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Editorial

One of the great pleasures of adding new items to the *OED* is the process of pushing back into linguistic history to find their first usage. Although many contemporary words and phrases do, as expected, have their origins in the recent past, sometimes assiduous research turns up surprisingly early evidence; as Graeme Diamond demonstrates below, it's often 'earlier than you think'.

Also in this issue, Principal Bibliographer Veronica Hurst shows us the bibliographical work that goes on beneath the tip of the iceberg of an *OED* quotation paragraph, while Andrew Ball examines the literary reputation of one of *OED*'s thousands of cited authors, the 18th century writer Eliza Haywood.

This issue of *OED News* will be the last to be edited by me; from December Peter Gilliver takes over as editor. Compiling the *OED*'s newsletter has provided me with a great deal of fun over the last three years. I hope readers will continue to enjoy their regular features while appreciating a fresh new voice!

Bernadette Paton, Newsletter Editor and Principal Editor,
OED

It's earlier than you think...

As the *OED*'s commitment to releasing new material online each quarter begins to hit its stride, I, as one of the editors responsible for this material, am starting to notice a recurring theme, indeed a recurring phrase heard in our discussions about the words we are working on: 'It's much earlier than I thought...'



A major element of the research work we carry out on a word before clearing it for publication is to ensure that every possible effort has been made to locate (and quote in the entry) the very first use in writing of the word. To this end we will consult, among other things, in-house electronic files, our unique paper 'database' of filing cabinet upon filing cabinet of slips, each carrying information about a particular word, assembled over more than a century, and the ever-increasing range of electronic

Sometimes, though, I have found that the discrepancy between the rough first date ... and the actual date that emerges, is genuinely surprising.

archives available over the Internet. The upshot of this concentration of resources and effort is frequently - usually - that a word, phrase, or sense is older than one had initially assumed.

Often this merely elicits a slight 'oh!' of intrigued curiosity: 'grunge', the genre of rock music I associate with bands from Seattle in the early 1990s, has been around as a word referring to the same loud, distorted, guitar sound since 1973. 'Reality television',

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'Hypertext', 'on-line' and 'grunge' are all older than you may suspect, writes Graeme Diamond.

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Was she monstrous or motherly? Andrew Ball discusses.

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More words that are earlier than you might think.

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New additions to the Appeals list.

The September
OED Online
update
illustrates that
English has
borrowed
words from a
wide variety of
languages,
including
Arabic
(**merissa**, a
maize beer
from Sudan),
Hebrew
(**menorah**, a
candelabrum),
Malay
(**merbau**, a
tree from
south-east
Asia), Russian
(**Menshevik**, a
moderate
Marxist), and
Spanish
(**merino**, a
breed of sheep).

programming following real people in their everyday lives, or in an artificial situation, has only really come to my attention in the last few years, with the appearance of shows such as 'Big Brother' and 'Survivor'. But the phrase first shows up, in exactly the same sense, in 1978. 'Reality programming' is even earlier, dating back to 1962. People could win lottery 'roll-overs' in 1981. Computer data has been protected by 'firewalls' since 1982, and linked together by 'hypertext' since 1965. Sometimes, though, I have found that the discrepancy between the rough first date that I have assumed will emerge from research, and the actual date that emerges, is genuinely surprising. The existence of a 1714 quotation for 'European Union' shows how long that particular debate has been raging. People have been complaining about entertainment being 'dumbed down' since 1933. Governments have appointed 'czars' (or 'tsars') to oversee the implementation of policy in a particular area (a phenomenon often associated with the last decade, especially with 'drug czar') since 1942.

However, in some cases one's first assumption can be proved right. Research uncovered evidence of 'on-line

newspapers' being read in 1939. This was really quite alarming. (Although 'online' is already in the *OED*, we are as committed to updating words whose primary meaning has shifted substantially, as we are to documenting new vocabulary, as quickly as possible.) Had wartime information distribution reached hitherto unsuspected levels of complexity? Did a malevolent time-travelling writer have a grudge against the *OED*? Thankfully, neither of these things proved true - at least in this case. It quickly became clear we were dealing with a meaning of 'online' that had previously escaped documentation by dictionaries, meaning 'situated on the route of a railway line; in use on a railway line'. Other evidence for this sense was found. We were not uncovering evidence of a thirties Internet; these were newspapers operating in towns situated on a particular railway.

