

Oxford English Dictionary News

SERIES 2 NUMBER 23
DECEMBER 2002

Editorial

If the lexicographers who worked on the First Edition of the OED were to visit the Dictionary's offices today, they would recognize much of what we do. Indeed, lying on my desk as I write are some of their own quotation slips, which have just been added to the database.

They would also have had no trouble appreciating the delights (and lexicographical challenges) of Canadian English. Some items of Canadian vocabulary did appear in the very first section of the OED, published in 1884, including *Acadian* ('of or native to Nova Scotia'); the *Supplement* of 1933 added many more, beginning with *aboiteau* – but our coverage has now gone even further. Katherine Barber takes us through some of the more recent (and tastier!) developments.

There is also, of course, much that would have been unimaginable to those First Edition lexicographers. It is an enormous leap from a world of slips and inkwells to one where we can at a stroke locate every instance of a given word in thousands of

volumes of English literature, or in the entire run of a scholarly journal. As Emma Lenz and Sarah Williams explain in their article, the power of the Internet has transformed our work in many ways; and yet there is also a great sense of continuity. Historical lexicography is still the same process – of assessing the available evidence and distilling it into dictionary entries – and that, at least, seems unlikely to change.

A sadder change, and a great loss to the project, is the death of the OED's archivist, Jenny McMorris. Her contribution to Dictionary history and her work on Henry Fowler are celebrated in Elizabeth Knowles's tribute.

Peter Gilliver, Newsletter Editor and Associate Editor, OED

Midgets and matrimony in the land of the maple leaf

'Matrimonial cake'. The classic 4" x 6" OED dictionary slip sitting on the table in the slip-filing room at the OED's offices one day in 1992 was duly catchworded.

The slip, however, came not with the customary quotation but rather with a confection: a dessert, made with my very own hands, consisting of two layers of a crumbly sweet oat mixture with a date filling in the middle.

Home baking was admittedly a somewhat unorthodox method for getting a Canadianism into the OED, but it was apparently not unappreciated by the OED lexicographers, who perhaps were too busy

eating to complain about the lack of a proper citation. Known in most of Canada as 'date squares', this dessert has acquired this matrimonial moniker in Western Canada (where I grew up), for reasons that



CONTENTS

1. Midgets and matrimony...

Katherine Barber on compiling the OED from a Canadian point of view

2. Mining the web

Emma Lenz and Sarah Williams search for gems on the internet

3. Project news

Brief notes on some recent events

4. Appeals

Can you help with these words?

5. Interesting antedatings

More words that are older than you might think

6. Quotable quotes

Another interesting selection of quotations from the OED and its files

even the *OED* has alas been unable to determine. For my efforts were successful, and 'matrimonial cake' is one of the new Canadian entries that have appeared in *OED Online*. The word is now properly exemplified by quotations, the sources being a 1944 Canadian cookbook unearthed by our Canadian library researcher, Alice Munro's 1971 collection of short stories *Lives of Girls and Women*, and the *Hamilton Spectator* newspaper that I found on one of our newspaper CD-ROMs when an *OED* lexicographer emailed me for a postdating. Just as well, perhaps: just think how that date filling would clog up the Internet. Who knows, however, whether *OED* subscriptions would skyrocket if we could tell users that consulting the dictionary is literally a piece of cake!

It was very considerate, from a Canadian point of view, for *OED* lexicographers to start revision in the letter M, thus allowing for the rapid inclusion of *maple leaf*. Speaking of our national tree, I never thought the sight of a Manitoba maple would give me pleasure, but seeing it in the *OED* did. Manitoba maples are notoriously weedy trees, shedding what seem like millions of seeds every spring, with the result that I usually have to spend the Canada Day holiday (July 1) unpatriotically ripping maple seedlings out of my garden. But I would never want to see *Manitoba maple* uprooted from its rightful place in the *OED*. And being from Manitoba myself, I am heartened that the *OED* has now recognized my existence (and the existence of

I never thought the sight of a Manitoba maple would give me pleasure, but seeing it in the *OED* did.

a million other Canadians) with an entry for *Manitoban*, both noun and adjective.

