgement to solve them satisfactorily. Coleridge and Furnivall had shown a sound understanding of what was necessary as a foundation for the Dictionary; to Murray belongs the credit of giving it, at the outset, a form which proved to be adequate to the end, standing the test of fifty years without requiring any essential modification to adapt it to the steady advance of English scholarship or the accession of new material.

III

At this point it will be well, both for the sake of greater clearness and of giving credit where credit is due, to give some account of the method of collecting the material for the Dictionary and of the work done by the voluntary readers and sub-editors. Each member of these two classes stood to the final editors in a relation similar to that which Socrates in the *Ion* compares to the magnet and the suspended rings, each depending on and operating through the other, although in the case of the Dictionary the order of their sequence was reversed.

The example of Johnson and Richardson had shown clearly that the citation of authority for a word was one of the essentials for establishing its meaning and tracing its history. It was therefore obvious that the first step towards the building up of a new dictionary must be the assembling of such authority, in the form of quotations

from English writings throughout the various periods of the language. Johnson and Richardson had been selective in the material they assembled, and obviously some kind of selection would be imposed by practical limits, however wide the actual range might be. This was a point on which control was difficult; the one safeguard was that the care and judgement of some readers would make up for the possible deficiencies of others.

By the directions which were issued to intending readers in 1858, and again in 1879, uniformity in the method of presenting the quotations was attained. Each was written on a separate slip of paper, at first of the size of a half-sheet of note-paper, latterly of a quarter of a sheet of foolscap, except when readers who supplied their own paper (such as Dr Furnivall, Dr Fitzedward Hall, and the Revd W. B. R. Wilson) wrote on pieces of any size or quality that came to hand. This difference in size makes it easy to distinguish the slips belonging to the two periods of collecting. When completed, the normal slip presented three things, (1) the word for which it was selected, written in the upper left-hand corner, (2) the date, author, title, page, etc., of the work cited, and (3) the quotation itself, either in full, or in an adequate form. A typical slip therefore presented something like the following appearance:

> Britisher
>
> 1883 <u>Freeman</u> Impressions U.S. iv. 29
>
> I always told my American friends that I had rather be called a Britisher than an Englishman, if by calling me an Englishman they meant to imply that they were not Englishmen themselves.

To obviate the tedium of repeating item (2) over and over again on hundreds of slips, it was in a large number of instances printed on each, in accordance with an estimate of the number that would be required for the particular book, or was supplied by stamping after the quotations themselves had been written. In this way, too, it was easier to make the references to page, chapter, line, etc., conform to general rules.

How the readers were to be guided in their selection of words was thus explained in the directions issued in 1879:

Make a quotation for *every* word that strikes you as rare, obsolete, old-fashioned, new, peculiar, or used in a peculiar way.

Take special note of passages which show or imply that a word is either new and tentative, or needing explanation as obsolete or archaic, and which thus help to fix the date of its introduction or disuse.

Make as *many* quotations *as you can* for ordinary words, especially when they are used significantly, and tend by the context to explain or suggest their own meaning.

It is obvious that these rules would apply in very varying degrees to different books, and that the task of some readers would be much more difficult and extensive than that of others in books of the same size. The amount undertaken or done by the different readers also varied enormously. In both periods of collecting there were a number who were marvels of industry and

whose mark is plain on almost every page of the Dictionary to those who can recognize it. With these on the one hand, and the large army of lesser, but often important, contributors on the other, it is not surprising that the piles of quotations grew into the interminable series that filled to overflowing the pigeon-holes of the Scriptorium. How rapidly the material increased in the periods of greatest activity will best be realized by a few of the passages relating to this phase of the work. In May 1879, in response to the appeal issued at the end of April, '165 readers have offered themselves, 128 of these have chosen their books, been supplied with slips, and are now at work for us. The number of books actually undertaken and entered against readers is 234; arrangements are in progress for perhaps as many more.' A year later the number of readers had risen to 754. 'Altogether 1,568 books have been undertaken, of which 924 have been finished', and 'the total number of printed slips supplied to readers now amounts to 625,035, while the quotations returned are 361,670'. Of these readers some had sent in a large number of slips varying from 4,500 to 11,000. By another year (1881) 'the number of readers has now risen to upwards of 800, of whom 510 are still at work. The slips issued now number 817,625, and the quotations returned 656,900.' The total number of authors then represented in the Reference Index was 2,700, and the titles numbered some 4,500.

Many of the particulars of this remarkable activity were given in the preface to the first volume of the Dictionary, and a full list of the readers and the books read by them between 1879 and 1884, with the approximate number of quotations supplied by each, forms an appendix of 32 pages to the Presidential Address for 1884 (pp. 101–42).

On looking over this list, the observant reader will notice that the interest in the Dictionary which at its first beginning had been manifested in the United States had been maintained, though not on the lines suggested by Coleridge. The interest, and the results it produced, are specially referred to by Dr Murray in his Presidential Address for 1880 in these words:

In connexion with the Reading, I cannot sufficiently express my appreciation of the kindness of our friends in the United States, where the interest taken in our scheme, springing from a genuine love of our common language, its history, and a warm desire to make the Dictionary worthy of that language, has impressed me very deeply. I do not hesitate to say that I find in Americans an ideal love for the English language as a glorious heritage, and a pride in being intimate with its grand memories, such as one does find sometimes in a classical scholar in regard to Greek, but which is rare indeed in Englishmen towards their own tongue; and from this I draw the most certain inferences as to the lead which Americans must at no distant date take in English scholarship.

Dr Murray then specially refers to the services rendered by Prof. Francis A. March of Lafayette College in directing the reading done in the United States at that time, and adds:

There is another feature of American help to which I must allude, because it contrasts with that we have obtained in England—I refer to that offered to the Dictionary by men of Academic standing in the States. The number of Professors in American Universities and Colleges included among our

readers is very large; and in several instances a professor has put himself down for a dozen works, which he has undertaken to read personally, and with the help of his students. We have had no such help from any college or university in Great Britain; only one or two Professors of English in this country have thought the matter of sufficient importance to talk to their students about it, and advise them to help us.

By far the greater part of the material supplied by these American readers, it may be noted, was of the same type as that furnished by the British contributors, that is, it was mainly drawn from literary or scientific works written in standard English, or without noticeable American features in vocabulary or idiom. It was thus very serviceable in supplementing the English evidence, but failed to a very large extent to bring out the special developments of the language in the American colonies and the United States. Much of the material for these was specially supplied during the progress of the Dictionary by one or two workers, notably by Mr Albert Matthews of Boston.

In addition to the quotations supplied by all this new reading, a few collections of Dictionary material, which had already been made by various persons, were by them generously handed over for use in the new work. If the Dictionary as it stands is a monument of scholarship, it is also one of unselfish giving on the part of a great number of men and women whose nameless contributions form the foundation of almost every article it contains.

Only second in value to the work done by the voluntary readers was that of the volunteer sub-editors. Without these, the mere handling and reducing to alphabetical order of three and a half millions of slips would have formed a task sufficiently heavy to delay for some years the actual preparation of the Dictionary. Even those who did no more than this rendered good service, but most of them went much farther, and so arranged and subdivided the words they dealt with, and defined their various senses, that their work was of real value in the final editing. It is with good reason, therefore, that the portions done by each were carefully recorded in the various reports on the Dictionary presented to the Philological Society and in the Preface to each letter in the Dictionary itself.

IV

Amid all the turmoil of assembling the old material, collecting the new, and reducing both to some kind of orderly arrangement, Dr Murray was working out the lines on which the editing of the Dictionary was to proceed. The problem of the best means of indicating the pronunciation, for example, was under consideration for a long time, and was decided only after the views of various authorities had been duly taken into account. Correspondence on this subject with Isaac Pitman, James Lecky, and W. R. Evans, was still in progress in the summer and autumn of 1881 and the spring of 1882, and the notation finally adopted was submitted to, and accepted by, the Council of the Society on 17 March of that year.

Meanwhile the preparation of the letter A was making progress with the material then available. As early as 16 May 1879 this had advanced as far as *aby*, covering 557 words, and providing enough copy to

make 36 pages of the Dictionary. A year later this had increased to 160 pages, going as far as *al*. By May 1881 the question of typography was being discussed, and there is mention of a specimen page in June. About the same time, the desire to settle down definitely to the real work of editing becomes obvious in the statement that 'the general amassing of quotations must cease with the present year'.

It had been estimated that three years would be required for all this preparatory work, and the estimate proved to be correct. On 19 April 1882, the first batch of copy went to the printer, and in his report to the Philological Society on 19 May, Dr Murray had the satisfaction of being able to announce 'the great fact ... that the Dictionary is now at last really launched, and that some forty pages are in type, of which 48 columns have reached me in proof'. To fill the first part, however, extending from *A* to *ant*, more than a thousand columns were necessary, and the task of providing these occupied the remainder of that year, and the greater part of the next. Finally, on 18 January 1884, advance copies of Part I were exhibited at a meeting of the Society, publication took place on 1 February, and the 'New English Dictionary' at once took its place as an incomparable record of the English tongue, far surpassing all that had as yet been accomplished or even dreamt of in the field of lexicography.

The beginning had been made; how to continue the work rapidly was the next question that called for solution. Simple arithmetic indicated that there was need for an increased rate of production, though it was not clear how this was to be attained. In May 1884 Dr Murray thought that with six good assistants 'it might be possible to produce two parts in the year, and thus finish the work in 11 years from next March'. This suggestion was no doubt justified by the facts as they were at that time. That it failed to work out was certainly due in great part to the fact that A was not a good letter on which to base the calculation, and to a steady increase in the material which could not at that time be foreseen.

All the work necessary to produce the first part had been done in the original Scriptorium at Mill Hill. It was clear that greater progress could be made if the editor could devote all his time to the work and be in closer touch with the printing at the Clarendon Press. As early as 1882 the idea of removal to Oxford had been suggested, but it was only towards the end of 1884 that the proposals began to take definite shape. The practical aspects of the question having been settled, the removal took place in 1885; a new Scriptorium was erected in the garden of the house at 78 Banbury Road, and here Dr Murray and his staff carried on their work for the next thirty years. The Scriptorium was not in itself lacking in space, but when into it were packed all the accumulated material, the necessary works of reference, and the tables, desks, and chairs required by the editor and six or seven assistants, it presented a crowded scene to the eye of the visitor. If John Baret had been able to look into it, he would have hailed it as another *Alvearie*, with a swarm of workers as busy as those who helped him to compile his own volume.

