

The *OED* and collaborative research into the history of English

by John Simpson, Chief Editor of the Third Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*

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Abstract

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (originally published between 1884 and 1928) is currently undergoing its first comprehensive revision and updating. The Third Edition of the Dictionary is now being published online in quarterly instalments, the first of which appeared in March 2000. Since then, three different streams of material have emerged: a full alphabetical sequence of entries (beginning with the letter *M*) which revise and update the standing text of the Dictionary; entries and subsenses from throughout the alphabet which are entirely new to the Dictionary; and amendments to the newly revised entries, based on information which has entered the Dictionary's files since online publication. The revised edition benefits from the work of many historical and other dictionaries published since the First Edition of the *OED*, and examples are provided in this article of typical improvements stemming from such sources. Examples are also given of new information collected from a range of other sources, including the *OED* itself (as a historical database), online historical textbases, the Dictionary's own reading programme of primary and secondary sources, and the contributions of individual scholars. The Dictionary relies to a great extent on the generous collaborative contributions of scholars working in specialist fields, and the article calls on such scholars to continue to send the results of their research to the editors of the *OED*. The article ends with a detailed critical comparison of the revised and updated version of an entry (*naiad*) with the equivalent entry as previously published in the Dictionary.

Introduction

At the close of his celebrated Romanes Lecture *On the Evolution of Lexicography* in 1900 James Murray, Editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), wrote that the dictionary would "remain, it is believed, the great body of fact on which all future work will be built".¹ Murray was not complacent that he and his team had discovered everything there was to know (within the dictionary's scope) about the English language. He knew that many of the entries in his edition of the *OED* could be antedated, and doubtless recognized that new information would emerge to improve other parts of the dictionary.

Over one hundred years on, there are many new 'facts' to be added to Murray's castle of lexicography. The language has moved on, and much scholarship has been addressed towards aspects of language, both in the past and in the present.

Revising the OED: history and strategies

¹ James Murray, *On the Evolution of Lexicography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900) 49. A facsimile of Murray's text is available online at http://oed.com/public/archive/Papers/Romanes/Romanes_index.htm. The author of the present article has been Chief Editor of the *OED* since 1993 (Co-Editor 1986-93).

The *OED* today is undergoing its first comprehensive revision since the First Edition of 1884-1928, and the initial results of this revision and updating have been published online in quarterly instalments since March 2000. Work started in the letter *M*, and by the time of writing (December 2003) the whole of the revised letter *M* has been published along with almost all of the (considerably smaller) letter *N*.² At first it was hoped that the complete cycle of revision would be completed by 2010, but as editorial work began in earnest on the revision it soon became apparent that this was an over-optimistic estimate. If the complete letter *M* were to be published in book form (as indeed it may be at some point), it would take up two *OED* volumes, rather than the one it occupies in *OED2*.

In fact, the whole strategy of revision was reviewed when the revised material started to appear online. The objective of the project had previously been to produce a electronic version of the complete revised text at the end of the editorial cycle. Online publication gave us the realistic opportunity of making the text available as individual sections were completed (ironically, in much the same way as the First Edition had been published, in instalments or ‘fascicles’). Along with this came the opportunity to publish new material outside the principal range of revision (thus dividing the project into two streams: revision of the existing text and publication of modern (and historical) entries for terms not yet in the dictionary and outside the alphabetical revision range of *M* onwards). This second stream began appearing online in June 2001, and was soon joined by new editorial material produced by the *OED*’s second editorial office in New York. Yet a third component was also added in June 2001, as we obtained the ability to *republish* all revised and updated entries in each quarterly release, enabling the editorial team to incorporate additions and amendments to those entries previously published since March 2000 in their revised form. In some senses, the concept of an end to the cycle of revision started to disappear, and the project shifted to being one which both revised and ‘maintained’ the dictionary as it went along.

This has surprised many users (and some reviewers), who were used to seeing the *OED* as an unchangeable Victorian monolith. Suddenly the prospect developed of a dictionary, covering the English language from its early days to the present time wherever it is spoken in the world, which is responsive to language change and to the discoveries and publication of scholars and others. Unsettling as it may seem to some, it also brings the prospect of other changes in future as the current work sparks new ideas about how best to organize and publish the findings of what is clearly becoming one of the world’s major research projects.