Much of this new Canadian content in the *OED* is thanks to the massive reading program we at OUP Canada's dictionary department undertook from 1992 onward in order to produce the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* in 1998. This reading program, still ongoing, has contributed 125,000 quotations to the *OED*'s quotation files. Sometimes our quotations could be misleading to the innocent lexicographer in Oxford. Take, for

example, the quotation from the *Goderich Signal-Star* (a local newspaper from a small town on the shores of Lake Huron): 'Sue outjumped everyone at the..track and field meet in Tillsonburg last week, winning the gold in the Midget Girls high jump event.' Do Canadians have a bizarre penchant for making very short people engage in sports more suited for the beanpoles of this world? A check in the quotation file shows that we have midget basketball as well! But no, we are not sadistic: *midget* in Canadian English designates, as *OED Online*'s new entry correctly states, 'a level of amateur sport typically involving players aged 16 or 17'.

With the letter N approaching, stay tuned for the story on Nanaimo bars, an ultra-rich combination of chocolate, cookie crumbs, coconut, walnuts, and butter cream...

Katherine Barber, Editor-in-Chief, Canadian Dictionaries (OUP Canada)



Mining the Web

The Internet is the lexicographer's friend. It can provide factual information to help refine definitions, it can suggest new avenues of research, but, perhaps most importantly for the *OED*, it can supply quotations.

As regular readers of *OED News* will know, a large part of lexicographers' time is spent putting together and updating paragraphs of quotations which give contextual examples for each word we define. We have for several decades used electronic databases to aid this work, notably the *British National Corpus* and *Lexis-Nexis*. Now, with the arrival of the Internet, tens of thousands of scholarly texts and individual works of literature are available to us in a searchable form.

However, bigger isn't necessarily better: we need to be discriminating. A search engine, such as *Google*, provides a scattergun approach, returning a vast set of results with no indication of the date or reliability of sources. We are therefore most interested in material that has been collected together in databases, where we are able to carry out sophisticated searches (by date, in proximity to other terms, etc.) and where we can rely on the provenance of the information we are viewing.

New words featured in the December 2002 *OED Online* update include several sport-related expressions: **dream team, extra time, golden goal, most valuable player, racket abuse**, and 'the **zone**'.

The newsletter of the *Oxford English Dictionary*

Some of the databases we use are freely available; in other cases we must pay a subscription. Editors are becoming increasingly adept at knowing which database is most likely to provide evidence for the term they are working on.

Literature Online: A Millennium of English

Literature Online is perhaps the largest electronic resource used by the *OED*. It is certainly the database which covers the longest period, with texts ranging from *Beowulf* to the poems of Benjamin Zephaniah, and from the plays of Aphra Behn to the novels of the Brontë sisters. As this list suggests, the database also includes an extremely diverse range of genres and styles; American Poems jostle with Renaissance Plays, Medieval Lyrics with Victorian Novels.

An important role which *Literature Online* plays in revision is as a source of antedatings. Some of these have been dramatic, transforming our view of the period in which a word was current. For example, the earliest known use of the noun *olive oil* has been pushed back from 1774 to 1566, while the adjectives *misspelt* and *outspoken* have been antedated from 1838 to 1762 and from 1808 to 1661 respectively. In other cases the change in the date at which a word was first used may not be that great. However, a large body of small antedatings may have important cumulative significance. For example, in both the first and second editions of the *OED*, Shakespeare appears as the originator of a large number of words and senses (e.g. *majestically*, *neglected*), but by looking at texts written by less well-known sixteenth-century authors on *Literature Online*, we have confirmed our suspicions that in many of these cases Shakespeare was using words which were already current. This gives us an altered view of Shakespeare as a writer; more importantly for the lexicographer, it begins to modify our understanding of how and why English vocabulary changed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

JSTOR: The Origins of Scientific Literature

JSTOR documents a much more formal type of writing: scholarly articles published in academic journals and periodicals. Publications held on JSTOR are drawn from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, social and natural sciences, with titles including the *Bulletin of*

Symbolic Logic, *Family Planning Perspectives*, and the *Slavonic Year-Book*.

The oldest journal on JSTOR, the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, dates back to 1665. Given this early starting date, it is perhaps no surprise that JSTOR has provided some important antedatings. Recent examples include *Newtonian* (antedated to 1676 from 1713), *nucleus* (1668 from 1708), and *molecule* (1701 from 1794).