In the new quarters the Dictionary continued to make progress, and Part II, containing the words from

Ant to *Batten*, appeared in 1885. By that time it had become plain that some editorial co-operation was necessary to increase the rate at which successive parts could be produced. Here again the Dictionary was fortunate, as it had already been in rising, in Dr Murray's hands, out of the apparent impasse into which it had fallen ten years before. When Part I was published, the editor of the *Academy* handed it for review to Henry Bradley, who had but lately arrived in London, and was yet comparatively unknown in the world of scholarship. His review, which appeared in two parts, on 16 February and 1 March, at once marked him out as one of the few who were competent either to appreciate the Dictionary at its proper value, or to offer useful criticism. So clear an indication of possible help was not overlooked, and by July Bradley was assisting in the preparation of the latter part of B. From January 1888 he was independently editing the letter E, and continued with this and F while still engaged in other work in London. In 1896 he also moved to Oxford, and with his staff found quarters in the Clarendon Press itself.

From 1888 there were thus two distinct sections of the Dictionary simultaneously in progress, Dr Murray doing the whole volume occupied by C, and the half volume containing D, while Bradley completed that volume with E, and began the next (Vol. IV) with F. Down to 1900 the letters published, with the respective dates of the preparation of each, stand as follows:

A B	1882–8		
C	1888–93	E	1888–93
D	1893–7	F	1893–7
H	1897–9	G	1897–1900

In all this work the part played by the assistants who formed the staff of each editor was of the greatest importance. While considerable training and experience are required by every one, however well qualified, it is also true that the real dictionary worker is born and not made, and that no application or diligence will ever make up for the lack of natural aptitude for the work. The two earlier editors, and those who came later, were fortunate in having the services of a number of such assistants, some of whom (and those among the best) became connected with the Dictionary in its earlier stages and remained faithful to it for periods of twenty, thirty, and even forty years. Without their unflagging and efficient aid, no editor could have coped with the task without so much expenditure of his own time that the end of it would have been beyond all calculation. If those who read the original prefaces to the various letters will note the names that occur time after time at the end of these, they will do right to recognize that the bearers of these names have throughout many years borne the greater share of the labour by which the Dictionary was made possible.

Among these assistants a natural subdivision of labour readily established itself according to the special interests of each. Some became experts in preparing copy for the printer, drafting articles which required only a few editorial changes, or actually writing them in a form which admitted little or no improvement. To these fell the task of taking up the work already done by the sub-editors, of incorporating new material, of making fresh additions that were obviously required, of

distinguishing senses and sub-senses, of writing the definitions, and of reconciling the historical order of the senses with their logical development from the original meaning of the word. This became a highly complicated task in the case of common words with a long history, such as the most frequently used verbs, adverbs, or prepositions. The difficulty of these had become apparent even in the early period of the work, and formed the subject of comment by Dr Murray in 1881:

In returning to me his last batch, Mr. Jacob mentioned to me that the division of the meanings of the verb *Set*, and the attempt to put them in satisfactory order, had occupied him over 40 hours. In examining his results, with 51 senses of the simple verb, and 83 of phrases like *set-out*, *set-off*, *set-down*,—134 divisions in all—I do not wonder at the time. I suspect that the Editor will have to give 40 more to it, for the language seems not to contain a more perplexing word that *Set*, which occupies more than two columns of Webster, and will probably fill three of our large quarto pages.

When *set* finally came to be done, more than thirty years later, it took nearer 40 days than 40 hours to digest the mass of examples which had accumulated by that time; the word occupies a column more than 18 pages of the Dictionary, and extends to 154 main divisions, the last of which (*set up*) has so many subdivisions that it exhausts the alphabet and repeats the letters down to *rr*. Other words like *get*, *give*, *go*, *put*, *take*, may not rival this, but each of them required a vast amount of preliminary labour on the part of some assistant, which was of the greatest value in saving the time of the editor and giving him a clear basis on which to work.

Other assistants developed special ability in checking and verifying references readily and correctly, in finding earlier or desirable examples of words or uses, or in reading proofs and making additions to the material at that stage. When a staff had all these elements properly represented and distributed in it, and certain preliminaries to the work on each letter (such as the copying of glossaries, concordances, and indexes) had been fully carried out, steady progress could be made, and was made to an extent which seemed marvellous to foreign scholars acquainted with the difficulties of lexicography, but unfamiliar with the practical methods of overcoming them.

For the obtaining of full or accurate information on special points, it was frequently necessary to apply to outside authorities of the most varied kind. The services rendered by these were partly acknowledged on the title-page of the earlier parts and volumes in the words 'With the assistance of many scholars and men of science'. How many these were may be seen at large in the original prefaces to the various letters, but it should also be noted that there were many in those lists who would not have claimed to belong to either of these learned classes, but who could and did supply the information wanted with a clearness and fullness which made the editor's task easy, and gave him confidence in the correctness of his statements. If various errors to be found in standard works are not repeated in the Dictionary, it is frequently because someone with a practical knowledge of the subject had been specially consulted on the point, and had freely given the information required.

When the Dictionary had reached the stage of the

first proof (regularly supplied in sets of eight columns), it was found to be of much value to send these to various readers deeply interested in the work, to receive the benefit of their criticisms, suggestions, and additions. In this way many improvements were made, errors and misprints eliminated, and the history of words and senses more fully illustrated. In the latter respect the contributions of Dr Fitzedward Hall were of special value by reason of his own collection of material. His regular reading of the proofs extended over some twenty years, and after his death his collections for the later letters were placed at the service of the editors. Among nearly a score of others who reviewed the proofs for shorter or longer periods special mention should be made of Mr Henry Hucks Gibbs (Lord Aldenham), who also in other ways gave valuable help and encouragement in the early stages of the work; of Miss Edith Thompson of Bath, Canon Fowler of Durham, and Mr A. Caland of Wageningen in Holland, who not only supplied many fresh quotations, but as a foreign student of English frequently noticed points which did not so readily strike the native eye.

V

Although two editors and their staffs had been working separately from 1888, it was still considered by the Delegates of the Clarendon Press that the rate of progress ought to be increased, and it was clear that this could only be done by the appointment of a third editor. With this in view, William Alexander Craigie, then a lecturer at the University of St Andrews, was invited to Oxford in the summer of 1897, and after assisting Dr Bradley with the letter G, and Dr Murray with I and K, began separate editing with Q in 1901. From that date two sections of the Dictionary had their home in the Old Ashmolean Building in Broad Street, which had been left vacant by the removal of the Museum some years before. To these a third was added in 1914, when Charles Talbut Onions, who had at Dr Murray's invitation joined the staff in 1895, and had between 1906 and 1913 prepared special portions of M, N, R, and S, began with a separate staff to edit the later portion of that letter (Su–Sz).

With four editors and their staffs concurrently at work prospects for an early conclusion to the whole seemed brighter than they had ever been since the full magnitude of the undertaking became apparent. Unfortunately it was not long before various events began to mar these prospects, and bring unwelcome delays. The outbreak of the Great War soon began to reduce the staffs by withdrawing from them their younger members, and in time even some of those more mature in years. The loss of these trained workers for three or four years was naturally a serious handicap for those that remained. The next severe blow was the death of Sir James Murray (he had been knighted in 1908) on 26 July 1915, after more than thirty-eight years of connection with the Dictionary and thirty-three during which he had supplied copy to the printer without intermission. The transference of his staff to the Old Ashmolean, or to quarters near it, helped greatly to strengthen the three remaining sections, but there was no possibility of compensating for the loss that the work had sustained. If his wish had been fulfilled to the

extent of seeing his eightieth birthday in 1917, it would not have coincided with the end of the Dictionary, as he had hoped, but those two years would have brought the completion of the work appreciably nearer in spite of the difficulties of the time.

With the end of the war, some of the assistants returned to their posts, and for some four years the work went on steadily (although the two younger editors were not continuously engaged on it nor able to give their whole time to it), until the death of Dr Bradley on 23 May 1923 removed another of its mainstays. By that time it was clearly too late to think of finding another editor; the best that could be done was to make full use of the more experienced assistants in the preparation of special sections of the letters that still remained. By this means it was possible for Dr Craigie, in spite of his removal to the University of Chicago in 1925, to take part with Dr Onions in the editing of W, and so enable the work to be finished in the beginning of 1928, almost exactly seventy years from the date on which the Philological Society had decided to make 'a completely new English Dictionary'.

With work on three or four letters going on simultaneously, and publication of each taking place as soon as the sections were ready, the sequence of the various parts of the Dictionary became more irregular after 1900, as will be seen from the following table:

Murray	Bradley	Craigie	Onions
I J K 1899–1901			
	L 1901–3		
O 1902–4		Q 1902	
		R–Re 1903–5	
P 1904–9	M 1904–8	N 1906–7	
		Re–Ry 1907–10	
	S–Sh 1908–14		
T 1909–15	St 1914–19	Si–Sq 1910–15	
		V 1916–20	Su–Sz 1914–19
	W–We 1920–3	U 1921–6	X Y Z 1920–1
		Wo–Wy 1927	Wh–Wo 1922–7

The total number of pages in the first edition was 15,487; of these no less than 7,207, or nearly half of the entire work were edited by Sir James Murray.

The early volumes of the Dictionary were as a rule published in parts of 352 pages at a price of twelve shillings and sixpence each, with three smaller sections introduced to make the divisions coincide with the end of the letters B, C, and E. The size of these parts necessarily involved a considerable time in the preparation of each, and a corresponding interval between the dates of publication. Towards the end of 1894 it was decided that a shortening of these intervals was desirable, and the new arrangement explained in the following announcement was adopted.

The Letters, A, B, C, and E of this great undertaking having been already published, the Delegates of the Clarendon Press have been urged from many quarters to consider the more frequent publication of the subsequent portions of the work, in smaller instalments, as each is completed by the Editors, so as to supply students of the English Language and Literature more promptly with the results of the latest researches.

In response to this demand, the Delegates have arranged for the punctual issue of the letters D and F in Quarterly Sections. The new issue will begin with the simultaneous publication of the opening part of each letter on November 15, and further instalments of the Editors' work will be regularly published thereafter on the first day of each Quarter, in such alternation as may seem desirable. The Delegates have

no reason to fear any interruption in the continuous publication of the Dictionary on this plan.

This expectation was realized, and quarterly sections of 64 pages, or double sections of 128 (occasionally even a triple section of 192) were steadily issued for the next twenty years, until the reduction of staffs caused by the war, and other losses, made it impossible to continue with the same regularity. For the convenience of those who preferred them, however, the larger twelve-and-sixpenny parts were still issued whenever a sufficient number of consecutive single or double sections were available to make one.

