

# INTRODUCTION

1. *History of the Project.* In 1933 the *O.E.D.* team, its work done, dispersed, and the two surviving Editors, Dr. C. T. Onions and Sir William Craigie, and their assistants, turned to other matters. The *O.E.D.* library was broken up and quotation slips that had not been used were crated and stored, some later to be dispatched to the United States for use in the preparation of the *Middle English Dictionary* and of the projected dictionary of Early Modern English.<sup>1</sup>

After the conclusion of the 1939-45 war the Delegates of the University Press decided to re-establish a headquarters for the Dictionary and to embark on the preparation of a revised version of the 1933 Supplement to the *O.E.D.* In 1955, as a first step, they invited R. C. Goffin, formerly Deputy Publisher of the Oxford University Press, to establish an office in a private house, No. 40 Walton Crescent, close by the printing-works and the Clarendon Press, and to prepare the way for the editorial staff to arrive. He was joined for a few months by E. A. Horsman, on leave from Durham University. In 1957 the present writer, at that time Lecturer in English Language and Literature at Christ Church, Oxford, accepted the invitation of the Delegates to edit the revised Supplement, and the appointment took effect from 1 July 1957.

There is a passage in the Historical Introduction to the Dictionary describing the 'crowded scene to the eye of the visitor' presented by Sir James Murray's Scriptorium in the garden of his house at 78 Banbury Road:

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.

It was at 78 Banbury Road that Sir James and his staff carried out much of their work in the preparation of the dictionary. Since 1957 No. 40 Walton Crescent has become 'another *Alvearie*'. After some initial disappointments, largely occasioned by the impossibility of finding experienced staff at that time, the preparations for the Supplement proceeded steadily. Useful practical advice was obtained from Dr. Onions, and valuable contacts were made with former members of the dictionary staff who were still alive, among them Dr. L. F. Powell, Dr. G. W. S. Friedrichsen, and Mr. P. T. J. Dudley.

The first phase in the preparation of any dictionary on historical principles is the reading of sources. Since 1957 our readers have extracted about a million and a half quotations from works of all kinds written in the period from 1884 to the present day. The sources included all important literary works (in both prose and verse) of the period, a wide range of scientific books and journals, and large numbers of newspapers and periodicals, ranging from *The Times* to those publications that emanate from the so-called 'underground'. Numerous works containing multiple lexicographical information, for example, articles in *American Speech* and in *Notes and Queries* and the whole of Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang*, were also converted into the form of dictionary slips. Among the material submitted to the Press since 1933 there were three valuable private collections, and these were also added to the quotation files: a set of several thousand quotations assembled from theatrical and other works by the late Sir St. Vincent Troubridge, and a similar number (mostly written on the backs of envelopes or on any scrap of

<sup>1</sup> A description of the work so far undertaken at the University of Michigan on a dictionary of the Early Modern English period is printed in A. Cameron et al., *Computers and Old English Concordances* (Toronto 1970), pp. 94-102. This dictionary

and other period and regional dictionaries were first proposed by Sir William Craigie in 1919 ('New Dictionary Schemes Presented to the Philological Society, 4th April, 1919', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1925-1930 (1931), pp. 6-11).

paper that conveniently lay to hand) from the Revd. H. E. G. Rope and from the late Dr. R. W. Chapman. In 1958 Mr. Clarence L. Barnhart sent to us from his files in New York a set of some 4,500 slips drawn from 1955 issues of *The Times*, *Science News Letter*, and other sources. Some time later Mr. H. W. Orsman presented to us his unique collection of some 12,000 quotations from New Zealand works of the period from the rediscovery of New Zealand by James Cook until about 1950. At a still later stage specialized collections of terms in Archaeology and Forestry respectively were given by Professor C. F. C. Hawkes and Mr. F. C. Ford Robertson. Among the material left behind by the editors of the 1933 Supplement there was also a collection of quotations, numbering about 140,000, from which they had made 'only a restricted selection' (*O.E.D. Suppl.*, Preface), including illustrative examples of words excluded from the dictionary in 1933 because they were not fully established at the time (e.g. *canned* (of music), *usherette*).