A search engine, such as Google, provides a scattergun approach, returning a vast set of results with no indication of the date or reliability of sources.

JSTOR has also been useful in documenting the emergence of more recent words and expressions (it seems that many everyday terms started life in academic literature). The adjectives *caffeinated*, *benchmarked*, and *off-peak*, and the nouns *child-minding*, *multiculturalism*, and *comfort zone* are all examples of recent additions to the *OED* which currently have first quotations from JSTOR sources.

The Times: New Horizons

Editors at the *OED* are constantly on the lookout for new databases to help in our work. The latest (and very recent) addition to the *OED*'s collection of electronic resources is the *Times Digital Archive*. This database will

eventually include the text of every edition of the *Times* newspaper printed between 1785 and the present day. The archive is still under construction and at present we can only search papers published between 1924 and 1955. But even this period has proved fruitful, providing, amongst other things, an antedating for the phrase *man of the match* (from 1963 to 1924). As the database expands it is likely to become a key research tool for the *OED*.

The resources described represent just some of those used in our research. Such mining of the Web is enjoyable and frustrating by turns. Nuggets of text lie awaiting discovery; our job is to sift through surrounding material in the most efficient way we can. The Internet will never replace our paper files, reading programmes, or the work of individual contributors as a source of quotations, but it is certainly worthy of a place alongside these.

Emma Lenz, Principal Editor, *OED*, and Sarah Williams, Assistant Editor, *OED*

Words and phrases covered in the December 2002 *OED Online* update could help you to...

...mothball a monumentally moribund motor...

...motivate more moose to mosh on the moor...

...morosely mooch around the motherland in a monsoon...

...moonlight as a mostly monosyllabic Moroccan...

Project news

The OED's first Oxford home

On 21 October James Murray's former house at 78 Banbury Road, Oxford, was honoured with a 'Blue Plaque'.

This house, named 'Sunnyside' by Murray when he and his family moved there from Mill Hill in 1885, remained Murray's residence in Oxford until his death in 1915; he and his staff worked in a specially constructed Scriptorium erected in the garden. This was not the Dictionary's only Oxford home even during Murray's lifetime: the other Editors of the Dictionary – Henry Bradley, William Craigie, and Charles Onions – and their assistants were accommodated in a large room on the ground floor of the Old Ashmolean Building (now the Museum of the History of Science), in Broad Street adjacent to the Sheldonian Theatre.

In the photograph, Oswyn Murray, great-grandson of James, is seen giving the plaque a final polish. He is flanked by John Simpson, the OED's current Chief Editor, and the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Sir



Photograph: Keith Barnes

Hugo Brunner. Behind John Simpson is the pillar box which was placed outside 'Sunnyside' by the Post Office for the convenience of James Murray, who wrote many thousands of letters in the course of his work on the OED.

Jenny McMorris

Jenny McMorris, OED Archivist, died of a brain tumour on 5 November.

Since first coming to work at the OED Supplement (then in 37a St Giles) as a freelance archivist in the 1980s, Jenny applied a blend of skilled professionalism and personal enthusiasm to the task of ordering a heterogeneous collection of files, letters, and papers.

It was Jenny who opened a famous chapter of OED history by identifying the handwriting of a number of manuscript indexes as that of Dr Minor. Her detailed knowledge of the archives was unexampled, and her regular in-house exhibitions of archive material were both informative and enjoyable. (A notable one on Father Rope, whose connection with the OED lasted for over 70 years, included an advertisement for iodine socks, and a ticket for a raffle to be drawn, in 1925, by

His Eminence Cardinal Bourne.) Her greatest affection, however, was reserved for Henry Watson Fowler, and it was a true labour of love to research and publish her acclaimed biography *The Warden of English* (Oxford, 2001).

Any future historian of the OED will owe a tremendous debt to Jenny for her ordering and indexing of the OED Archives; those of us who knew her will remember also her ability to communicate the interest and excitement she found in her work, and the delight with which she would recount her latest discovery.

Elizabeth Knowles, Managing Editor, Quotations Dictionaries



Appeals

Words or phrases which appear on the Appeals List are those currently being drafted or revised for the *OED* for which the documentary evidence is incomplete. Often these are slang or colloquial items which cannot be researched in specialist texts and are most likely to be found by a general reader in non-specialized or popular literature.