The world of lexicography is changing. Where once the multi-volume historical dictionary was a static reference resource, it is now in the process of becoming a key component in a network of online texts. The *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) is currently available to subscribers online, and the *Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (amalgamating the *Scottish National Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST)) will soon become available over the Internet. The *Dictionary of Old English* (in preparation at the University of Toronto) has published its edited portion on CD-ROM, and has also made available to scholars on microfiche, tape, CD-ROM, and online the raw data (i.e. the Old English texts) on which the

² The online text is available to subscribers at <http://www.oed.com>. Alongside the growing Third Edition, users can search online the published text of the Second Edition (1989), itself principally an amalgamation of the First Edition (1884-1928) and its *Supplement* (1972-86). The three volumes of the *OED Additions Series* (1993, 1997), which were published after the Second Edition, are now searchable as part of it.

dictionary is principally based.³ There are many other similar ventures both in the English-speaking world and elsewhere. Each of these texts are (or will be) searchable – as we are coming to expect – electronically, passing to the user much of the ability to devise new strategies for extracting their treasures.

It is to be hoped that in the near future users will be able to search through many of these dictionaries in a single search, or be able to develop their search from, say, the *OED* by moving into the equivalent section of (for example) the *Middle English Dictionary* or the *Dictionary of Old English*. If this has not happened already, it is certainly not from want of a desire amongst lexicographers!

Some examples of changes introduced by the revision process

i) From published sources

The present revision of the *OED* has benefited substantially from the discoveries made by editors and readers working on other historical dictionaries. Here, for example, is a small sampling of words in the revised *OED* for which earlier attestation has been provided by the *Middle English Dictionary* (the date of the earliest documentary evidence given in *OED1/2* for each word is followed by the equivalent date in *OED3*):

maletolt n. (1514, **a1325**), *marten* n. (14.., **a1300**), *ministry* n. (1382, **a1225**), *mis-doing* n. (1340, **a1225**), *Moabite* a. (1870, **a1325**), *moulden* a. (1533, **a1400**), *noun-adjective* n. (1530, **c1434**)

A full listing of such instances would run to many hundreds of words in the first two letters revised (*M* and *N*) alone.

Much the same can be demonstrated with reference to material first published in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, and later used to improve the *OED*'s documentation. A similar extract of many hundreds of antedatings includes:

massacre n. (1586, **a1578**), *mastic* v. (1688, **a1538**), *mid-course* n. (1561, **a1522**), *mim* a. (?1679, **a1586**), *misfashion* v. (1570, **a1525**), *moot-hall* n. (1609, **?c1425**), *negoce* n. (1697, **a1617**)

And interestingly a further (at present smaller) group of words are antedated in *OED3* in the Middle English period from texts not available to the *MED* or *DOST*, principally because they occur in texts first published after the relevant section of those dictionaries had been prepared:

mantel n. (1489, **1357**), *mast head* n. (1748, **1495**), *matfellow* n. (a1387, **a1300**), *mawmenny* n. (?c1390, **1381**), *monk's head* n. (1666, **a1450**), *morbilli* n. (1693, **c1450**), *mortisement* n. (c1445, **1438**)

The inter-indebtedness of historical dictionaries is not, of course, restricted to the realm of antedating, but extends further into later attestations, variant spellings, historical information, the interpretation of semantic difficulties, and many other areas.

³ *Dictionary of Old English*: <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca/>.

ii) *From online and other sources*

But the network of interlocked texts should not of course be restricted to dictionaries. Dictionaries are simply one set of keys to the texts themselves. Lexicographers have in recent years had extensive access to large databases of historical and modern texts from which they have been able to extract data to improve their work. Important texts for the revision of the *Oxford English Dictionary* include the extensive *Literature Online* database published by Chadwyck-Healey, the growing number of periodicals available on JSTOR⁴ (including the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* back to 1665), the two *Making of America* databases⁵ freely searchable at the Universities of Michigan and Cornell, *The Times*⁶ online which contains the full text (and scanned pages) of the newspaper back to its original publication as the *Daily Universal Register* in 1785), *Accessible Archives*,⁷ which provides searchable text from early American newspapers from the eighteenth century, and many more.

Examples of the many new first references in *OED3* from these sources include:

Making of America (Michigan site): *mahorka* n. (1902, now **1858**), *mariculture* n. (1903, **1867**), *Micawberish* adj. (1920, **1877**), *Middle West* n. (1898, **1866**), *monoclinic* adj. (1869, **1856**).