Easily the most ambitious reading programme undertaken by any one reader was that of Miss Marghanita Laski. By 1971 her contribution amounted to more than 100,000 quotations, obtained (and copied by hand by Miss Laski herself) from a wide range of sources. Miss Laski described her experiences as a reader in a series of articles in the *Times Literary Supplement*, beginning with the issue of 11 January 1968.

The sifting of sources, the appointment and training of the first members of staff, and other necessary preliminaries were completed by 1964. In that year we turned to the preparation of 'copy' for press and the first instalment, *A-alpha*, was delivered to the University Printer on 27 May 1965. Since then members of the dictionary staff have been engaged simultaneously on two fronts, preparing 'copy' for press from *alpha* onwards, and dealing with the proofs. At a later stage, beginning in May 1970, material in the range E to G was sent to a second printer, Messrs. William Clowes & Sons Ltd., Colchester, leaving the University Press to deal with A to D inclusive.

It will be apparent to users of the Supplement that one result of this method of sending 'copy' to press in instalments as they became ready is that the earlier letters of the Supplement are not quite as up to date as the later ones. For example, it proved possible to add the word *Biafran* to the corrected galleys (though the civil war in Nigeria had not ended when this word was read in the galleys) but not *Anguillan* (to which attention was drawn by events in 1969). Similar considerations apply to numerous other words that readers may hope to find treated in the Supplement. The following table, which shows the dates of dispatch to press of the 'copy' for Volume I of the Supplement, is a useful guide in this connection:

1965 May A-alpha	1969 Jan. cruiser-cursus
Aug. alpha-antibiosis	Apr. curtain-dash
Nov. antibiotic-end of A	Thereafter in small consignments
1966 Feb. B-Benthamism	at regular intervals:
May benthonic-bond	1969 (remainder) dash-board-devil
Sept. bonded-bucket	1970 devil-end of D
Oct. bucket-end of B	E-flathead
1967 Feb. C-chain	G-get
May chain-city	1971 flat-headed-end of F
Sept. city-conditioned	get-end of G
1968 Feb. conditioner-Crimean	
Dec. Crimean-cruiser	

The final instalment of the letter G was sent to press in May 1971.

Other important stages<sup>1</sup> in the preparation of Volume I included the publication in the 1958–61 issues of *The Periodical* (the house magazine of the Oxford University Press) of lists of words, with dates attached, for which earlier, or later, or additional quotations were needed;<sup>2</sup> the building up of our reference library of some 7,000 volumes; the appointment of permanent members of staff in London and Washington, thus giving us access to the great reference libraries in those two cities; the establishment of links with language centres (e.g. at the University of Sydney) and with overseas libraries (e.g. in Wellington, New Zealand, where Miss M. Walton and other members of staff of the Turnbull Library have verified local items for us); the appointment to the editorial staff in 1968–9 of some graduates in scientific subjects, a radical departure from the policy adopted by the editors of the main Dictionary;<sup>3</sup> and the creation of a panel of outside consultants, who read and commented on individual items in specialized subjects in galley-proof, and of another group of scholars and writers who read through instalments of galley-proof with a critical eye. Since 1968 we have also received direct and valuable assistance from Dr. Philip B. Gove and his associates at the G. & C. Merriam Co., publishers of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, in the form of quotations of earlier date than those in our files for words, such as those in *-ly*, *-ment*, and *-ness*, which elude the most diligent search by research assistants. About one-third of the items of this kind submitted to Dr. Gove were antedated from Merriam-Webster's extensive citation files.