Usually the appeal is for an earlier example than our current earliest (e.g. 'antedate 1970' for a word for which our earliest example comes from 1970), but sometimes the appeal is for an interdating where there is a large gap in the *OED*'s quotation evidence (e.g. 'interdate 1589-1910'). Occasionally we ask for a postdating (e.g. 'postdate 1875'), if an editor feels that an item being revised is still current but has failed to

find any recent examples through the usual avenues of research.

Please note: it is generally safe to assume that examples found by searching the Web, using search engines such as Google, will have already been considered by *OED* editors.

dead leg (noun: numb leg, esp. as a result of a kick etc.) antedate 1987

deadleg (verb: give someone a dead leg) antedate 1972

mucky pup (noun: dirty child) antedate 1984

nos(e)y (noun: act of looking, out of curiosity) antedate 1990

omissibility (noun) antedate 1961

outpower (verb: outdo in power) interdate 1762-1975

Please send submissions to oed3@oup.co.uk

Interesting antedatings

Revision of the entries in the December 2002 *OED Online* update has revealed an earlier origin than previously known for many words, including:

monolingual (antedated to 1879 from 1953)

monologue (c1550 from 1668)

monotonously (c1786 from 1828)

monsignor (1579 from 1641)

monthly (adverb) (1463 from 1533)

moonwalk (1952 from 1966)

morass (1489 from 1655)

mortarboard (1761 from 1854)

motorized (1901 from 1922)

Quotable quotes

Thought-provoking snippets from the *OED* quotation files:

what not to wear...

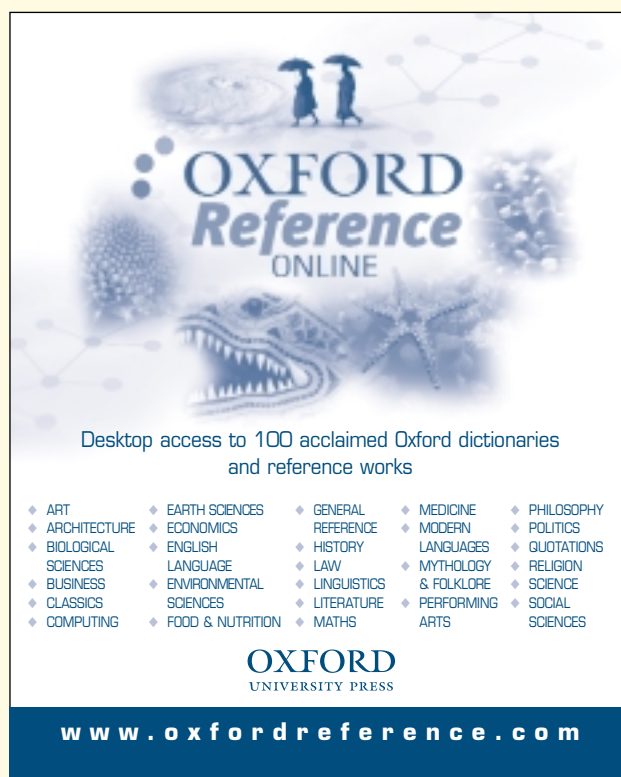
1903 J. Wright *Eng. Dialect Dict.*, *Musselled*, poisoned by eating mussels improperly dressed.

...what not to forget...

c1464 J. Capgrave *Chron. Eng.*, This emperour Claudius was so obliuious þat, sone aftir he had killid his wyf, he asked why sche cam not to soper.

...and what not to watch?

1706 A. Bedford *Evil & Danger of Stage Plays*, Such Sights, Bloodshed and Cruelty, being shewn on the Stage, do by degrees occasion the Spectators to be fierce and outrageous; and Men, if I may so speak, do there learn to be inhuman.



