

## Collection Development and Maintenance

### Selection and Keeping Current

There are a number of ways to keep abreast of developments and updates of dictionaries.

- Reading professional reviews is the most standard way.
  - *Reference Books Bulletin*, though sectioned into *Booklist*, has its own editorial board and reviews all dictionaries, not just those recommended for purchase.
  - An annual *Supplement* to the *Library Journal* published in November each year lists recent and forthcoming reference titles with a separate subject listing for dictionaries.
  - Updates of prominent dictionaries are reviewed in multiple professional publications such as *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *School Library Journal*.
  - *College & Research Libraries* publish a semiannual selection of recent reference books that includes reviews of general reference works such as dictionaries.
  - Reviews of online and CD-ROM dictionaries are frequently found in *Database*.
- Referring to regularly updated reference works is another way to keep informed. The ALA's *Guide to Reference Books* and *ARBA* are authoritative sources of information.
- A subject-specific monograph such as the 1998 *Guide to World Language Dictionaries* by British librarian Andrew Dalby covers dictionaries for 275 languages in alphabetical order. *Kister's Best Dictionaries for Adults and Young People* reviews 300 English-language dictionaries along with comparative assessments and charts. While dated, it is still a valid resource for insights into the structure of gauging dictionaries and getting a sense of the breadth of material available.
- For an in-depth look at dictionary sources, subscribing to the Dictionary Society of North America is a fertile possibility. Available at <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dsna/> the society is probably the most well-known professional organization of lexicographers. The newsletters and annual journal provide steady insight into the inner dialogues preceding the updating or launching of a dictionary. For a European perspective, membership in EURALEX is possible at [www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/euralex](http://www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/euralex).
- Individual dictionary updates are also possible. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, provides a quarterly newsletter, the *OED News*, which reports research projects and new development initiatives planned for the dictionary. Regular reports on *OED* revisions and new features are guaranteed by signing up for an e-mail listing at [www.oed.com/news/email.html](http://www.oed.com/news/email.html).

### Evaluating Word Sources

Authority and understandability are the prime criteria for evaluating a word source. If the definition of a word is presented in abstract or misleading ways, all other criteria become moot. Since constant and widespread usage of words decides on whether a word

Cassell, Kay Ann, & Uma Hiremath. 2006. *Reference and information services in the 21st century: An introduction*. Neal-Schuman: New York. Answering Questions About Words  
– Dictionaries: Collection Development & Maintenance, pp. 125-133.

the classic subject dictionary, *ABC for Book Collectors* where a specialized term like "japon vellum" finds definition.

- Word sources can be highly derivative, even incestuous, in their capture of existing words and defining mores. For example, no dictionary listed obscene or "gutter" words until the *American Heritage* decided it was a necessary component of existing communication. Today, it is primarily the children's dictionaries that do not include such words. It is therefore not necessary to compulsively acquire every new title that comes up for purchase.

## Referral

To paraphrase Ranganathan yet again: to every question its own word source. While reference librarians develop a "muscle" to efficiently field a wide variety of questions based on their knowledge of existing word resources, it is helpful to broadly deconstruct just what that "muscle" is.

- Visualizing: As the question is asked, fast-forwarding to the final answer helps establish the area for possible resources. If the question is "What is a chassis?" the final answer would read "A chassis is \_\_\_\_." A simple dictionary would suffice. If the question is "What's another word for assessment?" the final answer would read "Another word is \_\_\_\_." A simple thesaurus would suffice.
- Complexity: Is the question multi-tiered? Does it require analysis or oblique thinking? "Was Thomas Edison aware that the use of mercury at his labs could adversely affect the health of his employees?" With no recorded evidence of whether he did or did not, tracing the definition of "mercury" as it appeared in dictionaries at the turn of the century allowed one researcher to hazard a guess. For the librarian, the area of complexity lay in making the link between the question and the resource to be used.
- Depth: How much information does the question suggest? Instead of "what is angst?" if the question posed was "Is angst an English word and can I use it to describe my teen years?" more depth is required of the answer than a simple definition. A check into the etymology of the word as well as usage would provide a complete answer.
- Context: Given the mutability and infiniteness of words, placing words within a larger framework can sometimes ease the reference process. If a word is wholly unfamiliar, the context must be probed. For example, a graduate student wanted to know the meaning of "bovate," a word that could not be found in a general dictionary. The probe helped: "Do you have the sentence in which this word appears?" "Did you hear this in a particular class at college?" In this instance, the user had heard the word in the context of Elizabethan history. The possibility that it was an archaic word led the reference librarian to the *OED* where it was defined as a unit of land measure.
- Format: In the goal for conducting the most efficient search for the most efficacious answer, print or online resources are very often the personal choice of the librarian, but not always. In the world of word sources, for example, some words

## INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR REFERENCE SOURCES

are more ephemeral than others and better served by online searches. A virtual reference question that was phrased as "Are there any statistics available on zero-heros?" had the librarian frantically looking through *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, before tracking the definition online to slang for "designated drivers." Current slang and outrageously marginalized words such as those found in one-letter or all-vowel dictionaries usually suffer premature deaths and are best served by the Internet.

Below is a list of real questions asked at a library that can help exercise the reference "muscle" for answers deriving from word sources.

- I did a phone interview with the Mayor for my term paper. How do I cite his comments in my bibliography?
- Is the word "parsimony" ever mentioned in the Bible?
- I was reading the novel *Kite Runner*, and the word "Baba" was used. Is that generic for "father" in Afghanistan?
- How do you spell the word that was the title of the poem by British poet William Henley and Timothy McVeigh's last words before he was executed?
- What is the most relevant definition of the word "browser"?

### TOP TEN DICTIONARY SOURCES

Title	Print	Online
<i>The American Heritage Dictionary</i> . 2000. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	4th ed.	<a href="http://www.bartleby.com/61/">www.bartleby.com/61/</a> <a href="http://www.yourdictionary.com">www.yourdictionary.com</a>
<i>Bartlett's Familiar Quotations</i> . 2002. Boston, MA: Little Brown.	17th ed.	<a href="http://www.bartleby.com/100/">www.bartleby.com/100/</a> 1919 edition.
<i>Dictionary of American Regional English</i> . 2002-. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.	4 vols.	100 entries available at: <a href="http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/">http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/</a>
<i>Macmillan Dictionary for Children</i> . 2001. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.		
<i>Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary</i> . 2003. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.	11th ed.	<a href="http://www.m-w.com">www.m-w.com</a>
<i>MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers</i> . 2003. New York: Modern Language Association of America.	6th ed.	

<i>New Oxford American Dictionary</i> 2005. New York: Oxford University Press.	2nd ed.	Subscription to "Premium" <a href="http://www.oxfordreference.com/pages/Subjects_and_titles_t183">www.oxfordreference.com/ pages/Subjects_and_ titles_t183</a>
<i>The Oxford English Dictionary.</i> 1989. New York: Oxford University Press.	20 vols.	Subscription <a href="http://www.oed.com">www.oed.com</a>
<i>Roget's International Thesaurus.</i> 2001. New York: HarperResource.	6th ed.	<a href="http://www.bartleby.com/110">www.bartleby.com/110</a> 1922 edition.
<i>Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged.</i> 2002. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.		Subscription <a href="http://corporate.britannica.com/library/online/index.html">http://corporate. britannica.com/ library/online/index.html</a>