This won't, of course, stop me from dropping the fact that there were online newspapers in 1939 into conversation every now and then.

Graeme Diamond, Senior Editor, OED

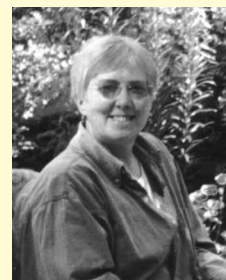
The OED Bibliography Group: the workers behind the quotation paragraphs

The Bibliography Group of the OED consists of four full-time members of staff at present, and just under 20 freelancers who carry out essential out-of-house research chiefly in Oxford, London, and Washington.

The role of the Bibliography Group is to ensure that quotations adduced as evidence in *OED* entries are taken from the most appropriate sources, and cited accurately and according to the Dictionary's house style; and to fulfil the lexicographers' needs for information relating to quotations which cannot be met within the department.

The bibliographers' days tend to be earnest, fairly solitary, absorbed in minutiae - hardly a raconteur's goldmine. But it's worth dwelling on one of the main features of the bibliographical or research life, which is sometimes referred to as the 'tip-of-the-iceberg' syndrome, or, more briefly, the 'can of worms' scenario (C.o.W.).

The C.o.W. is typically initiated by a simple request, thus: the *OED* has quoted from *A Treatise on the History of Guernsey*, citing the author as either Warburton or (mostly) J. Warburton. An editor drew the discrepancy to our attention, asking for the initial-less citations to be completed. Working to the bibliographer's motto *numquam confide, semper confirma* our group member looked up the work in the British Library catalogue, where it is attributed to John Warburton, *Somerset Herald*. However, the Bodleian's catalogue entry records the author as 'Mr. Warburton' - the title page form - with no additional note as to his identity. Further investigation in the invaluable *Dictionary of National Biography* revealed that John Warburton, who was the



official *Somerset Herald* in the early 18th century, would have been at most a year old when the book was stated to have been written. The Bibliographical Group decided to remove the initial from what had hitherto appeared to be the more complete and accurate citations, recognizing that 'J. Warburton' would be a misattribution.

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With the aid of the motto above and innate native suspicion, the bibliographer is unlikely to succumb to the trap into which the less wary fell some years ago: H. J. Massingham's 1935 work really is called *World without End*, and the desire to 'correct' this to *World without End* must be resisted. Sometimes, though, it is only a sort of sixth sense which uncovers a potential bibliographical gaffe in an *OED* entry:

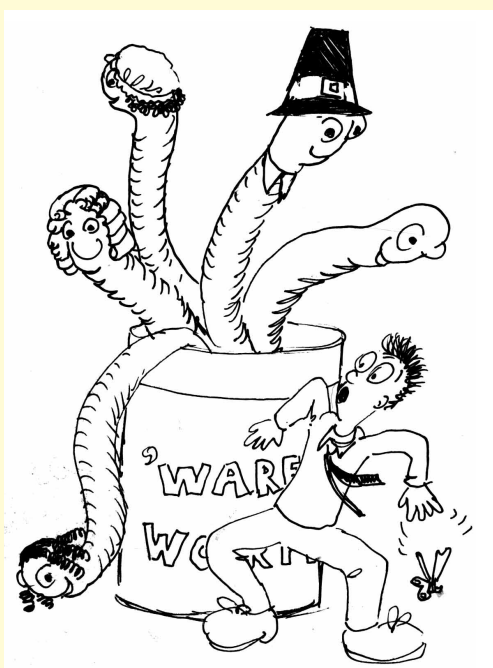
One of the group encountered a citation late last year which ran:

1650 *Artist's Rendition Edinb. Castle*

This triggered that 'Here be worms' reaction which the seasoned bibliographer learns to respect. Investigation revealed that the citation appeared in *OED* Second Edition in the form:

1650 *Art. Rendition Edinb. Castle*

which in turn made our bibliographer wonder whether the strong association



between the starting syllables 'art...' and 'rend...' had overcome caution at some stage between *OED* Second Edition and the present. And so it proved: the full title of the post-civil war text being quoted from was in fact *The Articles of the Rendition of Edenburgh-Castle to the Lord Generall Cromwel*, now cited in the *OED Online* as

1650 *Articles Rendition Edenb.-Castle*

Another classic C.o.W. which presented itself recently was a simple request for the date of death of the playwright John Ford – needed in the citation of a posthumously published work of his. What could be easier? A quick look in a library catalogue, *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*: any one of these would presumably furnish the answer. But *numquam confide, semper confirma* – and the bibliographer was immediately plunged into the complex and sparsely-documented world of early modern English drama. Here, the authorship of individual plays is often uncertain, and the identity of one particular John Ford hard to pin down.

Our own files suggested that there had been a change of heart from 1639 to 'after 1639'; the *Oxford Companions* veered from 'fl. 1639' to giving the date of death 'after 1639'; other sources settle for 'c1640' or '1640?'; while the latest academic opinion seems to offer 'between 1639 and 1656' as the nearest we can get to the fact. The bibliographer emerges from all this with a heartfelt wish that the play in question had turned out to be attributed to John Marston after all (d. 1634 – no doubt about that).

It has been very satisfying dealing with these recently raised bibliographical issues: untangling the worms in the can, tracking down the truth, and presenting it accurately and precisely in the Dictionary entry. Given the number of quotations in the *OED*, however (over 2.5 million and rising each week), I should like to suggest a toast for *OED* bibliographers and researchers: May the worm-cans be few, and the tin-opener sharp.

Veronica Hurst, Principal Bibliographer, *OED*

The September update of *OED Online* contains words derived from the names of people notable in many different fields, including journalism (**(Menckenisism)**), botany (**(Mendelian)**), music (**(Mendelssohnian)**), religion (**(Mennonite)**), mathematics (**(Mersenne prime)**), engineering (**(Messerschmitt)**), and cartography (**(Mercator's projection)**).

A resuscitated reputation: the case of Eliza Haywood

For two centuries and more it was official: Eliza Haywood was a dunce. In the *Dunciad* Pope had included her among his 'shameless scribblers'.



What is more, she was a dunce with a reputation. As with her fellow scribblers, her 'profligate licentiousness' offended Pope, but his depiction of her as a sexual monster with 'Two babes of love clinging to her waist' opens one of the most vindictive passages in the whole of his poem, a passage in which an assault on her sexual morality is deemed sufficient to negate her as a writer. As the mother of two love children, she is presented as 'yon Juno of majestic size With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes'. Through this she has an odd place in the history of the language. She is the referent of the *OED*'s only quotation for 'cow-like' and the only 18th century example of 'ox-like'. But other evidence in the *OED* suggests that she was not so much of a dunce and considerably more domestic than Pope would have us believe. It tells us that she was the first person recorded as visiting a 'habit-shop' ('clothes shop'), to use a 'pig-iron' ('an iron plate used to protect a piece of meat when the fire gets too hot'), or to worry that the colours in her tablecloth might 'run'.

So was Eliza Haywood a whore or a housewife, monstrous or motherly? In fact, the question is invalid. It is an apparition produced by the dominating characteristics of English literary culture as they developed from the age of Pope and held sway at the time of the compilation of the First Edition of the *OED*. The examples I have given of the domestic Eliza are all from a posthumously published work, *A New Present for a Servant-maid*. This represents an oddity in her literary output and yet it accounts for 23 of the 61 citations from her works in the alphabetical range from M to R in *OED* Second Edition. By contrast, her important journal, *The Female Spectator*, is cited 17 times, and her finest novel, the *History of Betsy Thoughtless* just ten. For a long time, the mud slung by Pope stuck. Sexual

