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A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR CREDITING THE WORK OF LEXICOGRAPHERS

*Prepared by Sidney I. Landau in consultation with all members
of the Executive Board, Dictionary Society of North America*

Preface: The DSNA includes among its members commercial lexicographers whose professional well-being depends upon their contributions to dictionaries and who consequently deserve to have those contributions appropriately acknowledged. The following proposal to establish guidelines to that end is put before all members of the DSNA for their consideration and response. Send comments you wish to make on this proposal to any member of the Executive Board, whose names and addresses are in the accompanying box.

I. Introduction

The first question to be answered is, Who needs such guidelines? Why are they necessary? A second and related question is, Don't the publishers of dictionaries own their works and have the right to do whatever they wish in extending or withholding credit?

To the second question, the answer is, Yes, they do, and because of that the extensive contributions of lexicographers have often been ignored. Sometimes this happens through the accident of corporate forgetfulness (and, it must be added, indifference) in the aftermath of changes in the managerial ranks above dictionary makers and sometimes through deliberate suppression (for one reason or another), but its occurrence is frequent and deplorable.

Almost all dictionaries are owned by their publishers, either because they are entirely staff-produced or because

they are produced in part by independent contractors who sign "work-for-hire" agreements. We have no quarrel with this arrangement. Since the publisher must provide a very large investment and takes all the risk, it is reasonable for the publisher to demand that the work be wholly owned and that subsequent adaptations, abridgments, etc., belong to the publisher. Indeed, few dictionaries would be undertaken on any other basis. The publisher's right to credit whomever it wants is not in dispute.

However, publishers are often unaware of the history and current state of lexicography. Through lack of awareness more often than intent, the names of lexicographers who have devoted years to the development of a dictionary may be omitted from subsequent editions. If publishers had guidelines, they might better appreciate the importance of due recognition to lexicographers, dictionary users, and themselves. Consequently they might give satisfactory acknowledgment, which now is sometimes thought to be of no more importance than acknowledging the printer or specifying the type styles, the latter being ancient practices, now generally obsolete.

The anonymity in which lexicographers are too often forced to work is a serious impediment to their careers and thus to the ultimate best interests of publishers and the public. It is unfair. Something can be done about it. It is the responsibility of the DSNA to do that something. From whom else in the US should such guidelines come if not from the DSNA?

This brings us to the first question. Who needs such guidelines? Why are they necessary? The nature of dictionary work is highly unusual in a publishing company. Publishers traditionally rely on authors working on their own time, often for years, to produce texts which the publishers will only then consider for publication, and

from which, in return for the service and expense of publication, they will derive substantial benefit. The value of the book in truth far exceeds what the publisher contributes to it, but this value is of course independent of whether or not the book makes or loses money. Since publishing is a business, the publisher's justification for its profit has to do with taking the risk that few individual authors would take.

A dictionary written by a staff of lexicographers on the payroll of a publisher has a unique status. Suddenly the publisher finds itself in the position of one of its authors, and moreover, not just an author of a short monograph but of an immensely long and complicated work that will take years to produce, one subject to delays and additional expenses not originally reckoned. In every case we know of involving a publisher's first entry into dictionary making, the enterprise was more than the publisher bargained for.

Unless a company or university or major division within it is entirely devoted to dictionary making and has a long history of publishing dictionaries, the lexicographers are looked upon as anomalous employees. No one knows what they do, since they seem always to be hard at work yet produce nothing, even after years of employment. Often corporate vice presidents or university provosts share this puzzlement.

The job of a lexicographer, even a staff position, is by its nature insecure. Since dictionary work is project related, the completion of a project often means that the staff will be "downsized" with all but a core of cadre laid off, and sometimes those as well. Even in mid-course, projects have often been suspended and staff summarily laid off.

Since dictionaries are publisher-owned, lexicographers have no equity in the work they may have spent eight or ten years working on, and must rely solely on credit being given for their dossiers. Their knowledge and experience have no tangible products except the dictionaries they have contributed to; the rest is in the lexicographer's brain. If lexicographers are deprived of credit, they have no basis for establishing their credentials in the future to obtain another job. They have no basis for making a career of lexicography. In fact, this is precisely the condition we are in today.