Making of America (Cornell site): *marine science* n. (1945, **1852**), *melodramatics* n. (1915, **1879**), *membra disjecta* n. (1957, **1829**), *minelayer* n. (1909, **1886**), *mothball* n. (1906, **1892**).

Literature Online (Chadwyck-Healey): *magnipotent* adj. (1680, **1599**), *make-believe* n. (1811, **1794**), *mastermind* n. (1720, **1692**), *meteorist* n. (1898, **1641**), *monumental* adj. (1604, **1596**).

Accessible Archives: *monarchium* n. (1838, **1792**), *mudflat* n. (1871, **1795**), *non-elective* adj. (1909, **1853**), *non-importing* adj. (1847, **1770**).

The scholarly community has long been aware that data presented in the First Edition of the *OED* can often be antedated. The extent of the antedatings which are evident may, however, come as something of a surprise. Any ‘reading’ for the *OED* is necessarily a sampling; there are always more documents which could be consulted, and more material to be extracted. Sometimes readers are implicitly criticized for ‘missing’ valuable examples. But readers are not automata. Although they miss some things, they are able to disambiguate polysemous words in early text far better than are computers. Computers, on the other hand, are excellent at finding unique strings and pre-defined patterns in enormous text corpora (which the reader or editor can then analyse). Both are nowadays essential in the search for new material on the history of the language. The databases mentioned above are typically growing, as more texts are added, and researchers may be interested in searching for yet further material which was not available on a particular database when it was last consulted for the *OED*.

One can imagine a time (business considerations allowing) when the integration of these sources can provide the researcher with a properly integrated research base, in which primary texts or reference resources counterpoint each other.

⁴ *JSTOR*: <http://www.jstor.org/> (by subscription).

⁵ *Making of America*: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrpf/> (Michigan); <http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/> (Cornell).

⁶ *The Times*: see the Gale Group’s InfoTrac collection of online products (by subscription).

⁷ *Accessible Archives*: <http://www.accessible.com/default.htm> (by subscription).

Scholarly research along these lines is gradually starting to appear, as researchers recognize the power of the tools that are available to them. A recent article in *Anglia* reviews the corpus of quotations in the *OED* in search of examples of the pattern *begin + V-ing*.⁸ Here the writer has recognized that although the original *OED* entry for *begin* has not yet been revised, it is possible to plug into some of the data which the lexicographers will use in its revision by searching the whole body of quotation material presented in all of the *OED*'s large historical quotation corpus for other chance occurrences of the pattern (using a wildcard search in the quotation-text field). The findings refine the results previously published in the *OED*, Visser, and elsewhere.

Here, for example, is a small sample of the many antedatings in *OED3* deriving from the quotation corpus of *OED1/2*:

malfeasance n. (1696, now **1663**, previously cited at *misfeasance* n.), *marriage broker* n. (1681, **1662**, *musk melon* n.), *materia medica* n. (1699, **1663**, *chemically adv.*), *Mertonian* adj. (1899, **a1672**, *counter-scuffle* n.), *Mexican* adj. (1604, **1578**, *Orient* n.)

But perhaps the most important aspect of this type of article for the lexicographer lies in the fact that lexicographers have to be practical, and in the process of compiling or revising a large text such as the *OED* there are limits to the amount of empirical research that can be conducted. There are so many avenues that can be followed (in matters of etymology, definition, pronunciation, documentation, etc.) that boundaries have to be set. Indeed, these boundaries are generous. They need to be, and short shrift for research would undermine the enterprise. But boundaries there do need to be.⁹

The OED as a collaborative enterprise

Collaborative research is absolutely essential to the *OED* and similar research projects. Such projects typically have a grand scope and fixed budgets (though sometimes they are mistakenly thought to have the time to indulge freely in any line of research which attracts their fancy¹⁰). Historical dictionaries are to a large extent

⁸ Christian Mair, "Early or Late Origin for *begin + V-ing*? Using the *OED* on CD-ROM to Settle a Dispute between Visser and Jespersen", *Anglia* 119 (2001): 606-10. Similar results can be obtained by searching the *OED* Online, with additional quotations available from the revised section of the Third Edition.

