

Call for Papers: Talking Back to the Dictionary

Dictionaries: The Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America invites submissions for a special issue on the reception of dictionaries by their users.

It is commonplace to speak of “using” a dictionary rather than “reading” it. This issue asks after the uses to which users have put their dictionaries beyond simply reading them. A user who looks up a word might accept what they find, or they might object to it, reject it, or rewrite it. Their use of the dictionary might be confined to a private act, such as annotating the pages of a single copy (e.g., Adams 2018) or wrestling with definitions in a personal diary (e.g., Turton 2022), or it might be publicly broadcast through writing for newspapers and scholarly journals (e.g., Bailey 2000), penning letters to dictionary houses (e.g., Stamper 2017), organizing boycotts against them (e.g., Russell 2021), or airing opinions on social media (e.g., Martin 2021).

Expanding on the conversation begun in *Dictionaries*' special forum on ‘Dictionaries in the public eye’ (Issue 42.1), this special issue approaches lexicography not as a linear transfer of information from dictionary-makers to users but as a multidirectional practice in which reception is as worthy of study as production. The issue invites articles that critically examine any aspect of users’ engagement with dictionaries, for any language and at any point in history, including but not limited to:

- Letters to dictionary editors and publishers from members of the public who offer advice, contributions, or criticism.
- Book reviews, news items, and opinion pieces about dictionaries.
- Petitions, boycotts, and other mass campaigns directed at dictionary houses, online and offline.
- Court cases brought against dictionaries and court cases bringing in dictionaries as authorities.
- The citation of real dictionaries, or the invention of fictitious ones, in literature.
- Private comments on dictionaries recorded in letters or diaries.
- Dictionaries written in response (commercial, political) to other dictionaries.
- The repurposing of dictionaries for non-textual uses (artistic projects, doorstops, table braces, kindling).

If you are interested in contributing to the issue, please submit a 300-word abstract of your proposed paper to the issue’s guest editor, Stephen Turton (smt75@cam.ac.uk), who also welcomes any questions or informal expressions of interest.

Timeline

Abstract deadline: November 1, 2023
Full paper deadline: March 1, 2024
Planned publication date: Autumn 2024 (Issue 45.2)

For more information about the purpose and scope of *Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America*, please visit <https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/540>.

References

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- Turton, Stephen. 2022. The lexicographical lesbian: Remaking the body in Anne Lister’s erotic glossary. *The Review of English Studies* 73: 537–51.