2. *Editorial Policy.* The famous dictum stated in the Introduction to the Dictionary that 'the circle of the English language has a well-defined centre but no discernible circumference' is only partially applicable to the vocabulary contained in this Supplement. The perimeter remains as undefinable as ever. But in any supplementary volumes the domain of new 'common words' known to all English speakers is bound to be somewhat less evident than the scientific, technical, slang, dialectal, and overseas words which have passed into common use in the academic or technical fields, or in the geographical areas, to which they belong. Our aim has been first and foremost to ensure that all 'common words' (and senses) in British written English of the period 1884 to the present day (of those not already treated in the Dictionary) are included. Then, whereas the *O.E.D.* adopted a policy of total literary inclusiveness for the earlier centuries, with the result that all the vocabulary, including *hapax legomena*, of such authors as Chaucer, Gower, and Shakespeare, was included, we have followed a somewhat more limited policy, namely that of liberally representing the vocabulary of such writers as Kipling, Yeats, James Joyce, and Dylan Thomas. The outward signs of the working of this policy may be observed in entries like those for the following words: *apatheia* (a medical word used by Beckett), *athambia* (*hapax legomenon* in Beckett), *Babbitt* (name of a literary 'hero'), *bandersnatch* (a 'Lewis Carroll' word), *bang, sb.*<sup>1</sup> 2 (used allusively after T. S. Eliot's line), *barkle, v.* (dialectal use in D. H. Lawrence), *barw-ways* (dialectal use in James Joyce), *ectomorph* (anthropometric term adopted by R. Fuller, C. P. Snow, W. H. Auden, etc.), and *elf sb.*<sup>1</sup> 6 (further illustrations in Walter de la Mare, J. R. R. Tolkien, etc., of obvious combinations). Thirdly, we have made bold forays into the written English of regions outside the British Isles, particularly into that of North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, and Pakistan. It is already and will remain impracticable for any general

<sup>1</sup> Accounts of the progress of the Supplement may be found in articles by the Editor in *Essays and Studies*, 1961, pp. 35–51, and in the *Oxford Magazine*, 21 Nov. 1969, pp. 68–9. One of our outside consultants, Professor Bernard Lennox, contributed a series of articles entitled 'Reflections of a Lexicographer' to *The Lancet*, beginning with the issue of 8 May 1971.

<sup>2</sup> This necessary exercise brought the detailed needs of the Dictionary to the notice of many people who would otherwise have been unreachable. The response was remarkable and for years afterwards contributions continued to arrive. Among the

most devoted of outside helpers reached by this means were Mr. David Shulman (New York) and Mr. D. J. Barr (Almonte, Ontario), who both submitted numerous antedatings and other contributions.

<sup>3</sup> By 1968–9 some scientific words in the earlier pages of the Supplement were already at too advanced a stage of printing for it to be possible to revise them further. Except for these items all scientific words and senses were prepared or revised by the scientific staff of the Supplement in the period between 1968 and the publication of the present volume.

dictionary of English, wherever it is prepared, to absorb all the contents of the great historical dictionaries of regional forms of English that have appeared<sup>1</sup> or are in preparation.<sup>2</sup> In practice we have drawn some items from these dictionaries, and have supplemented them with fresh examples and also with an entirely original vein of words and senses from the same areas. Readers will discover by constant use of the Supplement that the written English of regions like Australia, South Africa, and India has been accorded the kind of treatment that lexicographers of a former generation might have reserved for the English of Britain alone. Fourthly, we have endeavoured to extract from textbooks and journals the central and enduring vocabulary of all major academic subjects, including newish disciplines like Sociology, Linguistics, Computer Science, and the various branches of Anthropology and Psychology. Fifthly, whereas in 1957, when we began our work, no general English-language dictionary contained the more notorious of the sexual words, '*nous avons changé tout cela*', and two ancient words, once considered too gross and vulgar to be given countenance in the decent environment of a dictionary, now appear with full supporting evidence along with a wide range of colloquial and coarse expressions referring to sexual and excretory functions.

In the 1933 Supplement the Editors included a large number of 'Earlier U.S. examples'. These have not normally been retained in the revised Supplement since they have subsequently been absorbed, along with a mass of other material, in the large historical dictionaries of American English. It was also decided to exclude, in the main, pre-1820 antedatings of *O.E.D.* words or senses from general English sources, since the systematic collection of such antedatings could not be undertaken at the present time. Nor have we added later examples to words and senses whose illustration ends in the Dictionary with nineteenth-century examples. In the earlier letters of the alphabet such a policy would have entailed the addition of later-nineteenth-century or of twentieth-century examples for virtually every word and sense listed in the Dictionary. Our policy depends upon the realization by users of the Dictionary that any word or sense not marked '*Obs.*' or '*arch.*' is still part of the current language.