⁹ The following is an analysis of some provenance for the 115,000 number of newly added illustrative quotations in the revised entries for the letter *M* (= 52% of the total number of illustrative quotations in this section of the revised dictionary) (all figures approximate): the *OED*'s readers and contributors (415,000 quotations); the *OED* itself as a source of new references (10,800); *Literature Online* (6,350); the *Middle English Dictionary* (4,900); the *OED*'s own historical corpus (3,750); *Making of America* (Michigan) (2,050); *Making of America* (Cornell) (1,600). Many other dictionaries and other sources make up the remaining quotations.

¹⁰ See for example William Rothwell, "*OED, MED, AND: the Making of a New Dictionary of English*", *Anglia* 119 (2001), 527-553. Professor Rothwell suggests incorrectly that research "constraints do not apply to *OED3*" (p. 532), and later proposes that *OED3* should do "its own research in the Anglo-French field, using primary rather than secondary material" (p. 540). It seems to me that research of this nature within Anglo-French is best conducted by Anglo-French specialists wherever possible, and made available to others in the research community in the normal way. A number of other points made by Professor Rothwell in this article (principally relating to the relationship between *OED3* and Middle English/Anglo-French research) are based on inaccurate data and on incorrect inferences drawn from early (successful) efforts by the project to encourage collaborative work amongst medieval researchers. This is not the place to consider in detail how well the editorial policy of the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (avowedly not an historical dictionary) accords with that of the *OED*

compiled by their editors on the basis of material unearthed by others, and (often through the medium of the dictionary) made available to the wider public. Sometimes these collaborators are readers who make their way through texts in search of data which might prove useful to the editors; sometimes they are computer researchers who dig into large text databases in search of data which the editors – on a publication timetable – may not otherwise have the opportunity to assess; and often they are scholarly researchers who, as a result of their own research funding, are able to review closely a small but significant area of research for the benefit of the academic community as a whole.

How does collaboration work on the *OED*? Traditionally it has taken two main forms: specialist consultants and volunteer contributors. Murray was renowned for his letter-writing, to scholars and specialists around the world who might be able to provide him with that elusive piece of information which completed the editorial picture about a word. Sometimes individuals were contacted just once, but often the more valuable consultants were written to time and again as terms in their speciality arose.

The same process is in operation today, and as entries pass through the editorial cycle they may be sent (on paper or more often by e-mail) to any of a group of around 400 specialists throughout the world, whose task it is to check whether the entry as it is presented to them fulfils their expectations of what they would hope to find in an *OED* entry. Not all entries are submitted for specialist review, as if this were done the process would become so unwieldy that editorial progress would become too slow. Many entries are of course ‘non-specialist’ by their very nature, and others are suitably handled by the *OED*’s own specialist editors and by consulting relevant texts both in the *OED* department’s library and in the research libraries used by staff.

Once specialist consultants receive an entry for review, they may approve it without amendment and return it to the editorial offices, or they may feel that some change to the definition is in order, or that some earlier or more appropriate piece of documentary evidence should be added. The query may relate to a word in an Anglo-Saxon charter, a Middle English medical text, a Renaissance play, or an article on nuclear fusion. Sometimes the advisers are contacted as individuals (academics or other specialists), sometimes as members of institutions (museums of craft or historical dress, centres of nautical history, etc.), and sometimes they are lexicographers approached because they are specialists in another variety of English. The dictionary in addition benefits inestimably from the ‘reading’ of all entries containing Old English by Professor Eric Stanley, formerly Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at the University of Oxford, and of all entries with a Middle English component by Professor Robert Lewis, formerly Editor-in-Chief of the *Middle English Dictionary* at the University of Michigan. I should add, of course, that any remaining errors in these entries are the responsibility of the *OED* editors themselves.

The other traditional strand of collaborative contributors are those thousands of academics, researchers, and members of the public who have over the years of the dictionary’s existence (and indeed for thirty years before the first instalment of the First Edition was published in 1884) either agreed to ‘read’ texts for the dictionary – extracting contextual examples of words according to a regime laid down by the dictionary’s editors – or to send into the offices in Oxford or New York individual pieces of information (often examples of words in context) which may be of

and similar historical dictionaries and what problems this can give rise to in making use of its data; for some discussion of this point see Philip Durkin “Mixed Etymologies of Middle English Items in *OED3*: Some Questions of Methodology and Policy”, *Dictionaries* 23 (2002), 142-155.

assistance to the editors when they come to work on particular entries. Nowadays much of this incoming material reaches the editors by means to the ‘submissions’ page of the dictionary’s web site.¹¹ Each month several hundred suggestions or illustrative examples enter the dictionary system in this way.