Desktop access to 100 acclaimed Oxford dictionaries and reference works

◆ ART	◆ EARTH SCIENCES	◆ GENERAL REFERENCE	◆ MEDICINE	◆ PHILOSOPHY
◆ ARCHITECTURE	◆ ECONOMICS	◆ HISTORY	◆ MODERN LANGUAGES	◆ POLITICS
◆ BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES	◆ ENGLISH LANGUAGE	◆ LAW	◆ MYTHOLOGY & FOLKLORE	◆ QUOTATIONS
◆ BUSINESS	◆ ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES	◆ LINGUISTICS	◆ PERFORMING ARTS	◆ RELIGION
◆ CLASSICS	◆ FOOD & NUTRITION	◆ LITERATURE		◆ SCIENCE
◆ COMPUTING		◆ MATHS		◆ SOCIAL SCIENCES

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oxfordreference.com

Addresses and contacts

EDITOR, OED NEWS

Peter Gilliver (pgilliver@oup.co.uk)

A full list of OED staff can be found at www.oed.com

OED APPEALS AND SUBMISSIONS

Oxford English Dictionary
Oxford University Press
Great Clarendon Street
Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353660
Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353811
E-mail: oed3@oup.co.uk

OXFORD DICTIONARY RESEARCH CENTRES

United Kingdom and Europe

Oxford English Dictionary
Oxford University Press
Great Clarendon Street
Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 556767
Fax: +44 (0) 1865 556646
E-mail: oed3@oup.co.uk

United States

Oxford English Dictionary
North American Editorial Unit
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York
N.Y. 10016, USA
Tel: +1 212 726 6215

Australia

Australian National Dictionary Centre
Linnaeus Cottage
Australian National University
Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia
Fax: +61 (0) 2 6249 0475
E-mail: ANDC@anu.edu.au

Canada

Canadian Oxford Dictionary
Oxford University Press
70 Wynford Drive, Don Mills,
Ontario M3C 1J9, Canada
Tel: +1 416 441 2941

New Zealand

New Zealand Dictionary Centre
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Wellington, New Zealand
Tel: +64 (0) 4 471 5316
Fax: +64 (0) 4 495 5057

South Africa

Oxford University Press
P.O. Box 12119
N1 City, Goodwood 7460
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 595 4400
Fax: +27 21 595 4430

OED CD-ROM TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For assistance with the OED on CD-ROM, please contact:

Canada

OUP Technical Support
Tel: +1 416 441 2941
Fax: +1 416 441 0345

United States

OUP Technical Support
Toll Free: +1 877 773 4325
Fax: +1 914 747 3590
E-mail: techsupport@oup-usa.org

United Kingdom, Europe, and Rest of World

OUP Technical Support
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353534
Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353990
E-mail: ep.help@oup.co.uk

OED ONLINE TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For assistance with OED Online, please contact support@oed.com. Alternatively, if you are in the United States or Canada, you may telephone +1 877 304 3221.

ASK OXFORD

A wide range of queries about English words and the English language can be answered by consulting the AskOxford web site. This includes advice on Better Writing, and answers a selection of Frequently Asked Questions under the heading 'Ask the Experts'. You can also e-mail a query from the web site.

www.AskOxford.com

the web site for all English language-related queries

OED SALES AND MARKETING CONTACTS

North and South America

Oxford University Press Inc., USA
198 Madison Avenue, New York
N.Y. 10016, USA
Marketing Director
Rebecca Seger
Tel: +1 212 726 6081
Fax: +1 212 726 6440
E-mail: americasinfo@oed.com

UK, Europe, and Rest of the World

Oxford University Press
Great Clarendon Street
Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
Sales and Marketing Director,
Online Products: Susanna Lob
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353229
Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353308
E-mail: worldinfo@oed.com

Head of Publicity, Trade & Reference
Kate Farquhar-Thomson
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353423
Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353457
E-mail: farquhak@oup.co.uk

Would you like us to send you future issues of OED News?

If so, please contact
Margot Charlton
Oxford English Dictionary
Oxford University Press
Great Clarendon Street
Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353811
E-mail: oednews@oed.com

Would you like us to notify you when future issues of OED News are available on our web site?

If so, please sign up at www.oed.com/public/news or send an e-mail to: listserv@oed.com with a message consisting of the line
subscribe oednews-l

© Oxford University Press 2002

OED *online*

Visit the *Oxford English Dictionary* website at www.oed.com

For the OED Word of the Day, visit www.oed.com/wordofday.htm

Sign up for future issues (and view back issues) of OED News at

www.oed.com/public/news

Take a free tour of OED Online at www.oed.com/tour

OED Online now has a suite of new features, which enable more powerful and flexible searching of the Dictionary. Find out more at www.oed.com/welcome/whatsnew.htm