A great many words and senses can be traced to their first appearance in print and we have studiously endeavoured to trace all such 'first uses'. But it should be pointed out that the earliest examples presented here for some other words and senses must necessarily represent merely the first appearance of such words in the printed sources read for the Supplement.

The Main Words, and cross-references, are arranged in a single alphabetical series, as in the Dictionary, but the bold-type head-words are here printed with a lower-case initial letter, except for proper names (in the *O.E.D.* itself all head-words, whatever their status, were given capital initials). The *O.E.D.*'s distinction of Main Words and Subordinate Words has been abandoned and in consequence all head-words appear in the same size and darkness of type. As in the Dictionary, Combinations are normally dealt with under the Main Words which form their first element, and are printed as the concluding section of the article. The asterisk often used in such sections in the Dictionary to draw attention to the word illustrated is here abandoned since the asterisk has other functions in the Supplement (especially preceding cross-references to a word or sense found elsewhere in the Supplement). No substantive changes have been made in the structuring of articles except that an asterisk \*, or if necessary a double \*\* or triple \*\*\* asterisk, placed after a sense number indicates a new sense or senses which has to be inserted within the existing

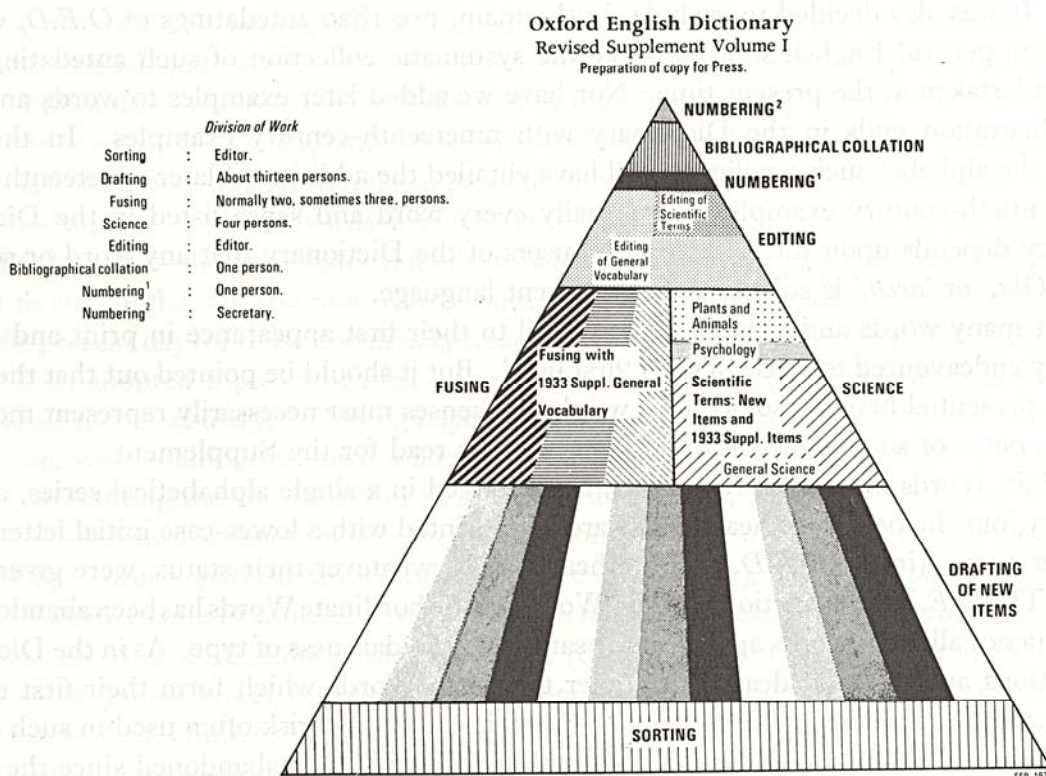
<sup>1</sup> *A Dictionary of American English* (4 vols., 1938-44), edited by W. A. Craigie and J. A. Hulbert; *A Dictionary of Americanisms* (2 vols., 1951), edited by M. M. Mathews; *A Dictionary of Canadianisms* (1967), edited by W. S. Avis and others; and *A Dictionary of Jamaican English* (1967), edited by F. G. Cassidy and R. B. Le Page.