At the time this change was made, a new name for the Dictionary was also introduced, though no change was made on the title-page. On the cover of the section containing *Deceit* to *Deject*, published on 1 January 1895, above the title, appeared for the first time the designation 'The Oxford English Dictionary', which was repeated on every section and part issued after 1 July of that year. The new name, being more distinctive than the old, steadily came more and more into use, and the abbreviation *OED* tended to supplant *NED*, although the latter was frequently employed for many years. A third abbreviation, *HED* (with H for Historical), though employed for a number of year in *Notes and Queries*, never attained general currency. Popularly the work was often referred to as Murray's, and the Philological Society by a natural tradition has continued to call it 'the Society's Dictionary'.

VI

During all these years of work, in addition to the growing appreciation which it steadily received, the progress of the Dictionary was diversified by a few extraneous events. On 12 October 1897, a large number of the readers, sub-editors, assistants, and other helpers were enabled to meet each other at Oxford by the generosity of the Provost and Fellows of The Queen's College, who on that date gave a complimentary dinner to 'Dr. Murray, Mr. Bradley, and some others who have helped in the production of the Historical English Dictionary'. The time was a fortunate one, for in that year it was still possible for some of the early workers to shake hands with those who were just beginning to take up the task which they had already carried on so long. Only a small number of the company which met that evening lived long enough to see the completion of the work.

In the same year the Dictionary was by permission dedicated to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, as intimated on a special page inserted in the part for January 1898.

Up to 1905 the whole expense of preparing and printing the Dictionary was borne by the Oxford University Press. In that year, however, a contribution was made towards the cost of the sixth volume, which was also recorded on a separate page in these words:

This sixth volume is a memorial of the munificence of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, who have generously contributed five thousand pounds towards its production.

When the completed dictionary was published in April 1928, the first copies were presented to His Majesty King George, and to Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States, as the highest representatives of the two great English-speaking nations.

On 6 June of the same year the Goldsmiths' Company celebrated the completion of the work by a dinner in the Company's hall in London, at which contributors and workers again had an opportunity of meeting, and of hearing the Prime Minister, Mr Stanley Baldwin, commend the results of their labours in eloquent and graceful terms.

During the progress of the work academic honours were from time to time conferred upon the editors by various universities, and at its completion the University of Oxford marked the occasion by conferring the honorary degree of D.Litt. on the two surviving editors, the Secretary to the Delegates of the Press, the Publisher to the University, and the Printer to the University.

Sir James Murray, as already mentioned, had in recognition of his services to scholarship received the honour of knighthood in 1908, the announcement being made in the Birthday list of 26 June, and the same distinction was bestowed on the third editor in the Birthday list of 3 June, 1928.

After the completion of the Dictionary in 1928, editorial work did not immediately cease. Since the *OED* had been published over a period of forty-four years, it was inevitable that many later additions to the language, both of new words and of new senses, should be lacking in the earlier volumes, and that even the later should to some extent present similar deficiencies. To remedy this as far as possible, the succeeding five years were devoted to the preparation of a supplementary volume, the scope of which is explained in the next section. After this work had been finished the original ten-volume *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* was, in August 1933, reissued as *The Oxford English Dictionary* in twelve volumes. An additional volume was issued at the same time, containing the Supplement of new words and meanings, the Additions and Emendations prefixed to the original volumes, revised and amplified, a List of Spurious Words, and a List of Books quoted in the principal work; this last forming, as the 1933 Preface has it, 'a bibliography of English literature such as does not exist elsewhere'.

THE FIRST SUPPLEMENT, 1928–1933

From the earliest days of the publication of the Dictionary it had been envisaged that a Supplement or Supplements might be necessary, in order to keep the historical record of the language up to date, and to take account of subsequent research into the vocabulary already covered by the Dictionary. This possibility had been kept in view not only by members of the Dictionary staff but also by a certain number of the regular 'readers' who maintained a continuous flow of contributions to the material from which the work was being compiled; moreover, communications of corrections and additions were constantly sent in by many

interested users of the published work. Consequently, when the original Dictionary was completed in 1928, a great body of quotations had been amassed with a view to a Supplement on a grand scale, which should not only treat the new words and new meanings that had come into being during the publications of the successive sections of the Dictionary, but should also correct and amplify the evidence for what was already in print. It was soon discovered, however, that such a Supplement, if it were to be at all a worthy and adequate addition to the main work, would demand intensive research by experienced workers extending over many years. This course could not be contemplated when the possibility of preparing a Supplement was considered as work drew to an end on the original Dictionary.

It was therefore resolved to produce a supplementary volume, the scope of which would in the main be restricted to the treatment of those accessions of words and senses which had taken place during the preceding fifty years. To this limitation there were to be two principal exceptions: items of modern origin and contemporary currency that had been either intentionally or accidentally omitted from the Dictionary would be included, and account would be taken of earlier evidence for American uses, which Sir William Craigie, at that time editing the *Dictionary of American English* in Chicago, was in a position to supply. Temporary or casual uses were recognized only in so far as they marked stages in the recent history of scientific discovery, invention, or fashion, or illustrated the progress of thought, usage, or custom during the half-century then under review. A few important corrections or amplifications of existing definitions were introduced under the necessity of bringing the work into line with recent research. The details of this policy were established by Dr C. T. Onions, under whose editorship the first *Supplement to the OED* was published in 1933.

The chief characteristics of the vocabulary set forth in the 1933 Supplement can be summarized briefly: on the technical side, it exhibited the great enlargement of the terminology of the arts and sciences at the close of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth—biochemistry, radio telegraphy and telephony, mechanical transport on land, at sea, and in the air, psychoanalysis, the cinema, to name a few outstanding subjects; on the purely linguistic side, the varied development of colloquial idiom and slang, to which the United States of America had made a large contribution, but in which the British dominions and dependencies of the time also contributed a conspicuous share. As in the main work, there was continually present the problem of the inclusion or omission of the more esoteric scientific terms and of the many foreign words reflecting the widened interest in the conditions and customs of distant countries; it was acknowledged that the problem had not been satisfactorily and comprehensively solved in every instance, as the material from which the Supplement was compiled had been collected principally while the original Dictionary was still in preparation, and following the same guidelines in operation during that work. In one respect the 1933 Supplement went somewhat beyond the limits of the main Dictionary, in its more generous inclusion of proper names; but even so, these were not admitted unless they had some allusive interest or were important for some linguistic, literary, or historical reason.

The result was a Supplement of over 800 pages which went far towards completing the documentation of the English language up to the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century and just beyond. However, extensive though it was, it still represented only a restricted selection from a large collection of material from which a much larger volume might have been produced. Once it had been completed, the *OED* team dispersed, and the editorial staff, including the last surviving Editor of the original Dictionary still in Oxford, Dr C. T. Onions, turned to other work. The *OED* library in Oxford was broken up, and quotation slips that had not been used were stored away, some later to be dispatched to other historical dictionary projects, notably for use in the preparation of the *Middle English Dictionary* at Ann Arbor, Michigan and the projected dictionary of Early Modern English.

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, 1957–1986[1]

After the Second World War the Delegates of the University Press decided to re-establish a headquarters for the Dictionary in Oxford, and to prepare a revised version of the 1933 Supplement. In the end, this proved to be an even greater work than that which circumstances had forbidden in 1928, an addition to the main Dictionary of one-third of its size, taking almost thirty years to prepare. But this was not foreseen at the time. The original intention was simply to amplify the existing Supplement in a single-volume work of some 1,275 pages which would take account of the lexical development in English throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In 1957, R. W. Burchfield, a New Zealander who was then Lecturer in English Language

and Literature at Christ Church, Oxford, and formerly a Rhodes Scholar at the University, accepted the invitation of the Delegates to edit the *Supplement*. It was envisaged that this new *Supplement* would take about seven years to complete.

At this stage, the editorial office of the Dictionary was located on one floor of a private house, No. 40 Walton Crescent, adjacent to the University Press's printing works and to the Clarendon Press itself. The presence in Oxford of Dr C. T. Onions provided valuable continuity between the *OED* and the projected new *Supplement,* and at the time it was still possible for the editor to receive the advice and encouragement of a small number of people who had worked on or for the

[1] The Editor's own account of this project may be read in the prefatory sections of the four volumes of the *Supplement,* especially the Introduction to Volume I (A–G), on which the present narrative has drawn.

Dictionary in other capacities. However, the lapse of some twenty years since the disbanding of the original *OED* staff meant that one of the first duties incumbent on the new editor was the selection and training of new assistants. In the days of the Dictionary itself, Sir James Murray had often found the recruitment of suitable staff to be a problematic and uncertain affair, and so it proved again. Gradually, though, the initial difficulties began to subside, and early work in the preparation of the new *Supplement* began to take a steadier course.

The raw material for a dictionary on historical principles—a file of quotations excerpted from the literature of the period treated—was almost entirely lacking. Among the material left behind after work on the 1933 Supplement there was indeed a collection of quotations numbering about 140,000, few of which had appeared in the Supplement itself, which included illustrative examples of words excluded in 1933 because they were not fully established at the time. Though useful, these materials fell far short of what was needed, both in quantity and range: the whole literature of the eventful quarter-century since 1933 had to be sifted from scratch. In 1957 an extensive reading programme was inaugurated, covering printed sources of all kinds relating to late nineteenth- and twentieth-century English. The sources included all the important literary works, as well as many hundreds of popular titles, a wide range of scientific books and journals, and large numbers of newspapers and periodicals, ranging from the national press to the publications of the 'underground'. Numerous works containing lexicographical information, such as *Notes and Queries, American Speech,* and many dictionaries of regionalisms, slang, jargon, and technical language, were converted into the form of dictionary slips. In addition, several valuable private collections were submitted to the Press, and these were also added to the quotation files. Thanks to these and subsequent valuable donations, to the comprehensiveness of the reading programme, to the alertness of the departmental staff in their private reading, and to the regular contributions of scholars and voluntary readers, the quotation file grew to contain at least two million, and possibly three million, slips by the time of the completion of the *Supplement,* and proved an excellent resource from which to make the initial selection of items for inclusion in the dictionary and from which to document the history of each term up to the present day.

At the same time it was necessary to build up a reference library of books in the department to which staff could turn for additional information about items for which entries were being prepared. Some volumes from the 1933 Supplement library were brought together again, and a further 7,000 or so books, especially dictionaries, were gradually acquired by the department. These consisted of books and periodicals dealing with the development of English in Great Britain, America, the Commonwealth, and elsewhere; a large collection of dictionaries (both English and bilingual), volumes on slang, dialect, etymology, and as many of the subject areas treated by the dictionary as it was convenient to house in the editorial offices, besides many of the novels, plays, and collections of published diaries and letters, which had been 'read' for the dictionary's quotation file and were at hand when quotations included in the dictionary needed checking.