The insecurity of a lexicographer's career affects not only him or her personally, but dictionary publishers and dictionary users as well, in fact, the entire enterprise of lexicography. Good dictionaries require good and experienced lexicographers. And persons entering a career in lexicography need a modicum of assurance that they can point to past work well done as a basis for seeking future lexicographical opportunities. It is thus also in the interest of publishers and the dictionary-using public to have a pool of skilled and properly credited lexicographers.

II. The Problem

Because dictionaries take so long to complete, the composition of the editorial staff at the initiation of a project is often very different from that at its conclusion. Also, since dictionaries are expensive undertakings, they often generate a progeny of derivative works, whose relationship with their parent varies but is inevitably diluted over time. Further, every dictionary, if successful, remains in print for a long time and undergoes numerous revisions, some small and some great.

It is obviously impossible to expect that everyone who has worked on a dictionary, even for a short time and in a minor capacity, will be accorded credit in perpetuity. We are not here concerned with some theoretical ethic but with the practical matter of assuring that proper credit is given to professional lexicographers pursuing careers in their chosen work. Although we all recognize that the contributions of clerical and other supporting staff can be crucially important and deserve recognition in simple human terms, such matters are not the concern of this paper. Our concern is with lexicographers.

It may be instructive to note how the *Oxford English Dictionary* coped with the problem of recognition. Herbert Coleridge was appointed editor in November 1859 but died in April 1861. Shortly after, F. J. Furnivall was appointed editor; he served from 1862 to 1879, when James A. H. Murray became editor. This is recounted in the "Historical Introduction" of the *OED*, which recognizes the importance (p. xiv) "of giving credit where credit is due."

Part VII of the *OED*'s Historical Introduction is devoted to specific acknowledgment of the principal readers before 1884, sometimes with indication of the number of citations each was accountable for; to another list of readers after 1884; to sub-editors, with dates; and to assistants, divided into three groups, the first of which worked for at least ten years and in more than a few cases for more than forty years. Two other groups of sub-editors are listed, followed by proofreaders and "other helpers." In a work spanning 75 years (1859-1933), we would expect nothing less.

Fortunately, few modern dictionaries will be faced with an enormous roster of contributors like that of the *OED*. But it testifies to the integrity of Murray and his colleagues at Oxford University Press that an extensive catalog of the begetters of the *OED* was deemed essential, even to the particulars of dates and number of citations acquired, to "give credit where credit is due." The Dictionary Society could do worse than follow this precedent.

III. The Proposal

Two separate but related issues are credit itself (that is, listing lexicographers' names on the staff page) and the form of the credit (the title under which lexicographers are

listed). Our main concern is with credit itself, although at the very top level, the form of the credit is of concern as well. Below we consider the role of the top editor first, then the roles of the staff.

We suggest that the chief editor of a dictionary be called the "editor-in-chief" and that, if the editor-in-chief appointed at the beginning of a project retains that position at its conclusion, he or she should be accorded credit in the printed (or electronic) book as "editor-in-chief." This is the customary title for the chief editor, although there may be reasons in some cases for not employing it (as because of numerous changes among the top editors).

Complications arise when the editor-in-chief resigns, is dismissed, or dies before the end of the project. Obviously, we cannot account for every possibility, and we cannot argue that an incompetent or otherwise unsatisfactory editor-in-chief be credited simply because he or she was originally hired for the job. But if a person has held a position as editor-in-chief one half the duration of a project, or for five years (whichever is less), he or she deserves to be recognized as the original editor of the project. Anyone who has been engaged at the highest level with a project for that long must have had a major impact on it and deserves to have his or her contribution noted.

The same rule of thumb would apply to any other managing editors and senior staff, regardless of their specific titles such as "supervising editor," "executive editor," "senior editor," or "editor."

If the project has run its course pretty much as originally planned, the original editor should be identified by his or her original title with the dates of activity specified. However, in those cases where the project has undergone a major restructuring following the departure of the first editor-in-chief, he or she might be more properly identified in some other way, such as "contributing editor" or "consulting editor." The principle here is the extent to which the first editor's original vision or plan of the work was carried through. If it was, he or she deserves to be recognized as the chief editor. However, if it was substantially reshaped by another, it is only fair to recognize that the succeeding editor was the creator of the plan for the completed dictionary, while not ignoring the contribution of the first editor.

Although we have proposed limits of five years or one half the duration of the project, publishers should be urged to recognize contributions of lesser duration, perhaps two years or more in similar fashion. But we should regard the five-year criterion as essential, and any deviation from it a serious departure from the standards of professional reference publishing.