Collaboration was more difficult in the early days of the dictionary. James Murray’s Appeals for Readers reached a wide public, but these readers were working blind, before the dictionary was completed. As a result they had little against which to test their intuition that a particular illustrative quotation or other piece of information might prove useful. With the completion of the First Edition of the dictionary in 1928 readers (or those who had subscribed to the instalments, who had purchased the complete text, or who had access to a public or academic library) at last had a complete survey of the language in which to check whether their ‘discovery’ was in fact new. But sadly the editorial offices of the dictionary closed in 1933, after the publication of the first *Supplement to the OED*, and readers’ contributions dwindled as they realized there was no immediate opportunity for their work to be incorporated.

Things started to change in 1957, with the appointment of Robert Burchfield as the Editor of a new *Supplement to the OED*, and new appeals were made to encourage a new generation of readers to contribute to the dictionary. Despite a gap of only twenty-four years since the completion of the previous supplement, it soon became clear that there was a mass of new material to be collected. The scope of the *Supplement* was restricted principally to the vocabulary of English from roughly 1800 onwards, and almost all effort by readers was directed towards this period. As a result of this concentration on the later period of the language, there was a further dwindling (but not extinction) of contributions relating to the earlier periods of English, before 1800.

The Second Edition of the *OED* (principally amalgamating the First Edition and the 1972-86 *Supplement*) was published in 1989. Soon after that, work began on planning the major revision of the dictionary which is currently in progress. First of all the editorial policy of the new edition had to be developed, and this was undertaken in the mid 1990s by the editorial team and its Advisory Committee of language experts from Oxford and elsewhere.¹² Once the outlines of the new policy had been established and samples of the revised text approved, the gradual process of recruiting and training staff was put in train. There are currently about 70 editors working on the revision and updating of the dictionary.

But collaboration was still the watchword. The editors recognized (as had those of the original edition of the dictionary) that they would never be able to amass sufficient information about the language without external assistance, and soon appeals were being sent out again to recruit readers (most voluntary but – as in the times of the *Supplement* – some paid) and to gain the attention of the scholarly and professional community as to the importance of the work now in hand.

In any project of this nature, the essential component is momentum – once it is clear that the momentum is in the right direction. The editors maintained and developed contacts with the major historical and regional dictionary projects in the English-speaking world and reinforced their group of specialist advisors (many of whom had assisted the editors of the *Supplement*). But the nature of the work was quite different

¹¹ Potential contributors are encouraged to visit: <http://oed.com/public/readers/submitform.dtl>.

¹² The *OED*’s Advisory Committee: Professor Christopher Butler, Professor Anna Morpurgo Davies, Professor Jean Aitchison, and Professor Eric Stanley from Oxford, and Professor Randolph Quirk from London, and Professor Gabrielle Stein from Heidelberg.

from what it was in the 1970s and 1980s, when work was focused on post-1800 material. The English language sweeps with a broad brush, and the editorial team were now engaged on a project involving not simply the vocabulary of the recent past, but the language since its origins in Britain, and by association the languages which from an etymological point of view contributed to the development of English from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards. Contacts were continually made, conferences attended, and the word was disseminated.

The OED's Scholarly Reading Programme

At the same time the editorial team had to address the issue of all of the relevant scholarship published about aspects of the English language since the time of the First Edition up to the present day, mainly in the form of articles and books. Very little of this had been read and excerpted for the *Supplement to the OED*, as such work was not germane to the *Supplement's* principal purpose. Immediately the Scholarly Reading Programme was established, which sought to address this hidden literature about the language, and to pre-process data for the editors working on specific words. Indexes and bibliographies were looked into, and articles and books read in their hundreds. The process is ongoing, and cannot of course ever be complete. Some research will be missed, especially if it falls outside the scope of the major reference tools. But this reminds us again of the nature of dictionary work, which is bound to be incomplete, and which must rely both on the publications of researchers working in the mainstream of funded and professional academic research and also on the willingness of such researchers to make their findings available to the dictionary. Perhaps I can use this opportunity again to encourage anyone who has published an article on any aspect of the history or use of English to consider making an offprint available to the editors; it is astounding how often work on almost any branch of English historical linguistics will turn out to have implications for one aspect or another of the dictionary's documentation, and we would much rather run the risk of having some material which we are eventually unable to use than of missing important material because researchers have been too modest or too hesitant about its usefulness to send it our way. Much the same applies to unpublished research. It is a frequent occurrence for members of the dictionary's staff to encounter colleagues in university departments who "have discovered something which they always meant to send into the *OED*", but keep forgetting to (and by now have sometimes forgotten what the discovery was!). By sending this sort of material to the editors you are not simply contributing to the *OED*, but you are perhaps taking the first steps towards making the information available to others through the medium of the dictionary.