## Recommended Resources Discussed in this Chapter

- Abingdon's Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.* 1980. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Acronyms. Available at [www.acronymfinder.com](http://www.acronymfinder.com).
- Acronyms, Initialisms & Abbreviations Dictionary.* 2005. Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.
- The ACS Style Guide: A Manual for Authors and Editors.* 1997. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Janet S. Dodd, ed. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society.
- Albania-English/English-Albanian Practical Dictionary.* 1996. New York: Hippocrene Books.
- The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.* 2000. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- The American Heritage Dictionary for Learners of English.* 2002. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- American Medical Association Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors.* 1997. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Hagerstown, MD: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- The American Sign Language Handshape Dictionary.* 1998. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- APA (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association).* 2001. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- The Associated Press Stylebook.* 2004. New York: The Associated Press.
- Bartlett, John. 2002. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations.* 17<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Black's Law Dictionary.* 2004. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Bryan A. Garner, ed. Eagan, MN: West Publishing Company.
- The Bloomsbury English Dictionary.* 2004. London: Bloomsbury.
- British dictionary. Available at [www.freesearch.co.uk/dictionary](http://www.freesearch.co.uk/dictionary).
- Burchfield, R. W. 2004. *New Fowler's Modern English Usage.* Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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- Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 2003. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- The Cambridge Guide to English Usage*. 2004. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. 2004. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Katherine Barber, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canadian spelling. Available at [www.luther.ca/~dave7cnv/cdnspelling/cdnspelling.html](http://www.luther.ca/~dave7cnv/cdnspelling/cdnspelling.html).
- Carter, John, and Nicolas Barker. 2004. *ABC for Book Collectors*. 4th edition. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press.
- Cassell's Italian Dictionary*. 1977. New York: Macmillan.
- Cassell's Latin Dictionary*. 1977. London: Cassell.
- Chambers Dictionary Ninth Edition*. 2003. Ian Brookes, ed. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap.
- Cheney, Debora. 2002. *The Complete Guide to Citing Government Information Resources*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Bethesda, MD: Congressional Information Service.
- The Chicago Manual of Style*. 2003. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Collins English Dictionary*. 2004. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: HarperCollins.
- A Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of Shakespeare*. 1968. Marvin Spevack, compiler. New York: G. Olms.
- Concordance—Shakespeare. Available at [www.it.usvd.edu.au/~matty/Shakespeare/test.html](http://www.it.usvd.edu.au/~matty/Shakespeare/test.html).
- Corbeil, Jean-Claude, and Arianne Archambault. 2005. *The Firefly Five Language Visual Dictionary: English, Spanish, French, German, Italian*. New York: Firefly.
- . 2002. *The Firefly Visual Dictionary*. New York: Firefly.
- Dictionary. Available at [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com).
- Dictionary of American Regional English*. 2002. Vol. IV. Joan Houston Hall, chief ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Encarta Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*. 2004. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Espy, Willard R. 2001. *Words To Rhyme With*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Facts on File.
- Frank, Leonard Roy. 2001. *The Random House Webster's Quotationary*. New York: Random House Reference.
- Gage Canadian Dictionary*. 2000. Scarborough, Ontario: Thomson Nelson.
- Gibaldi, Joseph. 2003. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. 1973. Marvin Spevack, compiler. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- The Harvard Dictionary of Music*. 2003. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Don Michael Randel, ed. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Hickey, D. J., and J. E. Doherty. 2003. *A New Dictionary of Irish History from 1800*. Dublin, Ireland: Gill & Macmillan.
- Lighter, Jonathan E. 1997. *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*. Vol. II. New York: Random House Reference.
- Macmillan Dictionary for Children*. 2001. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- The Macmillan English Dictionary*. 2002. New York: Macmillan.
- McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms*. 2004. New York: McGraw-Hill.

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT WORDS—DICTIONARIES

- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 2003. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- Metadictionary. Available at [www.onelook.com](http://www.onelook.com).
- Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language*. 1997. Scarborough, Ontario: ITP Nelson.
- New Oxford American Dictionary*. 2005. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- NTC's American English Learner's Dictionary*. 1998. Richard A. Spears, ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ostler, Rosemarie. 2003. *Dewdroppers, Waldos, and Slackers: A Decade-by-Decade Guide to the Vanishing Vocabulary of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- The Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*. 2004. Christine A. Lindbergh, ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford Dictionary of English*. 2005. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*. 2003. Elizabeth Knowles, ed. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford Dictionary of Phrase Sayings and Quotation*. 2003. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford English Dictionary*. 1989. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. John Simpson and Edward Weiner, eds. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford Large Print Dictionary*. 2002. New York: Oxford University Press.
- The Oxford Starter Bilingual Dictionary Series*. New York: Oxford University Press. Copyright varies.
- Random House Webster's Dictionary Large Print Edition*. 1997. New York: Random House.
- The Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. 1997. New York: Random House Reference.
- Rhyming dictionary. Available at [www.rhymezone.com](http://www.rhymezone.com).
- Roget's International Thesaurus*. 2001. Barbara Ann Kipferer ed. New York: HarperResource.
- Shakespeare concordance. Available at [www.it.usyd.edu.au/~matty/Shakespeare/test.html](http://www.it.usyd.edu.au/~matty/Shakespeare/test.html).
- Slang dictionary. Available at [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com).
- Stahl, Dean, and Karen Kerchelich. 2001. *Abbreviations Dictionary*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. 2005. 28<sup>th</sup> ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Sternberg, Martin L. A. 1998. *The American Sign Language Dictionary Unabridged*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- A Student's Dictionary*. 2004. Charleston, SC: The Dictionary Project.
- The Style Manual for Political Science*. 2001. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
- Thesaurus. Available at [www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com) and <http://thesaurus.reference.com>.
- Thorndike-Barnhart Children's Dictionary*. 1998. Tuscon, AZ: Good Year Books.
- Tulloch, John H. *The Dictionary of Aquarium Terms*. 2000. New York: Barron's.
- Ultimate Visual Dictionary*. 2002. London: DK Publishing.