An abridged dictionary may have a different editor-in-chief and staff than those of the parent work. Clearly, they should be recognized by the guidelines stated above for the

work in which they were engaged. In every case, however, the editor-in-chief (or editors-in-chief) of the parent work should be acknowledged, either on the staff page or in the introduction of the abridgment.

If an abridgment is almost entirely a straightforward reduction and not a substantial revision of the content, it would be appropriate also to list the entire senior staff of the parent dictionary. If, on the other hand, the derived work involves major changes in the content, only the editor-in-chief(s) of the parent work need be given, since the staff of the derivative work in this case deserves more recognition than the staff of the original work.

How long after the initial publication of a dictionary should the editor-in-chief and staff be listed? In our view, the origination of a new dictionary is such a rare and difficult enterprise that the original editor-in-chief and senior staff should be listed on all succeeding editions, even if the placement of their names on the staff page descends gradually, like a helium balloon with a slow leak, until it nestles at the bottom of the page in small type. It should nonetheless remain.

However, if the dictionary undergoes a major revision (as, for example, Webster's *Third New International* compared with the Second Edition), we are justified in regarding the new edition as a new dictionary, and accord its staff the same rights here adumbrated for any new dictionary. In that case, the staff of the earlier edition need not be immortalized, although, as is usually the case, the introduction would cite the chief editor of the earlier edition. This is not our concern, however, and is not part of our guidelines.

So far we have considered the editor-in-chief and senior staff, but credit should also be given to the junior staff, younger lexicographers just getting their careers underway, sometimes designated "associate editors" (though in some cases that title applies to relatively senior staff) or "assistant editors." We propose the following rules for staff generally, including junior staff.

Anyone working in any lexicographic capacity on a project for two years or more deserves to be given credit on the completion of the original edition of the work, with a job title that is commensurate with his or her level of responsibility and the nature of his or her assignment. However, it is unreasonable to expect that such credit be recorded on every subsequent edition, revision, or abridgment based on the work in which each editor was engaged. Such notice becomes impractical as new contributions from new editors must be acknowledged. Few companies can maintain accurate records of junior editors long after they have departed, and it is impractical to expect that every editor be listed on every subsequent edition.

If a young editor makes a career of lexicography, he or she should graduate to a more senior position and be accorded the more permanent credit advocated in this paper. In the

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meantime, even the single listing in the original edition to which he or she contributed will provide potentially valuable evidence of his or her work.

The foregoing considerations have led to the following proposed set of guidelines, now being considered for adoption by the Executive Board.

GUIDELINES FOR CREDITING THE WORK OF LEXICOGRAPHERS

1. It is the responsibility of publishers to give credit to the lexicographers who edit the dictionaries they publish, even though those dictionaries are wholly owned by the publishers. Because the professional livelihoods of lexicographers depend on such recognition and because dictionary makers, publishers, and users are best served by fostering a skilled pool of lexicographers through recognizing their work, the Dictionary Society of North America strongly urges all publishers to adopt these guidelines as a standard.
2. The editorial staff, and particularly the chief editor, should be credited on the staff page of its dictionary, recognized with appropriate titles, especially "editor-in-chief" for the chief editor. Due consideration should also be given to listing the editor-in-chief and, where the situation merits, the managing editor on the title page of the dictionary.
3. Any member of the senior staff who works on a dictionary for half the time of its preparation or five years (whichever is less) should be credited. If the work is a first and unabridged edition, this credit should be in perpetuity, though it may be variously presented to allow for greater prominence to succeeding editors. If a senior staff member works for less than this time, the recognition may be like that of junior staff (see 4 below), i.e., it will apply to the first edition only.
4. Any member of the junior staff who works on a dictionary for more than two years should be credited in the first edition of the work to which he or she has contributed.

NEW BOOKS

The Newbury House Dictionary of American English by Philip M. Rideout: 0-8384-5532-8, Heinle and Heinle, Publishers, Boston, MA 02116, 1996.

A Thesaurus of Old English by Jane Roberts and Christian Kay, with Lynne Grundy, 2 vols, ISBN 0-9522119-0-4, 1995, L47.50, King's College London Medieval Studies, XI.