Here are a few of the titles read by the *OED's* Scholarly Reading Programme over a few months last year:

- Adams, J. N. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London: Duckworth; 1982) *American Speech* (various issues)
- Brailsford, D. *A Taste for Diversions: Sport in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Lutterworth; 1999)
- Brorström, S. *The Increasing Use of the Preposition 'About' during the Modern English Period* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell; 1963)
- Burwash, D. *English Merchant Shipping, 1460-1540* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 1947)
- Cowling, G. H. *The Dialect of Hackness (North-East Yorkshire); with Original Specimens, and a Word List* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1915)
- English Language and Literature*
- English World-wide* (various issues)

- Hancock, I. F. "George Borrow's Romani" in Y. Matras et al. *The Typology and Dialectology of Romani* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins; 1997), 199-214
- Jones, M. "The Names Given to Ships in Fourteenth & Fifteenth Century England" in *Nomina* 23 (2000), 23-36
- Lindkvist, K.-G. *Studies on the Local Sense of Prepositions In, At, On, and To in Modern English* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup; 1950)
- Montgomery, M. "Eighteenth-century Sierra Leone English" in *English World-wide* (1999), 1-34
- Notes & Queries* (various issues)
- Review of English Studies* (various issues)
- Rickard, P. *The Transferred Epithet in Modern English Prose* (Cambridge: P. Rickard; 1996)
- Sokol, B. J. & M. *Shakespeare's Legal Language* (London: Athlone Press; 2000)
- Visser, F. Th. *The Historical Syntax of the English Language* (Leiden: E.J. Brill; 1963-73)
- Wright, L. *The Development of Standard English, 1300-1800: Theories, Descriptions, Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2000)

The revision process: a comparative study of versions of an OED entry before and after revision

The revision process is certainly incorporating a large number of new details about the English language, and the overall mosaic will present a language which is less heavily illustrated by the canonical literary writers, a language which is more closely indebted to foreign influences (especially in terms of etymology), and one which spreads its branches more widely around the world than the First Edition was able to demonstrate. This is perhaps best illustrated by a comparison of the same entry before and after revision. In future any revised entry should be seen as an interim report on the language, liable to change slightly or in larger detail as more information becomes available. The ability to adapt to such new information is apparent from some of the hundreds of alterations already made to revised and published entries. These changes allow the editors also to update the editorial style of these entries when minor alterations are made to the manner in which entries are written.

Examples of this category of alterations made to revised entries *since they were published* between 2000 and now (often as a result of information received from users of the dictionary) include:

M [= abbreviation of monsieur]: addition of nineteenth- and twentieth century quotations showing *MM* = messieurs (which is also added to definition)

Massilian n. and adj.: addition of early references documenting new orthographic variants (*Massylien* and, irregularly, *Mastylian* in the sixteenth century and *Massylian* in the seventeenth)

Middle German n.: antedating from 1911 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*) to 1860 (*Iconographic Encyclopaedia*)

minibus: addition of reference (in German) to J. G. Kohl's *Reisen in Schottland* (1844), containing an early description of the vehicle and use of the word in German

move vb.: reference to article addressing the modern English vowel quality

morris dance: revision of etymology now regarding it as originally from *Moorish* and *dance* before reinterpretation as from *morris* and *dance*.

new-raised adj.: redating of one source and subsequent exchanging of sense 1 and 2

off-message adj.: new quotation from *Washington Post* (1992) added as earliest documented use of the term (formerly 1997)

It is not possible here to demonstrate the typical changes made during revision to a major entry. There is simply too much rewriting done to make this feasible in a short space. So for the purposes of this exercise I have taken a relatively small entry (*naiad*) as an illustration.

The entry found in *OED2* (see Fig. 1) is in an amalgamation of the entry published originally in the First Edition of the dictionary (concerning simply the water nymph and a transferred use) and the additional entry from the *Supplement to the OED* which, in 1982, had added two further technical senses (one from entomology and one from botany).

