

CALL FOR PAPERS

Vernacular Practices of Lexicography

Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America invites submissions for a special issue focused on practices of lexicography arising outside of professionalized or scholarly dictionary-making. Other disciplines describe as “vernacular” the everyday practices and products that coexist (and may preexist) alongside officially codified and valorized practices. Scant research addresses the topic even though, on the scale of human linguistic history, most “practices of lexicography” have taken place outside the context of professional lexicography.

What are practices of lexicography?

- Explanations of meaning, in formal definitions or by other, pretheoretical strategies
- Glosses
- Organization of words into alphabetical, thematic, or other lists
- Thematic or schematic arrangements of concepts (thesauruses, ontologies; alignment-chart memes, Venn diagram memes)
- Division of word meanings into senses and methods of indicating multiple senses

What is vernacular lexicography?

Most, if not all, of what happens on Wiktionary and Urban Dictionary; digital, crowdsourced, and other electronically mediated community dictionary projects; glossaries — the brief, usually simplified and topic-constrained, dictionary-shaped word-to-definition lists found in some books; dictionary-formatted creative works; dictionary-style texts that appear in marketing, consumer goods, and internet memes that may appropriate, subvert, or parody professional standards. The tropes of structure and content in these works reveal what everyday people notice (and don’t notice) about dictionaries.

Between vernacular and professionalized lexicography

- When did the professionalization of lexicography begin?
- What similarities and differences are there between the work of vernacular lexicographers today and the work of important pre-professional lexicographers such as Nathan Bailey and Samuel Johnson?

Insiders and outsiders in vernacular lexicography

Missionaries have documented the languages of the communities they work with and—though now trained by organizations like SIL (<https://www.sil.org/training/lexicography>)—missionary lexicography has historically been vernacular. What kind of lexicography arises when an endangered or minority language is documented, from the inside, by its native speakers? How compatible are diverse indigenous linguistic practices with (largely western) lexicographical traditions? Does adherence to present-day lexicographical standards erase essential aspects of such languages?

Final submission deadline July 8, 2019.