By the early 1960s, it was clear that the development of the English language throughout the world had been much more rapid than either the Delegates of the Press or the Editor of the *Supplement* had at that time considered, and that the *Supplement* would occupy many more pages than had been originally intended. The paramount importance of reassessing the projected size of the *Supplement* had been highlighted by the publication in 1961 of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary,* which illustrated dramatically the proliferation of new vocabulary in North America and Great Britain in the early and mid-twentieth century. *Webster's Second* had appeared just one year after the earlier *OED* Supplement, in 1934, and offered a perfect basis for comparison in terms of the rate of change in the language, bringing home sharply to the Editor and his staff the necessity of improving considerably the *OED*'s own coverage of American English, and, *pari passu,* other overseas varieties of English. The original plans were revised to allow for a *Supplement* spanning three (and eventually four) volumes, concentrating much more extensively on the vocabulary of North America, the West Indies, Australia, and the other English-speaking countries of the world. The Editor drew a parallel between the current state of affairs on the *Supplement* and Dryden's remarks in the *Preface to the Fables* (1700):

'Tis with a Poet, as with a Man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the Cost beforehand: But, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his Account, and reckons short of the Expence he first intended: He alters his Mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that Convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began.[1]

A substantial research base had been built up by the mid-1960s. Besides assistant editors and researchers in Oxford, the *Supplement* soon had permanent members of staff working as researchers in the major libraries in London and Washington, and links with language centres and with other libraries throughout the world. A panel of specialist consultants was established to read and comment on individual entries in galley proof, and another panel of scholars and writers to read through continuous sections of galley proof with a critical eye. A radical departure from the policy adopted by the editors of the original Dictionary was the appointment from 1968 of graduates in scientific subjects, who took general responsibility for the drafting of entries in these disciplines. The necessity of taking this step had been impressed on the Editor as a result of his visit to the editorial offices of Merriam-Webster in 1967. Editorial work on the *Supplement* began in earnest in 1964, and the first instalment of copy (*A–alpha*) was delivered to the University Printer on 27 May 1965. From this point until the completion of the *Supplement* editorial staff were involved simultaneously in the preparation of copy for press, and in dealing with proofs. At first the University Printer, and subsequently (with considerable overlap) Messrs. William Clowes and Son Ltd., of Colchester, and, in the final stages, Latimer Trend

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[1] *Supplement*, Volume II, p. vii.

Ltd., of Plymouth, were engaged in the typesetting of the *Supplement.*

The first volume of the *Supplement* (*A–G*) was published in 1972, and immediately established itself as a worthy sequel to the original Dictionary. Soon after its publication the Editor was honoured with the title of Commander of the British Empire for his services to scholarship. The dictionary was fortunate in attracting the interest of several scholars who began by reviewing the work in the academic press, and then became valuable consultants to the dictionary itself. Gradually more staff were appointed to the work of completing the *Supplement,* and by the mid-seventies some twenty-five people were involved in one or other editorial task, drafting the initial entries, reviewing the work of assistants, verifying bibliographical information, or conducting essential library research. The second volume (*H–N*), in which was included a dedication of the whole work to Her Majesty the Queen, appeared in 1976; by this time the editorial offices of the Dictionary were no longer large enough to contain the expanding number of staff, quotations, and research materials necessary for its preparation. Furthermore, the scope of the Dictionary department had expanded under the Chief Editorship of Dr Burchfield to include not simply work on the *Supplement,* but also the compilation and revision of the other Oxford Dictionaries, and for a time, a number of bilingual dictionaries as well. The department removed, therefore, to more extensive offices in St Giles', Oxford, in 1978; 1982 saw the publication of the third volume (*O–Scz*); and the *Supplement* was completed after twenty-nine years of editorial effort with the publication of the final volume in 1986.

Policy

Ian Hay's *First Hundred Thousand* (1915) contains the observation that 'the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language will have to be revised and enlarged when this war is over'. This fact had not escaped the notice of the Dictionary's editors, and they made ironic use of the quotation as evidence for the use of the adverb *when* (sense 4b).

The Delegates of the University Press had taken the decision in the 1920s to produce a Supplement which would concentrate on new vocabulary (embracing new words, new meanings of existing words, collocations and combinations, phrases, etc.); as plans were laid for the new *Supplement* in the 1950s to supersede the 1933 volume, it was again thought that the scope of the work should be restricted primarily to neologisms, thus leaving open the possibility of revising the main dictionary for the future.

Within this context, the principles by which entries for the new *Supplement* were prepared were inherited in most particulars from the original dictionary: the selection of material was based primarily upon a large quotation file collected as a result of reading an extensive range of sources; the style of definition, along with the critical apparatus (in the form of semantic and syntactic labelling, sense division, etc.) was derived closely from that employed in the parent work. However, although it did concern itself almost exclusively with additions to the language in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many antedatings of material in the *OED* had

been collected in the Dictionary's files over the years, and it was decided that, since the work was intended to update the historical record for the modern period in general, the new *Supplement* should include as many as possible of those antedatings which related to this period (for which 1820 was at first taken as the notional beginning, later 1750). Important though these predatings were, they still represented only a small fraction of the dictionary, which was primarily concerned with new lexical items.

The principal objective of the *Supplement* was to include all those standard words and senses which were new to the language in Britain since the period of the Dictionary. This objective was soon expanded to include as many of the standard terms from other varieties of English (notably North American English) as could be identified by the reading programme or by other resources. In the event, the broadening of the reading programme to encompass a much greater proportion of the written English of North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, and other regions than had been the case for the *OED* itself had a profound effect upon the eventual coverage of these areas which the *Supplement* was able to achieve. In earlier years, Sir William Craigie had advocated the preparation of historical dictionaries treating specific varieties of English around the world. Largely as a result of his pioneering work in this field, a number of scholarly historical dictionaries, such as the *Dictionary of American English*, the *Scottish National Dictionary*, and the *Dictionary of Canadian English*, had been compiled, which assisted the preparation of the *Supplement* in two ways. First, they provided additional (often very detailed) evidence for items selected for the *Supplement;* secondly, their existence allowed the *Supplement* to omit many purely local items, on the grounds that entering them would simply duplicate material that was readily available elsewhere.

The standard vocabulary of British English was already well covered by the existing Dictionary. As well as recent additions to this, and wider coverage of common terms from the other varieties of English, much of the material prepared for the *Supplement* consisted of the scientific, technical, slang, dialectal, and other words which had passed into common use in the academic or technical fields, or in the social culture or geographical area, to which they belonged. This simply extended the policy of the 1933 Supplement into the age of computing, space technology, popular music, and the other areas of innovation and development by which the second and third quarters of the twentieth century had been characterized. Furthermore, whereas the *OED* had included nearly all the vocabulary, including *hapax legomena,* of important medieval and Renaissance authors such as Chaucer, Gower, and Shakespeare, the *Supplement* followed the more limited policy of presenting liberally, but not exhaustively, the occasional vocabulary of a wide range of major modern authors.

There is sometimes opposition to the appearance in dictionaries of words which are considered either generally offensive or opprobrious to a particular group. The arguments run, on the one hand, that to allow such usages into a dictionary is equivalent to sanctioning

their use, and may even bring them to the notice of a wider public than would otherwise have been the case; and on the other hand, that to exclude such items would be tantamount to corrupting the historical record of the language, and would represent the first stage in a process of regulating the dictionary to fit the ethos of the times rather than the facts of the language. After very careful consideration of the matter, it was decided to admit to the *Supplement* the sexually taboo words formerly thought too gross and vulgar to be given countenance within the covers of a dictionary. This was done long after such vocabulary had been admitted to areas of general literature, and on the understanding that inclusion of these terms in a scholarly dictionary did not necessarily free dictionary editors to add them to dictionaries prepared for other audiences. Two of the most notorious of these terms happened to fall in the alphabetical range covered by the first volume of the *Supplement* (1972), where they appeared with a wide range of other colloquial and coarse expressions referring to sexual and excretory functions.

A second major area which involved the treatment of potentially offensive vocabulary concerned racial and religious terms. Consideration of this led to the formulation of certain general lexicographical guidelines for the *Supplement*: namely, that (*a*) offensiveness to a particular group was inadequate as the only ground for the exclusion of any word or class of words from the *OED*; (*b*) it was therefore desirable to enter new racial and religious terms however opprobrious they might seem to those to whom they were applied and often to those who had to use them, or however controversial the set of beliefs professed by the members of such groups; (*c*) it was also desirable, in order to avoid misunderstanding and consequent hostility, that the antiquated historical records of some words in this category already treated in the *OED* should be brought up to date.

Similarly, on the question of proprietary terminology, the *Supplement* endeavoured to follow a policy which safeguarded scholarly standards while not doing anything to imperil the proprietary rights of the owners of such terms. The proprietary status of each term likely to fall into this category was investigated thoroughly in Patent Office records in Britain and America, and elsewhere if this seemed to be necessary. If a term was found to be proprietary this was stated in the definition, and the earliest reference to the application or registration of the name in the official literature was cited as one of the illustrative quotations in the completed entry. It was sometimes found that a proprietary name had passed into general use: this fact was also related in the entry.

The editorial process

A brief description of the various processes involved in the preparation of entries for the first volume of the *Supplement* (1972) may be found on pp. xvi–xvii of the Introduction to that work. For subsequent volumes a broadly similar method was followed, but as the scope of the work expanded to encompass more diverse material and as the size of the *Supplement*'s staff grew to accommodate this, certain modifications were introduced to ensure that the work was conducted in the most efficient manner. The following account contains a slightly more detailed description of the practices that prevailed at the completion of the *Supplement*.

i. *Collection of material.* The raw material serving as a basis for the selection and preparation of entries in the *Supplement* consisted of the quotations which were collected as a result of a programme of directed reading established in 1957. Many illustrative quotations were also supplied by contributors outside the confines of the reading programme. All quotations were filed alphabetically according to catchword, and were available to staff working on the *Supplement*, to those working on other departmental projects, and to other interested scholars.

ii. *Sorting.* In order to establish which entries should be prepared for the *Supplement*, the entire quotation file was inspected section by section—in the early years by the editor; subsequently by his senior colleagues. Cards illustrating words and meanings selected for inclusion in the *Supplement* were extracted from the file, and grouped into 'bundles' (each consisting of between thirty and fifty items), ready for drafting. The primary selection was made by comparing the contents of the file with the relevant section of the *OED*, along with that of the 1933 Supplement which the new *Supplement* was to supersede. In addition, note was taken of terms not recorded (or sparsely attested) in the quotation file, but which seemed to deserve inclusion in the *Supplement* on the basis of their appearance in other dictionaries. Cards representing items already covered by the *OED*, as well as items considered too ephemeral or otherwise irrelevant to the *Supplement*, and pre-datings from before the modern period, were refiled in a separate sequence for possible later use. 'Bundles' of material were then handed to editorial assistants for drafting.