The *OED2* entry gives a fairly straightforward account of the history and usage of the word, with the etymology (from *OED1*) concerned only with the nymph sense. The headword form is the same in both entries, the standard spelling both now and at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the entry was first published. However, *OED2* perpetuates the earlier lexicographical tradition within the *OED* of not assigning a part of speech to nouns for which there is no other homographic entry. *OED3* (see Fig. 2) assigns a formal part of speech to each entry.

Next, *OED2* (following *OED1*) assigns a subject label to the entry: *Myth[ology]*. The label is one of those that assumes an educated Victorian or Edwardian readership for whom ‘mythology’ could be understood as indicating ‘classical mythology’. *OED3* moves the label to the relevant sense (sense 1a) and prefers to associate it ‘originally’ with ‘Greek Mythol.’

The pronunciation section is one which has undergone a certain amount of change. *OED2* (following *OED1*) identifies two possible pronunciations, and gives the one approximating to that used in standard British English today as the secondary pronunciation. *OED3* gives only one British English pronunciation (the latter, secondary one in *OED2*). It retains the older pronunciation, but in a note on the history of the word in English, documenting the history of the older pronunciation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sources show that at the time of *OED1* the primary pronunciation of *naiad* (with the first vowel as in modern *nay*) may have been in the process of being supplanted by the later pronunciation (with the first vowel as in modern *nigh*). So *OED1* appears to have been correct in its assessment (for its time), but the situation has now changed, and its secondary pronunciation has now become the dominant one. Furthermore, *OED3* systematically introduces American pronunciations, and we see the equivalent of the older British English form (as in *nay*) retained as a secondary pronunciation today in American English.

After pronunciation information both editions offer a brief schematic history of the way in which the word *naiad* has been spelt over the centuries. For *OED2*, this record begins in the sixteenth century, with Shakespeare’s plural form *nayades* in *The Tempest*. In fact, the attenuated list of variant spellings in *OED2* implies that the

headword form is recorded (dates unspecified) and specifies forms in *nay-* which are found from the sixteenth century.

The situation is rather changed in *OED3*, where documentary evidence of orthographic forms dates back to the late fourteenth century. Here we have three Middle English forms (two of which may be errors in transmission and one of which is in fact the modern form), along with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century form *nayad* and other Early Modern forms (with diaeresis) from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In addition, modern plural forms are given showing both English and classical plural styles (with accompanying pronunciation transcriptions). The orthographic variation in *OED3* is compiled from the evidence of the quotations provided in the dictionary, and those in other resources available to the editors.

With etymology, the situation is changed again. As noted above, the etymology to be found in *OED2* (following *OED1*) simply addresses the mythological sense of the word, regarding the word as derived either from the oblique form of the Latin or the equivalent Greek base, themselves related to the Greek for ‘to flow’ and for ‘running water, river, etc.’, as perhaps might be expected of a water nymph.

OED3’s etymology is more extensive. Both the nominative and oblique forms of the Latin (classified as classical rather than post-classical) are given (with a reference to Ovid), as are the equivalent ancient Greek words from which the Latin versions are stated to derive. The ancient Greek word is said to derive from the base of the ancient Greek verb meaning ‘to flow’, itself perhaps cognate with the Sanskrit *snu-* (meaning ‘to ooze, trickle’). The English plural forms in *-es* are shown to be same as the equivalents in the classical languages.

The parallel development of the classical terms in the European languages is also traced wherever possible. The Middle and modern French form (possibly relevant to a term entering English in the late Middle English period) is shown to exist in Middle French (in the form *nayade*) by around 1490 and the more modern spelling by the early sixteenth century. Other continental parallels are shown to exist in Italian from before 1321, in Catalan in 1429, and in Portuguese from the sixteenth century. As a result it is possible to understand something of the dispersal of the classical term not simply in English, but also elsewhere in medieval Europe.

OED2 includes a single quotation for a ‘transferred’ use (something likened to a naiad). *OED3* allocates this meaning to a new sense (1b) and offers a reference to an earlier, mid eighteenth century French use in Voltaire. It also associates a new Zoological sense (a freshwater mussel or shell) with its use in Lamarck’s *Philosophie Zoologique* of 1809, giving the full source reference, and provides documentary evidence for the French equivalent of the botanical use of *naiad* in various spellings from 1770 (*nayade*) and in its classical form in de Jussieu’s *Genera Plantarum* of 1789.