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- Upton, Clive, and Eben Upton. 2004. *The Oxford Rhyming Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Webster's New Explorer Large Print Dictionary*. 2000. Darien, CT: Federal Street Press.
- Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. 2002. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- World Book Dictionary*. 2005. Chicago: World Book.

## Recommendations for Further Reading

- Dalby, Andrew. 1998. *A Guide to World Language Dictionaries*. London: Library Association. This evaluative single-volume collation of dictionaries covering 275 languages from around the world, provides the most updated information in the area of language dictionaries. The listings are both annotated and listed alphabetically, so it is not necessary to have additional knowledge of language groups.
- Kabdebo, Thomas and Neil Armstrong. 1997. *Dictionary of Dictionaries and Eminent Encyclopedias*. New Providence, NJ: Bowker-Saur. This edition provides a comprehensive and evaluative bibliography of 24,000 subject, online, historical, and language dictionaries and encyclopedias. While an updated edition would be welcome, the resource continues to be useful in providing an overview of the breadth of dictionaries available.
- Kister, Kenneth. 1992. *Kister's Best Dictionaries for Adults and Young People: A Comparative Guide*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press. Kister has written the definitive study of dictionaries. While the facts describing each dictionary are obsolete, the essays on the history, typology, and comparative evaluation of dictionaries continue to be powerful.
- Reitz, Joan M. 2004. "ODLIS: Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science." Available at <http://lu.com/odlis/>. Also available in print as the *Dictionary for Library and Information Science*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. First popularized as an online resource, the author has now published this wonderful resource in a print version as well. Definitions for all kinds of dictionaries are provided in a clear style with helpful "compare with" suggestions for relevant entries.
- Romero, Joseph M. 2004. "Life Among the Lexicographers." *Humanities* 25, Issue 2 (March/April): 20. This is both a well-researched and elegant article on the creation of a unique dictionary, the *Dictionary of American Regional English*.
- Sweetland, James H. 2001. *Fundamental Reference Sources, 3rd ed.* Chicago: American Library Association. The author, who was president of the Reference and User Services Association in 1990-1991 and is currently professor at the School of Information Studies, University of Washington-Milwaukee, is highly qualified to write this "reference on reference" that configures a workable method to both determine and pick out the most useful print and non-print reference resources.
- Wallraff, Barbara. 2004. "Dictionaries." *The New York Times Magazine* (October 5): 18. Written by the author of *Your Own Words*, this article alerts users to the fallibility of dictionaries in terms of differing and idiosyncratic entries and styles.
- World Wide Words*. Available at [www.worldwidewords.org/reviews/re-fou1.htm](http://www.worldwidewords.org/reviews/re-fou1.htm). Michael Quinion, an established British lexicographer, author, and contributor to

the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is the creator of this delightful online newsletter on the English language and reviews of new books dealing with language.

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- Levett, John. 2003. "The Death of the Dictionary?" *Australian Library Journal* 52, no. 4 (November): 309-310.
- McKean, Erin. 2004. "Lexicographer." *The New York Times Magazine* (November 14): 46.
- McQuade, Molly. 2003. "Defining a Dictionary." *Booklist* (May 15): 1688.
- Nunberg, Geoffrey. 2004. "What the Good Books Says: Anti-Semitism, Loosely Defined." *The New York Times*, Section 4 (April 11): 7.
- Poehlmann, Christian. 2005. "Software Reviews." *Technology and Libraries* 21, no. 1 (November 16). Accessed at [www.lita.org/ala/lita/litapublications/ital/2101software.htm](http://www.lita.org/ala/lita/litapublications/ital/2101software.htm) on 1/5/2006.
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