<sup>2</sup> *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (1931- ), edited by W. A. Craigie and A. J. Aitken (*A-Mony* published by 1971); the *Scottish National Dictionary* (1931- ), edited by W. Grant and D. D. Murison (*A-Selkirk* published); and the *Middle English Dictionary* (1952- ), edited by H. Kurath, S. M. Kuhn, and J. Reidy (*A-Lef* published).

numerical sequence because of the custom in the Dictionary of placing the Combinations at the conclusion of each article. To accord with the practice of the Dictionary the ligatures *æ* and *œ* have been retained, although the use of these runs counter to the 'house style' of the Oxford University Press.

The system of labelling is unchanged. Thus, for example, the status labels *Obs.* (obsolete), *arch.* (archaic or obsolescent), *colloq.* (colloquial), *dial.* (dialectal), and *slang* are retained notwithstanding the practice in some modern dictionaries of replacing *colloq.* (and sometimes also *slang*) by the label *informal*. Whatever the merits of *informal* it would have been inappropriate to have a different system in the Supplement from that used in the Dictionary itself. The label *N. Amer.* has been used to mean 'recorded in (part(s) of) the United States and Canada'. The Pronunciation Key is in all main particulars unchanged, again in the interests of consistency with the Dictionary. The list of Abbreviations and Signs has been substantially expanded. In the etymologies the characters of all foreign languages except Greek have been transliterated (where necessary) into the roman alphabet.

3. *The Editorial Process.* The various stages involved in the preparation of the material of Volume I for press can be represented diagrammatically:



The divisions within the triangle are proportional: they show the amount of 'effort' that was involved at each stage, estimated on the basis of the relative amounts of time expended and the number of people concerned. A brief explanation of the terminology follows.

**Sorting:** The removal of quotation slips illustrating words and senses that lay outside the terms of reference of the Supplement (pre-1820 antedatings of words and senses already treated in the Dictionary, ephemeral items, etc.), and the rough grouping of quotations into parts of speech and senses.

**Drafting of New Items:** The preparation of dictionary articles in handwritten form on 6" × 4" slips by editorial assistants. Each editorial assistant was expected to draft complete entries, i.e. to ascertain the pronunciation and etymology of each word, to add a definition, and to select and (with the assistance of people specially appointed for the purpose) verify the quotations to be used.

**Fusing:** The collation of new items submitted by various drafters and the 'fusing' or merging of new items with the words and senses of the standing matter of the 1933 Supplement. Those responsible for 'fusing' also revised the material in the standing matter.

**Science:** Articles for new scientific words and senses were drafted and scientific items in the standing matter were revised by the scientific staff.

**Editing:** The bringing together and revision of all material by the Editor.

**Bibliographical collation:** The process of establishing that the titles of illustrative examples were consistently presented in respect both of the date and spelling, etc., and of the formulaic 'short title' used. For this purpose a very large card-index of verified book-titles, made up of all the works cited in the Supplement, has been compiled and will form the basis of the Bibliography in Volume III.

**Numbering:** Two stages of numbering of the slips to ensure that the compositors could set the material from the handwritten 'copy'. When the numbering of each instalment was completed the 'copy' was sent to press.

4. *Size of the Supplement.* It is estimated that the Supplement, when completed, will contain some 50,000 Main Words. Volume I contains between 17,000 and 18,000 Main Words divided into some 30,000 senses. There are just under 8,000 defined Combinations within the articles and a similar number of undefined Combinations. The illustrative quotations number 130,000.

R. W. BURCHFIELD

Oxford

October 1971