iii. *Drafting.* This process involved the preparation of a first draft of a dictionary entry for all of the items in a 'bundle'. Each assistant editor was expected to prepare complete entries, i.e. to ascertain the pronunciation and etymology of each new term where appropriate, to compose a definition, and to select and verify the quotations used. Clearly, the better an entry was prepared at this stage, the less work was needed in revising and editing it later. During this process the material available from the quotation file was augmented by further quotations found in the department's library of dictionaries, concordances, and other reference works. Often it was necessary for additional research work to be done in other libraries, such as the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the British Library in London, the Library of Congress in Washington, and elsewhere, in order to trace earlier and further quotations and to provide more detailed information for the definition. This work was normally conducted by library researchers appointed for the purpose. The library researchers were also responsible for verifying quotations from sources not available in the departmental library. All general items were drafted by non-specialist assistant editors; scientific, natural history, and social science terms were passed to specialist staff for drafting. Dictionary entries were prepared in handwritten form on 6 × 4 in. slips; a drafted entry would typically consist of head-cards containing the

relevant headword, pronunciation and etymology where appropriate, the definition, and other information, followed by other cards bearing the quotations selected to illustrate the entry. When the entries were complete (and all outstanding library research had been returned) they were filed in the main alphabetical sequence of copy in readiness for subsequent review by senior staff.

iv. *Revision.* In order to allow the Editor to proceed at an efficient pace through the material it was necessary to interpose a revision stage between the initial drafting and the final editing. At first, this involved the incorporation by senior editors of scientific and technical drafting into the main sequence of entries (with concomitant adjustments to sense ordering, etc.), and revising long and complex entries. Subsequently this was extended to the inspection (and, if necessary, revision) of each entry. Quotations recently added to the quotation file were considered, and alterations made to entries in the light of these; occasionally new entries were prepared if the fresh material warranted this.

v. *Editing.* The final stage of entry preparation was, naturally, the sole responsibility of the Editor. Every entry was inspected minutely, further revisions were carried out, and delicate decisions (as in the treatment of 'sensitive' items, the balance in size between entries from different disciplines, etc.) were made in order to impose an editorial uniformity on the published work.

vi. *Bibliographical collation.* In the course of drafting, editorial staff endeavoured to ensure that the bibliographical details of works cited were correct. But at this stage it was the task of the bibliographer to establish consistency in respect of the date of publication, 'short title', and other matters. For this purpose an index of verified citation styles, consisting of the majority of the works cited in the *Supplement*, was maintained throughout the compilation of the work. From it, a bibliography of the works most frequently cited in the *Supplement* was published at the end of Volume IV.

Bibliographical verification was carried out either on the edited slips or, when publication schedules dictated, on corrected galley proofs.

vii. *Proofs and the use of specialist consultants.* Copy for the *Supplement* was sent in regular instalments to the printer, from whom multiple sets of galley proof for each range were received in corresponding instalments for further review.

Up to this point, the entries had been compiled entirely by the departmental staff; at this stage, they were submitted to outside scrutiny. Entries relating to particular disciplines or geographical regions were examined by consultants with specialist knowledge: they were often able to suggest modifications or to supply earlier or more appropriate attestations of the term under consideration. Furthermore, several complete sets of each batch of galley proofs were sent to critical readers for general comments. The improvements suggested by such independent experts were vital in maintaining the standard of Dictionary entries. These comments and suggestions were incorporated by the Editor or by his senior colleagues, along with the routine proof corrections. Quotations which had gathered in the files since the preparation of the copy were inspected, and in the light of them further alterations and additions were made. The corrected galleys were then reviewed by the Editor, and returned to the printer for setting in pages.

One last important process was carried out in page proof: the verification of cross-references. Every cross-reference in the batch of page proofs was checked against its target in the *OED*, the published volumes of the *Supplement*, the material in proof, or the manuscript copy. After the second round of page proof, the material was finally passed for press. By the time that the last pages of Volume IV were undergoing these final procedures, the preparation of the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had begun.

THE NEW OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY PROJECT

Beginnings

Early in 1982, when the editing of the third and fourth volumes of *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* had reached an advanced stage, the Oxford University Press set itself to consider the future of the *OED*. The two questions of whether any further amplification or revision of the Dictionary should be undertaken, and whether an attempt should be made to combine the main *OED* with the four volumes of the *Supplement*, were recognized to be complementary. Publishing a supplement to the *Supplement*, or adding further material to it, had to be rejected as unsatisfactory expedients. The *OED* and *Supplement* should be combined before any further development was possible.

How should this amalgamation be performed? The two portions of the Dictionary had been typeset in hot metal. A new edition, whatever it might entail, would have to be typeset by computer. Conversion of the text into electronic form could be carried out either before or after the amalgamation. The option of creating copy for typesetting from the existing printed texts by means of cutting and pasting, or the marking-up of insertions and deletions, was dismissed. The technology of textual processing by computer was now at a stage of development that made it a highly appropriate tool for the task that OUP contemplated. The *OED* in machine-readable form, structured for use in a database management system, would be relatively easy to revise and, moreover, would be susceptible of a number of other applications, especially as a publicly available computer database. Indeed, the conversion of the Dictionary into electronic form, for just such a purpose, had already been suggested by parties both inside and outside the Press. It was therefore decided that the data conversion should be the first step taken, not only to lead into and facilitate the amalgamation, and subsequent editing, of the two parts of the Dictionary, but also to open up the possibility of its future development in electronic form.

A preliminary study, carried out by the Oxford English Dictionaries Department in March 1982 under the supervision of Dr R. W. Burchfield, concluded that both the conversion of the texts by manual keyboarding and their integration by experienced editors were feasible;[1] the report also listed the main aspects of the *OED* which were ripe for revision and correction. The Senior Officers of the Press determined at once to pursue the idea. Since the *OED* could be regarded as a kind of national monument, it was felt to be quite proper to solicit assistance, whether financial or technical, from Government departments, research institutions, or industrial companies. Accordingly, Mr Richard Charkin, the then Head of Reference Publishing, initiated a large number of approaches in various quarters, and in the meantime assembled the elements of an appeal brochure. By the end of the year the first outlines had emerged of a project that would involve computerizing and merging the two parts of the Dictionary, revising and updating the merged text, and publishing it in both a new printed and an electronic form.

The Identification of Partners

In March 1983 a small team was set up within the Press to begin the planning of the project. Its first task was to write the appeal booklet. It was decided that this should combine two aims. The first part, a clear explanation of the background and purpose of the project, was intended both for general information and more specifically to arouse the interest of any institutions or individuals who might wish to enter into some kind of partnership in the project. The second part, giving detailed technical specifications, was to be used by firms wishing to tender for the work of computerizing and merging the text.

By June, the brochure, entitled *A Future for the OED*, was complete. Copies were sent to computer companies, data conversion firms, on-line database proprietors, universities, libraries, and the British Government. A deadline of 1 August was set, by which time four firms had submitted tenders. The project team, evaluating these, quickly found that, while each tender had its own particular strengths, none furnished the Press with grounds for confidence that one tenderer, alone, could carry out the entire task to the required standard.

The initial idea had been that the chosen supplier would convert the text into electronic form, merge the *OED* and *Supplement*, and supply the resulting computer database to OUP; then, using the text editing system newly installed at OUP, lexicographical staff would revise and correct the Dictionary interactively and pass it on for composition and filmsetting. It now became evident that to carry out integration, to create a fully searchable database system, and to revise the bulk of the text in a single step would be impractical, and it would be far too long before any new edition of the Dictionary could be published. A revised approach was needed. The project had to be broken down into smaller components; a number of different project partners

were required, each responsible for what it could do best; and OUP should act as overall manager of the whole process, co-ordinating the separate components centrally. By the end of 1983, partnerships had been established with three contrasting institutions. These were as yet on an informal basis, but during the succeeding months of joint exploration they rapidly crystallized into formal agreements.

A data conversion firm of great experience and capacity, International Computaprint Corporation (ICC), a subsidiary of Reed International situated in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, was selected to carry out the conversion of the two texts into electronic form. IBM United Kingdom Ltd. undertook to supply computer hardware and software, and to second a group of experts as the nucleus of a team of system designers: their task would be to build a computer system that would facilitate the integration of the two electronic texts into one. Early in 1984 it was confirmed that this assistance would take the form of a donation under the auspices of IBM's Academic Programme. The University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, had expressed great interest in the research aspects of the project as early as 1982. They undertook the task of designing a database system suitable for the dissemination of the *OED* in electronic form and for the phase of updating and editing which would follow integration. The geographical distribution of this partnership was felt by OUP to symbolize quite suitably the international significance of the *OED*.

Recognition of the national importance of the project followed soon afterwards. A copy of the brochure had been favourably received by the British Government, and as a result a subvention towards the cost of the lexicographical research was announced by the Department of Trade and Industry in May 1984.

There was one other development of great importance towards the end of 1983. Fifty years before, the remainder of the team responsible for the *OED*, having completed the original Supplement, dispersed, and there followed an interval of a whole generation during which no original historical lexicography was carried on at OUP. Because of this, the new *Supplement* had to be started virtually from scratch, and needed many years to make up the lost ground. It was imperative to avoid the repetition of such a hiatus at the completion of the *Supplement*. Accordingly, a small editorial group who had been engaged in the drafting of entries in Volume IV was set to continue the work of compiling new entries, starting again from A, but also taking in new words and senses anywhere in the alphabet for which entries were clearly needed. This new series of entries was called by the convenient acronym 'NEWS', standing for the 'New English Word Series'. It immediately became a valuable source of information for the other Oxford Dictionaries. Although a complete updating of the Dictionary was now postponed to a second phase of the project, it was decided during 1984 that approximately 5,000 items from this series should be included in the new edition of the *OED*, in order to

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[1] The feasibility of using an optical scanner to convert the text of the Dictionary into machine-readable form was also investigated by OUP at this point, as also by others later. It was generally agreed that the complexity of the structure and the irregularity of the type would require an excessively large amount of editorial intervention in the scanning process; and it was not clear how an adequate framework of structural mark-up could be introduced into the text alongside this method of data conversion.

compensate for the temporal gap between the earlier and later volumes of the *Supplement*. The selection and editing of these articles was set in motion, and their text converted to machine-readable form at the end of 1986. This subject is treated more fully in the foregoing Introduction.

Planning

In January 1984 a department was established within OUP to manage the project. It was now possible to establish the objectives of the project, as follows: the conversion of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Supplement* to machine-readable form, ensuring that all information contained in the one form was carried over into the other; the integration of the two texts into one; the addition of articles on a selection of new words and senses; and the publication of the integrated version of the Dictionary within an acceptable time. These objectives constituted the first phase of the New Oxford English Dictionary Project. The revision, updating, and enhancement of the Dictionary (of which more is said below) would be the business of a subsequent phase.