The overall intention of the *OED3* etymology is not simply to trace the term to its classical roots, but to demonstrate the influence of later continental languages on the semantic (and perhaps orthographic) development of the word in English.

We then come to the section of the entry which contains sequences of definitions and accompanying illustrative quotations of the word in English.

Sense 1a in *OED3* carries the documentation for the ‘river nymph’ sense back to the Middle English period, but this is not caused by new material supplied to the

dictionary, but because the new entry for *naiad* conflates two separate entries in *OED2* (those for *naiad* and *naiades*, both deriving from the same classical Latin word). However, later new examples in this sense come from a variety of sources: the research undertaken by the *Middle English Dictionary* (Lydgate, *a1420*, cited as *naydes* and *nardes*, as potential transmission errors), the *OED* itself (Dickenson, ?1596, where it is cited at *wind-winged*, and represents the first clear example of the modern spelling with an unambiguous –s plural; Rupert Brooke, 1912, with an example of the word from early twentieth-century poetry), a volunteer reader's contribution (from the works of Walter de la Mare, 1918), and the *OED*'s own directed-reading programme (Weaver, 1989, as a recent example). The revised definition removes the ambiguity of “one of a number of beautiful young nymphs” (is it a specific nymph?), and introduces the slightly different meaning of “a representation of a water nymph in art, sculpture, etc.”, as exemplified in the final quotation. In addition, it draws attention to the fact that although the term derives from classical mythology, it is later found frequently in English poetry influenced by classical styles, and refers the reader to various sea nymphs (*nereids* and *oceanids*) from which the naiads were distinguished.

OED2 silently presents a single example of a ‘transferred’ sense of *naiad* (Burton, 1876) after the main paragraph of quotations at sense 1. As mentioned above, *OED3* prefers to allocate this a separate sense section (1b), and provides a definition showing the extended meaning to range from young women likened to naiads to streams and lakes “invested with the spirit of a *naiad*”. The documentary evidence is taken back to the early years of the nineteenth century with a quotation from Coleridge (originally discovered on the *OED*'s own corpus of historical texts), along with another quotation predating *OED2*'s first use, from Byron, provided by one of the *OED*'s many voluntary contributors. Later attestations are supplied (from the *OED*'s historical and modern reading programmes) to bring the documentation up to date.

OED2 (following the *Supplement to the OED*) demonstrates the use of *naiad* in scientific contexts from 1918 (an entomological meaning) and 1966 in botany. However, *OED3* shows that the emergence of the use of *naiad* in a new zoological sense (“a freshwater mussel or shell, as distinguished from a marine one”) can be dated to at least 1829. Almost all of the material for this meaning has amassed gradually in the *OED*'s files since the publication of the First Edition, and was overlooked or discarded by the *Supplement*, probably because at that time not enough evidence had been collected to indicate that it should have been included. The semantic shift from ‘river nymph’ to ‘freshwater mussel or shell’ is not hard to understand. References are given to parallel terms *naiid* and *oceanid*.

Sense 3 in *OED3* predates the botanical use by seventy years by documenting an apparently isolated use by Lindley in the sense “a plant of the family Najadaceae, comprising various aquatic monocotyledonous plants”, before continuing to predate *OED2*'s specific use “any plant of the genus *Najas*, comprising submerged aquatics with linear leaves and inconspicuous flowers” by thirty years to 1916, again from material contributed to the *OED*'s files in the years since the First Edition. Later examples also bring the documentation of the use up to the present day.

The final sense in *OED3* (sense 4) is *OED2*'s (or, more precisely, the *Supplement*'s) entomological one, redefined as “the nymph or aquatic larva of a dragonfly, mayfly, or stonefly”. In this case no earlier attestations have been discovered, though a later example, from the *OED*'s own departmental library, shows usage into the 1990s.

Conclusion

This entry is just one of the thousands revised and published since the *OED* went online in 2000 which shows the variety of different means by which additional documentation reaches the dictionary. The amount of material provided by individual scholars and other projects is remarkable, as is the material discovered on the many online sources now available (both relating to historical and to modern periods of the language). The significant level of collaboration by those not actively involved in the editing of the dictionary means that the *OED* is able to present a much deeper and more diverse picture of English as it has developed throughout the historical periods and throughout different regions of the world than would otherwise have been the case. And long may this collaboration continue.

A select bibliography of publications by OED editorial staff relating to the revision process

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