Concise History of the Language Sciences edited by E.F.K. Koerner and R.E. Asher, ISBN 0-08-042580-1, 1995, Pergamon, Elsevier, \$140.

Handbook of Pragmatics compiled by Jef Verschueren, Jan-Ola Ostman and Jan Blommaert, ISBN 1-55619-503-6, John Benjamins North America, \$160.

Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion by Jonathan Z. Smith and William Scott Green, ISBN 0-06-067515-2, \$45.

Nordische Lexikographie und europäische Zusammenhänge mit Edition wichtiger Titelblätter by Michael Jacoby, Berlin, 1995, ISBN 3-00-000429-7.

The American Heritage Student Thesaurus, 1994 Houghton Mifflin, ISBN 0-395-78576-6, \$4.95.

Oxford Hachette French Dictionary, edited by Marie Helene Correard, Valerie Grundy, Oxford 1994, ISBN 0-19-864519-8.

Random House Personal Computer Dictionary by Philip E. Margolis, 2d. ed., ISBN 0-679-76424-0, \$15.

Dictionary of Euphemisms by R. W. Holder, Oxford, ISBN 0-19-869275-7, £16.99, \$25.

Random House Dictionary of Popular Proverbs and Sayings by Gregory Y. Titelman, ISBN 0-679-44554, \$30.

The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary, 1995, ISBN 0-395-69955-X, \$24.95.

VERBATIM AWARDS

Joan HALL, Dictionary of American Regional English, University of Wisconsin, \$2000 to fund the hiring of a Project Assistant to verify quotations during the summer of 1996.

Michael Paul ADAMS, Ann Arbor, Michigan, \$500 to fund a trip to Chicago to work on the archives of the Middle English Dictionary.

SECOND ANNUAL VERBATIM-DSNA AWARD COMPETITION

The Dictionary Society of North America announces the Second Annual VERBATIM-DSNA Awards to support lexicographical study and research. Funded by the magazine *Verbatim: The Language Quarterly* (edited by Laurence Urdang) and administered by the Dictionary Society of North America, the awards will support one or more lexicographical projects during 1997 with awards ranging from \$500 to \$2500. **Deadline for applications: December 6, 1996.** For detailed information about application, write John Algeo, President DSNA, P.O. Box 270, Wheaton IL 60189-0270.

CALENDAR

JULY 15-19, 23d International Systemic Functional Congress, Sydney, Australia. University of Technology, Sydney, Center for Language and Literacy.

AUGUST 6-10, LACUS Forum, Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Contact Dr. Ruth Brend, Ann Arbor MI, e-mail:ruth.brend@um.cc.umich.edu.

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1994. VIII, 304 Seiten. Kart. DM 146.--. ISBN 3-484-30955-5 (Band 55)

Portugiesische und portugiesisch-deutsche Lexikographie

Herausgegeben von Udo L. FIGGE

1994. VI, 266 Seiten. Kart. DM 122.--. ISBN 3-484-30956-3 (Band 56)

Symposium on Lexicography VI

Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on Lexicography May 7-9, 1992 at the University of Copenhagen
Edited by KARL HYLGAARD-JENSEN
and VIGGO HJØRNAGER PEDERSEN

1994. XXIV, 334 Seiten. Kart. DM 164.--. ISBN 3-484-30957-1 (Band 57)

The World in a List of Words

Edited by WERNER HÜLLEN

1994. XII, 295 Seiten. Kart. DM 134.--. ISBN 3-484-30958-x (Band 58)

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NOTES FROM/ABOUT MEMBERS

Ruth K. KENT, Died September 18, 1995, in Nashville. She was one of the editors of Webster's *New World Dictionary*.

D.J. van SCHALKWYK informs us that courses on lexicography have been taught in South Africa, at the universities of Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Western Cape, and the University of South Africa.

Philip M. RIDEOUT reminds us that the *Newbury House Dictionary of American English* designed for ESL students, of which he was Chief Editor appeared in December 1995.

From the **IWASAKI LINGUISTIC CIRCLE** of Tokyo we have received a copy of their journal (*Lexicon*), which contains an article about reviewing EFL dictionaries and a review of the Longman Language Activator.

Lionel KERNERMAN (Tel-Aviv, Israel), has published a new type of dictionary (semi-bilingual). Hebrew, Arabic, Italian, Greek, French, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Thai, Slovene, Swahili, Bahasa and Slovak editions have seen the light of day so far.

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