Detailed planning was essential to the attainment of these objectives. An overall plan (known as the 'Plan of Record') was drawn up that identified all the major activities within the project, their interrelationships, the time each would take, and the resources of staff, equipment, and finance each required. These were: conversion of the data (or 'data capture'), initial proof-reading, computer development, automatic processing of the machine-readable text, editing of entries on the screen, composition of galley proofs, final proof-reading, and final page composition. For each of these a detailed plan was made. In July 1985, when the outline design of the computer system was complete, it became possible to estimate the times required by the process of building and using that system; these times were added into the plan, and a firm Plan of Record was established. Thereafter, the target dates for the completion of each main activity were fixed.

Proprietary software designed for project planning and spreadsheet operations was of vital help in developing and monitoring each of the interlocking detailed plans which made up the overall Plan of Record. This computer assistance immediately revealed the effects on that plan of changing any value (number of staff, amount of time, or cost). Hence it was possible to project time and cost quite accurately and to monitor progress against these projections. The use of such technically sophisticated methods, more redolent of engineering than lexicography, and unprecedented in the history of the Oxford Dictionaries, was necessitated by the scope and scale of the project. The latter may be roughly illustrated by some figures for the resources used in each main activity. Data capture, the keying of about 350,000,000 characters over 18 months, took 120 person-years; computer development took 14 person-years; automatic processing of the text took 10 months; interactive integration took 7 person-years; the two rounds of proof-reading, undertaken by over 50 people, each took 60 person-years; and final composition of the integrated text involved the setting of approximately 20,000,000 characters per week. The adoption of rigorous planning and adherence to strict monitoring of pro-gress contributed significantly to the work's completion in full accordance with the schedule and expenditure forecast which had been established four years previously.

Data structure

Once firm plans had been made, it was intended that the conversion of the text into electronic form should begin as soon as possible. Preparations at ICC were by now well advanced. But for data capture to begin, a system for structuring the text had to be agreed upon. It was resolved that the tagging language inserted into the electronic version should do more than simply express the typographical features—layout, typeface, type size, font—of the printed text. It must, as its primary function, identify the structural elements which combine to form a dictionary entry. This was a prerequisite both for the development of the database in the future, and, as it turned out, for the automatic processes applied to the text in the course of integration.

Several months were devoted to the analysis of the structure of the *OED* and its *Supplement*, resulting in an inventory of the most important structural elements (amounting to between forty and fifty) and their current typographical realizations. The translation of this scheme into a system of tags, though not without its difficulties, was straightforward compared to the immense task of ensuring that each element of Dictionary text was supplied with the correct tag. It emerged from discussions with ICC that a tagging scheme of such size and complexity would be very hard to insert accurately into the text at the stage of initial data capture. It would require so much knowledge that the training of keyboarders would be very long and the typing very slow. It would also require extensive pre-editing of the text, which again would take an excessively long time and require much training. On the other hand, a more modest scheme would be manageable. Accordingly, a compromise mark-up scheme was devised. The fifteen or so most prominent textual elements received tags with structural meaning, while all other features of the text were coded with tags that had a conventional typographical meaning. Further coding was deferred to a later stage. Even with this scheme, ICC found it necessary to carry out a considerable amount of preliminary mark-up, conduct lengthy training sessions, and undertake several proof-reading cycles, before the text was ready to be shipped to Oxford.

On 15 May 1984, at a press conference in the premises of the Royal Society in London, a formal announcement of the launching of the New Oxford English Dictionary Project was made, including the news that IBM UK Ltd. would be making a substantial donation to the first phase of the project. Meanwhile, work on the means of carrying out the integration of the text was continuing in collaboration with IBM. Matters needing development were identified as: the database management system for holding and protecting the electronic text, the software tool by which it might be edited, and a means of correcting cross-references affected by integration. There was also the problem of enhancing the system of tagging introduced by ICC so that it should be an entirely 'generalized' mark-up language, that is to say, one having structural, not typographical, signification. At

first this planning was conducted by means of a regular meeting between staff from OUP and IBM, but at length, in mid-July, the first secondee from IBM arrived at OUP as the project's computer group manager, and began to build up his team. From then on, the main instrument by which progress was monitored and problems were identified was a formal system of meetings, some at half-yearly and monthly intervals, at which representatives of the management of IBM were present, others occurring weekly and dealing with the minutiae of the project team's work.

During the following autumn the project gathered momentum. In September the University of Waterloo was granted Canadian Government funding with which to establish a Centre for the New OED as a focus for database research, from the point of view of both the academic user and the computer scientist. Early sketches of a potential database structure had already been made, and, more importantly, the project had attracted the interest of several researchers who might be able to provide parsing software which would facilitate the enhancement of the mark-up language. After some months of experimentation at the University of Waterloo, work was begun on this part of the system by the project's computer group, a vital contribution at the start being made by a secondee from Waterloo.

Also in September 1984, ICC sent to Oxford test data consisting of 100 pages of Dictionary text on magnetic tape. This not only proved the feasibility of the scheme for data capture but also made it possible to try out methods of proof-reading.

In October the project team drew up a formal Statement of User Requirements, which set out the aims of the first phase and the operations which the computer system would be required to perform. This gave the computer group a basis on which to develop their detailed design of the system, an activity which occupied their attention over the two succeeding years. An Editorial Board was constituted, consisting of about forty scholars in a wide range of disciplines; the idea being that they should give advice to the project team especially when the revision, updating, and enhancement of the dictionary were planned.

Data Capture

At the beginning of November 1984 the computer equipment from IBM was installed. At the same time, ICC began data capture in earnest. A team of ICC copy editors, based in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, began to insert structural mark-up on enlarged copies of the Dictionary pages. These were passed to the data conversion personnel (both on the same site and in Tampa, Florida) for keyboarding. Data-validation routines and sample proof-reading were carried out by ICC before the proofs were shipped to Oxford. It was stipulated that the rate of errors should be no more than 7 in 10,000 keystrokes; and this requirement was met.

The first batch of magnetic tapes and proofs arrived in January 1985, and proof-reading immediately got under way. From then until June 1986 a regular cycle of data capture, proof-reading, and data correction was maintained. A team of some fifty freelance proof-readers was directed from Oxford. They were required to check not only the accuracy of the text but also the selection and positioning of the computer codes. They were provided with a detailed manual describing the structure of the Dictionary and the correct application of the tagging system. Double proof-reading—the reading of the same section of text by two people independently, followed by cross-collation—was employed for a trial period. It proved, owing mainly to the very low error rate maintained by ICC, not to reveal a markedly higher number of errors than a single reading; certainly not enough to justify the double outlay of expense and editorial effort. A single reading was therefore conducted, but experienced staff checked, emended, and supplemented all the corrections before the proofs were returned to ICC. In addition, a system of monitoring the proof-readers' work by detailed rechecking of random samples was carried out until satisfactory standards had been achieved. During the same stage, a prototype of the parsing program was run on most of the electronic text to validate its structure: this functioned rather like an additional (and, within certain limits, infallible) proof-reader.

When ICC returned the corrected tapes, these were subjected to a further check, on the screen, to ensure that the corrections had been carried out within the agreed margins. This left the text with an estimated residual error-rate of only 1 in 235,000 characters. Since most of these were minor errors of punctuation and spacing, and the text would subsequently be proof-read a second time, this was felt to be an acceptable level at which the data could proceed to automatic processing by computer.

Computer Development

In July 1985 the computer group issued an Outline System Design, describing the essential components and features of the New OED computer system. Over the following eighteen months, in close consultation with the lexicographers, the group built a unique dictionary system tailored to the special needs of the project.

Once the text had been captured, it was loaded on to the project's IBM 4341 mainframe at OUP. It was important that it should be stored in a database system that would allow the necessary access and processing facilities. The operating system used was IBM's VM 370; the database management system was SQL/DS. Every new version of the data created by each successive stage of processing and editing was retained in the database; no older version was overwritten, and the whole was regularly archived on to magnetic tape and stored at a remote site for safety.

The structure devised by Sir James Murray and used by him and all his successors for writing Dictionary entries was so regular that it was possible to analyse them as if they were sentences of a language with a definite syntax and grammar. They could therefore be parsed, and this was the next process to which the text was submitted. The objective of parsing, as already mentioned, was to transform the text into a version categorized by a system of generalized mark-up, known as SGML (Standard Generalized Mark-up Language), in which each element is identified by its function, not its printed appearance. The programs used for parsing were written by staff of the University of Waterloo. The

'grammar' of the Dictionary text with which they operated was written at Oxford. It was developed by running a postulated grammar against the Dictionary text to establish whether the latter could be transformed without rejection of the input or ambiguity in the output. Revised versions of the grammar were run repeatedly until the closest possible approximation was achieved. The grammar had to be descriptive, not prescriptive, since the computer could not be allowed to override lexicographical judgement, and only the most minor rewriting of the text to accommodate computerization was acceptable.

A particularly important proposal in the outline design was that the computer system should automatically carry out as much as possible of the integration of corresponding *OED* and *Supplement* entries, leaving the lexicographical team the task of correcting errors, harmonizing adjacent text, and coping with difficult cases. The integration routines used the mark-up to create a single sequence of text from the two component parts, following the main structural cues (headwords and sense divisions) and the instructions in the *Supplement* that were identified as 'integration instructions' during parsing. Subsequent analysis of the integration program's performance showed that it successfully handled about 80 per cent of the text, and spared the lexicographers and keyboarders between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of the number of tasks which they would otherwise have been obliged to perform interactively at the computer screen.

Integration caused the targets of thousands of cross-references to be changed, rendering the cross-references inaccurate. To cope with this problem, every cross-reference identified by the parser was numbered and copied; after integration, the stored copies were automatically matched with their targets, changed wherever necessary, and returned to the text. In a similar way the pronunciations were copied, translated into the International Phonetic Alphabet, and restored.

The problem arose of finding editorial software suitable for emending and integrating entries interactively at the computer terminal. Failing to discover any proprietary software that was adequate, the team resolved to develop its own. The product of this development was a new kind of text editor, designed for structured text, and originally known as LEXX. The initial work was carried out by an IBM secondee, and then taken over and extended by the OUP staff. This highly versatile editorial tool was designed to interface with a number of programs that controlled access to the Dictionary data held on the computer, allowed entries to be proofed for immediate checking, and provided a complete working environment with checks and controls to protect the integrity of the text. The combined sub-system was eventually named the OED Integration, Proofing, and Updating System (OEDIPUS).

Once editing was complete, the text was to be transferred for composition of galley and page proofs. It was decided that this part of the process should be performed by an outside supplier.

During 1986 data capture of the main *OED* and *Supplement* text was completed (the remaining text—the entirely new entries and the bibliography—was keyboarded during the following half-year). The last of the eighteen monthly batches of proofs was returned, corrected, to ICC in mid-August. A month later the automatic processing of the Dictionary data on the computer system began. First the text was read on to the system and validated. Next the parser was run. Structural errors encountered by the parser were corrected on-line by the editorial group. During the three months that elapsed, 5,711 corrections were made. Automatic integration itself begain in March 1987, and the automatic processing of the whole text of the Dictionary was completed at the end of May.

The Editing of the Integrated Text

After subjecting OEDIPUS to acceptance trials, the editorial group was given access to the system at the end of June 1987. The most efficient working method had already been determined by experimentation. Proofs, or more strictly speaking, printouts, of all entries that were subject to integration and the modifications resulting from it were run off by the computer system. The lexicographical group would work through these, examining the results of automatic integration and making corrections and other emendations. These alterations would be entered into the text on-line by a separate group of keyboarders. Galley proofs of the complete integrated text would then be produced by an outside supplier. Accordingly, editing of the printouts began in June, and, at the same time, a team of keyboard operators was engaged, trained, and assigned to the task of 'interactive integration'.

After the first few months, during which no galley proofs were composed, the editorial group found itself occupied on several fronts simultaneously. On account of its huge size, the text was handled by the computer in forty alphabetical ranges or 'tables'. At any one time, the group would be editing up to half a dozen text tables. Each of these would be undergoing one of four consecutive editorial processes. The first was the editing by lexicographers of proofs of all entries that had in any way been modified by the integration and cross-referencing programs. Next, these marked-up proofs were passed to the keyboard operators, who made the necessary emendations to the electronic text. At this stage, a number of other corrections had also to be made, some unconnected with the action of integration; also, many complicated problems of integration came to light (including entries that had wrongly eluded automatic integration) and had to be resolved, at the keyboard, by the lexicographical staff. Once the integration of a table had been approved, a magnetic tape was produced and sent to the composition suppliers, Filmtype Services Ltd., of Scarborough, North Yorkshire.

Galley proofs of the entire Dictionary text for each text table were produced and distributed to the team of proof-readers (now increased to more than sixty). On their return, the third stage began. The editorial group checked all proof-readers' corrections, and carried out many additional systematic checks, some facilitated by specific computer scans. Cross-references were dealt with at this stage. Once approved, the table was again put on tape and sent for composition. This time fully formatted page proofs were produced, and the breaks between volumes were inserted. The fourth stage consisted of the checking of these proofs to ensure that all

galley proof corrections appeared correctly on them, and that no errors had crept into the text for any other reason, such as malfunctioning of the composition programs. The final corrections to the page proofs were again keyboarded into the database at Oxford; they were applied to the printed version by Filmtype Services either by the processing of a new magnetic tape copy or by simple keyboarding. When the final proof pages for a volume were deemed acceptable, the volume was passed for press.

Editorial Processes

During the course of the project, the text of the Dictionary was emended in numerous ways, over and above the central activity of integrating the matter from the *Supplement* into the main *OED*. Many classes of change were logically necessitated by integration; others, notably the adoption of the International Phonetic Alphabet and the addition of new words, were undertaken in order to increase the usefulness of the Dictionary. These alterations (a detailed explanation of which is given in the foregoing Introduction) were made during the three main stages by which the new edition was produced: initial data capture, automatic text processing, and interactive editing.

During initial data capture the chief amendments to the text were: the provision of transliteration for foreign script where the source text lacked it; the resolution of hyphenation problems; research on quotations with questionable text or imperfect citations; and the regularization of individual aberrantly structured entries. Before automatic text processing began, every main headword and bold subordinate headword in the *OED* that required an initial capital was marked by editorial staff and this information keyed into the computer, enabling the text and cross-references to be automatically emended. The system itself automatically carried out the conversion of the ICC tagging system to the generalized mark-up language; the translation of the Murray phonetic symbols and stress-marks into their IPA equivalents; the addition of a part of speech or homonym number to headwords no longer unique after integration; and the adjustment of cross-reference details affected by integration. The correction (by editors at the screen) of irregularities encountered by the parser was made at this stage, but corrections to capitalization, cross-references, and the phonetic transcriptions were made during the third stage. Many problems with the five hundred or so rarely occurring special characters, detected in the middle stage, were dealt with then too.

During the stage of interactive integration, galley-proof reading, and correction checking, the lexicographical group was notably assisted by a wide range of computer searches, the results of which were furnished on printed reports which could be tailored into formats of maximum usefulness. Among other matters, these reports covered unresolved cross-references, erroneous or ambiguous phonetic transcriptions, italicized phrases with initial capital letters, stray pronunciations that had not been converted to IPA, and entries with abnormal sense orders and structures. In addition, it was at this stage that the editorial group entered the addenda and spurious entries from Volume XII of the *OED*; the corrections which had been prepared for Volumes I and II of the *Supplement* but not inserted in them; and a host of minor corrections assembled on slips before and during the previous stages of the project. The entries for the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, and for certain similar two-letter groups, were also given special attention at this stage, as were many main entries from the *Supplement* which, for completeness' sake, required the transfer of portions of text from other (originally *OED*) entries. It may be said without exaggeration that the apparently straightforward task of amalgamating the two texts turned out to have ramifications and implications so multifarious, protean, and unpredictable that the project team occasionally despaired of detecting them all; and it is also freely acknowledged that resources sometimes did not permit them to carry out changes prescribed in the *Supplement* to quite the extent or degree implied by the latter. No effort was spared, however, in the attempt to carry out faithfully both the overt instructions and the implied purport of every one of the 69,372 entries in the *Supplement*.

The Future of the OED

It was recognized at the start of the project that no enhancements of the Dictionary could be carried out before the texts of the *Supplement* and the first edition of the *OED* had been combined. This amalgamation has been achieved, and the *OED* now exists in a second edition. But the English language continues to develop, the requirements of lexicography continue to change, and, accordingly, work on the *OED* continues too. The most important way in which the *OED* can be updated is by the addition of new words and senses, and this task is well in hand. Already 5,000 new items have been added to the second edition, and these can be regarded as an earnest of many more that are in the course of compilation. It has become very clear to the editors of this edition that virtually no new item can be added to the Dictionary without repercussions upon the entries already there. Purely as a result of integration, therefore, many changes have been made to the text which fall into the category of revision. Then, outside this sphere, the most important global revision of the text—the replacement of Murray's phonetic transcription with IPA—has already been achieved (though it could helpfully be extended, for example by the coverage of non-RP varieties). In short, the revision and updating of the *OED* is already well under way.

Much, however, remains to be done. Indeed some parts of the task could never be completed once for all, but that should be no deterrent from making a start. There is much in the style of the Dictionary, the punctuation, the capitalization, the definitional terminology, and the spelling (within entries and even of some headwords) that calls for modernization. In the cross-reference system, many improvements are desirable, notably in the citation of variant spellings as headwords and in the more precise specification of parts of speech, homonym numbers, and sense numbers. In the etymologies, the varying systems of transcription should be harmonized, the linguistic nomenclature should be brought up to date, and the results of recent research should be added. The organization of senses within many entries needs to be rethought. Numerous

scientific and technical definitions need to be brought into line with present-day knowledge (though the *Supplement* amended the treatment of many of the most important terms). Many of the definitions of general vocabulary need to be reworked to take account of recent technological and social changes. There are a number of references to countries, currency values, institutions, and persons, which are now anachronistic; and there are still a few definitions which enshrine social attitudes that are now alien. The usage and subject labels should be made fully consistent and modernized.

Many current words are illustrated by a latest quotation from the first half of the nineteenth century, or even earlier, and it is difficult to distinguish them from words or senses that are now, in fact, disused. Recent examples ought to be supplied for every sense that is still current. The citation style of many quotations from the original *OED* could well be brought up to the standard of consistency of the *Supplement* (although

improving it would require the rechecking of many thousands of quotations). Earlier examples exist (in various places) for thousands of words and senses, and these should be added. The coverage of English before 1700, and at least as far back as 1500, could be markedly improved. Last, but certainly not least, the coverage of English outside the United Kingdom needs to be greatly expanded, especially the English of North America, which is the greatest source of linguistic change, but not neglecting the English of the many other parts of the world where it is a first or important second language.

Other improvements could be mentioned, but these are the principal aspects of the *OED* on which there is work to be done, as most regular users of the Dictionary will recognize, however greatly they admire it. To these improvements the New OED project team hope to address their efforts in the coming years, so that the *Oxford English Dictionary* may continue to be an accurate and comprehensive register of the whole vocabulary of English.

THE FIRST EDITION: STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS

1. *Contributors*

A. This list contains the names of the principal readers before 1884; many of these began reading as early as 1858. The material which they contributed formed a great part of the main foundation on which the Dictionary was based. Under some of the names the number of quotations sent in is given, as an indication of the time and labour expended by many of these readers.

J. Amphlett, MA
W. J. Anderson (of Fife)
G. L. Apperson (of Wimbledon, SW; 11,000)
Col. R. D. Ardagh
Thomas Austin (165,000)
Miss E. E. Barry (of London)
Revd E. M. Barry
Mrs Bathoe (of London)
A. Beazeley, CE (of Thornton Heath)
Revd W. H. Beckett
Revd W. C. Boulter
Revd G. B. R. Bousfield, BA
The Misses B. M. and L. Bousfield
Revd S. J. Bowles
William Boyd (of USA)
E. L. Brandreth
Prof. and Mrs Brandt (of USA)
James Britten, FLS
The Misses E. and J. E. A. Brown (of Cirencester)
Mrs Walter Browne (of Worcester)
Dr T. N. Brushfield (50,000)
R. K. Buehrle (of USA)
Miss E. F. Burton (of Carlisle; 11,400)
A. Caland (of Holland)
Mrs G. M. E. Campbell (of Peckham)
Dr R. S. Charnock
The Ven. Archdeacon Cheetham
(Dean) R. W. Church
Herbert Coleridge
Prof. A. S. Cook (of USA)
J. M. Cowper (of Canterbury)
Revd T. Lewis O. Davies, MA
Revd Cecil Deedes, MA
H. Dixon (of London)
C. E. Doble, MA

William Douglas (of London; 136,000)
Edward Dowden
Revd J. Eastwood
Miss Eisdell (of Colchester)
Prof. Robinson Ellis
Mr and Mrs F. T. Elworthy
The Misses Elworthy
A. Erlebach, BA
H. A. Erlebach, BA
Revd J. T. Fowler, DCL
W. Warde Fowler, MA
Miss A. Foxall (of Birmingham; 11,250)
Dr F. J. Furnivall (30,000)
W. Gee, jun. (of Boston, USA)
H. Hucks Gibbs, MA (Lord Aldenham)
The Hon. and Revd Kenneth F. Gibbs
Hon. Vicary Gibbs
W. F. Grahame (of Madras)
C. Gray (of Wimbledon, SW; 29,000)
Mrs C. Gray
Mrs T. H. Green
Revd W. Gregor, MA
Revd A. B. Grosart
Miss M. Haig (Mrs A. Stuart, of Edinburgh)
Fitzedward Hall, DCL
W. C. Hazlitt
Dr H. R. Helwich (of Vienna; 50,000)
T. Henderson, MA (48,000)
S. J. Herrtage
James Hooper (of Norwich)
J. D. Howell (of London)
E. C. Hulme (of London)
E. Wyndham Hulme (late of HM Patent Office)

Miss Jennett Humphreys (of Cricklewood; 18,700)
C. Mansfield Ingleby
Revd Aiken Irvine (of Ireland)
Miss Eva Jackson (of Bishop's Waltham)
E. S. Jackson, MA (of Plymouth)
P. W. Jacob (of Guildford)
W. W. Jenkinson (of London)
Revd J. B. Johnston, BD
Revd W. M. Kingsmill, MA
Revd E. H. Knowles
Revd W. Lees, MA (18,500)
Miss Lees (of Reigate)
Dr J. Wickham Legg
Dr R. J. Lloyd
Prof. A. Lodeman (of USA)
W. S. Logeman (of Cheshire)
Revd W. J. Löwenberg, MA
A. Lyall (of Manchester)
Falconer Madan, MA
S. D. Major (of Bath; 16,000)
Revd A. L. Mayhew, MA
Dr W. C. Minor
Mrs Moore (of Addlestone)
W. Moore (of London)
Dr Richard Morris
Horace Moule
Revd C. B. Mount, MA
Mrs J. A. H. Murray (Lady Murray)
H. J. R. Murray, MA (27,000)
E. T. R. Murray
J. M. Norman (of Crawley, Sussex)
Cornelius Paine (of Brighton)
E. Peacock (of Brigg)
H. S. Pearson (of Birmingham)
Revd C. W. Penny

J. Peto (of London)
(Sir) W. M. Flinders Petrie
Prof. G. M. Philips (of USA)
H. Phillips, Jun., Ph.D. (of USA)
B. W. Pierson (of USA)
Revd J. Pierson, DD (of USA; 46,000)
(Sir) Frederick Pollock, LL D
Mr and Mrs G. H. Pope (formerly of
  Clifton)
Revd C. Y. Potts
Dr R. C. A. Prior (11,700)
Sir John Richardson, KCB
W. M. Rossetti
Mr and Mrs H. F. P. Ruthven
The Misses E. and G. E. Saunders (of
  Addlestone)
G. A. Schrumpf, BA (of London)
Adrian Scott (of USA)
Miss F. E. Scott (of Leamington)
G. R. Scott, MA
(Sir) Owen Seaman
A. Shackleton (of Birkenhead)
Revd T. H. Sheppard

Prof. W. W. Skeat, LL D
Revd J. Smallpeice
Dr G. C. Moore Smith
Miss L. Toulmin Smith
T. C. Snow, MA
A. B. Sprange (of London)
W. Barclay Squire (of London)
(Sir) Leslie Stephen
Revd Dr C. W. Stocker
C. Stoffel (of Amsterdam)
(Dr) E. H. Sugden
Revd W. D. Sweeting
Dr W. Sykes
Revd B. Talbot (of USA; 16,600)
George Tansley (of London)
The Misses Edith and E. Perronet
  Thompson (15,000)
Alderman Joseph Thompson (of
  Manchester)
Hon. Mrs L. Tollemache
Mrs Toogood (of Kirkby, Yorkshire)
Revd J. T. Toye (of Exeter)
Paget Toynbee, D.Litt.

Richard Chenevix Trench
Revd Kirby Trimmer, MA
Mrs L. J. Walkey (of Leamington)
Miss P. Walter (of Somerset)
J. L. Ward, MA (of Burnley)
T. Ward (of Northwich)
Dr W. W. Webb
Miss M. Westmacott (of London)
Dr R. F. Weymouth
The Misses B.M. and R. Weymouth
Revd G. Wheelwright
Revd F. Gilbert White
G. H. White (of Torquay; 13,000)
R. Grant White (of USA)
R. J. Whitwell, B.Litt. (33,000)
Miss J. E. Wilkinson and Miss
  Gunning (of Cambridge)
R. D. Wilson (of London)
T. Wilson, MA (of St. Albans)
Revd W. B. R. Wilson, MA (of Dollar)
Miss Charlotte M. Yonge

B. A large number of those included in the above list continued to supply quotations for many years while the Dictionary was in progress. The readers given below began their work after 1884.

F. J. Amours (of Glasgow)
Revd J. Bell, DD (of Auchtermuchty,
  NB)
F. H. Butler (of London)
W. J. Bryan (of Oxford)
P. M. Campbell
C. H. Chadwick (of London)
Miss Ellen Channon
Prof. Albert H. Chester (of USA)
Revd Andrew Clark, MA
Miss Susan Cunnington
Miss Ada Dewick
B. W. Dexter
James M. Dixon (of Japan)
Edward S. Dodgson, MA
John Dormer (of London)
R. Duncan (of Crowthorne, Berks.)
Revd Henry Ellershaw (of Durham)
Miss Ellis (of Oxford)
J. H. Everett
Miss E. Fowler (of Doncaster)
Wendell P. Garrison (of USA)

I. R. Gillespie (of Newcastle-on-Tyne)
Miss Geraldine H. Gosselin (of
  London)
Miss Hellier R. H. Gosselin (of
  London)
Col. C. Gray (of London)
H. F. Hall (of Oxford)
J. D. Hamilton
R. Oliver Heslop (of Northumberland)
Revd J. W. Hooper, MA
Alfred H. Huth (of Oxford)
Miss Ingall (of Manchester)
Albert Jacka
Miss Constance Jacob
George Joicey (of Gateshead-on-Tyne)
(Sir) J. K. Laughton
R. E. Leader
Halkett Lord (of USA)
L. Marcan
Albert Matthews (of USA)
H. A. W. Millar (of Oxford)
W. Payne (of Hayward's Heath)

Miss C. Pemberton (of Austria)
James Platt, jun.
Revd C. Plummer, MA
Miss H. M. Poynter (of Oxford)
Richard B. Prosser (of London)
Mrs Rackham (of Cambridge)
John Randall (of London)
Dr W. H. D. Rouse
Abrm. Shackleton (of Birkenhead)
H. F. M. Simpson (of Edinburgh)
J. Challenor Smith (of London)
Miss L. M. Snow
E. V. Stocks (of Durham)
Miss E. H. Taylor (of Suffolk)
John J. Thompson
Miss S. M. Unwin
C. R. Wilkins
Miss Wilson (of London)
Edward S. Wilson (of Hull)
C. B. Winchester
W. N. Woods, BA (of London)

2. Sub-editors

The sub-editing of the material falls into two periods, viz. that done under the direction of Dr Furnivall between 1862 and 1879, and that carried on during the years while the Dictionary was in course of publication. The following list gives the sub-editors of the later period, but it should be noted that some of these (e.g. H. H. Gibbs, W. M. Rossetti, Revd T. H. Sheppard, Revd J. Smallpeice) were also at work during the earlier years. For the earlier period mention should further be made of Revd W. P. Bailey, Revd S. J. Bowles, Edward Dowen, W. Gee, jun. (of Boston, USA), W. F. Grahame, J. D. Howell, Revd Aiken Irvine, E. S. Jackson, Revd E. H. Knowles, Revd J. E. Middleton, Richard Morris, Horace Moule, Revd A. S. Palmer, Revd Ralph Proud, C. W. Staunton, Dr W. Woodham Webb, Revd G. Wheelwright, G. A. White, Miss Charlotte M. Yonge. Most of these were also readers in the early history of the Dictionary.

W. J. Anderson, portions of M and P
  (1880–1900)
Revd G. B. R. Bousfield, BA, portions
  of F, G, and R, large part of W.
  (1880–96)
Walter Browne, portion of S (1881)
Samuel Taylor, portion of H (1881–2)
A. W. Longden, portion of H (1881–4)
A. Lyall, portion of T (1881–5)
Revd T. H. Sheppard, BD, portion of
  M, the whole of U and V (1881–5)

P. W. Jacob, portions of D, E, P, Q, R,
  and S (1881–6)
T. Henderson, MA, portions of B and
  C (1881–7)
T. Wilson, portions of I and T
  (1881–7)
E. C. Hulme, portions of C and L
  (1881–90)
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3. Assistants

The names of these are here divided into three groups, indicative of the relative length of time during which they were engaged on the work. As will be seen from the dates given, those included in the first group were for many years members of their respective staffs, and by their knowledge and experience contributed immensely to the progress of the work. The staff to which each was attached is indicated by the initial letter of the editor's name (M. = Murray; etc.).

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The following lists give the names of those who, outside of the regular staffs, rendered valuable help by regularly reading the proofs and making suggestions and additions. Those in the first list continued this important service for many years, in some cases from the beginning, and in all cases down to the year of their death or to the completion of the work.

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5. *Other Helpers*

It would require several pages to give even a partial list of those who contributed separate items of information, either of their own accord or in reply to queries addressed to them. Special mention, however, should be made of a few authorities who, especially in the earlier years of the work, freely gave the editors the benefit of their special knowledge in their respective fields, e.g. Prof. Paul Meyer in Romanic Philology, Prof. E. Sievers in Germanic, Profs. W. W. Skeat and A. Napier in English, Prof. Sir John Rhŷs in Celtic, Sir Frederick Pollock in Law, and Prof. F. W. Maitland in History. For many years Mr James Platt supplied most of the material for the etymology of words from remote languages, with the dictionaries of which he had an unrivalled acquaintance.

Valuable service was also rendered by a succession of voluntary workers who verified doubtful quotations or refer-ences, and searched for special information, at the British Museum; prominent among these were Mr E. L. Brandreth, down to his death in 1907, his immediate successor in the field, Mr W. W. Jenkinson, and Mr R. J. Whitwell, who also did verification and research in the Public Record Office and for many years contributed much material of special value.

While similar verification and research in the Bodleian Library was done by several of the regular members of the Dictionary staffs, their work was greatly aided by the generous co-operation of the Librarian and staff of that institution, on which the constant demand for the requisite books has imposed a heavy burden for many years. The share of 'Bodley' in furthering the progress, and increasing the value, of the Dictionary is one that deserves to be gratefully remembered, and adds one more reason to those which have given the name of 'Oxford' to a work that can no longer be described as 'New'.

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