reputation was often used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, but especially by Pope, as a means of diminishing women writers - Aphra Behn fell foul of the same tactic, for example - and Eliza was an easy target. She had begun her career as an actress, proof enough of a dubious morality for many. And, when her early attempts at writing tragedy in the neoclassical mode which dominated literary culture at the time failed in both artistic and popular terms, she turned to scurrilous literary attacks on the genteel world to make her way. The only book-length work about her before the 1980s was G. F. Whicher's *The Life and Romances of Eliza Haywood*, which as the title suggests concentrates more on her love life than on her literature. One article of 1918 is dedicated solely to documenting her relationships through a period left blank by Whicher.

She is no longer a sexual monster or a domestic goddess: she is a writer and social commentator, and one of the writers who developed the idea of feeling as a subject for the novel.

Times have changed, however. Scholarship has moved on, and Eliza's reputation (both as a writer and as a woman) has been resurrected by recent scholars. This process can already be seen in the sections of the *OED* that have been revised or are in the process of revision. Access to full-text electronic versions of *The Female Spectator* and *Betsy*

Thoughtless, amongst others, has provided Eliza with a new profile in the *OED*'s current files and databases. From the former, in particular, an interesting crop of antedatings have turned up. According to these, Eliza was the first to talk about the 'middling class', to refer to a person's final 'resting-place' (over half a century before Scott), and to describe a keenness or sharpness of feeling as 'poignancy'. She is no longer a sexual monster or a domestic goddess: she is a writer and social commentator, and one of the writers who developed the idea of feeling as a subject for the novel. Eliza Haywood was no dunce: it's official.

Andrew Ball, Senior Assistant Editor, *OED*

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

...menace a merchant of menswear
...merrily mend a meniscus
...mesmerize a mendacious mercenary
...mention meringue on the menu
...merengue with a mermaid on the meridian

Interesting antedatings

Revision of the entries in the June OED Online update has revealed an earlier origin than previously thought for many words, including:

merchant navy
(antedated to 1846 from 1875)

merengue (1888 from 1936)

merrily (pre-1150 from 14th century)

mesh (a1425 from 1541)

mesmerism (1785 from 1802)

messy (1627 from 1843).

Staff news



Tania Young, Principal Editor, leaves the *OED* to undertake a fast-track postgraduate medical degree in Oxford. Tania, who has a PhD in cell biology and formerly

worked in biological research, joined the *OED* in 1992 as a science editor in the New Words Group. She has been Principal Editor in charge of one of the *OED*'s four revision groups since 1999. We wish her all the best in her new career.



Ande George, who has worked as a consultant for the *OED* Publication Group for the past 12 months, takes up a new position as Head of *OED* Technology. This position unites

the *OED* Technology Group, which designs and maintains the project's computer systems, with the *OED* Publication Group, responsible for Online publication, under a single electronic umbrella. We are delighted to welcome Ande.

Quotable quotes

Some thoughts from the *OED* and its files on

An apple a day...

1529 *Grete Herball*, Apples eaten raw doothe more dysseases than any other fruytes.

...gender-bending...

1693 tr. G. de Foigny *New Discov. Terra Incognita*, All the Australians are of both Sexes, or Hermaphrodites.

...suffer the little children...

1895 *Jrnl. Anthropol. Inst. Great Brit. & Irel.*, They have a custom of flattening the heads of their infants...This process is carried out in early infancy; the infant is kept swathed and upright in the cradle-frame, at the top of which is hinged a folding flap, which is

tightly bound down on to the child's forehead. The little creature does not seem to suffer, indeed they are remarkably quiet babies.

...how time flies...

1899 *Edinburgh Review*, A millennium, which lasted a fortnight, succeeded his visit.

...and those were the days...

1977 T. M. Bernstein *Dos, Don'ts and Maybes of English Usage*, It sounds incredible, but a friend reports that he has recently heard access used as a verb. For instance, he says, at a sales seminar a speaker said, 'You can access the information if you dial 626'.

...the Internet's biggest,
most prestige-laden
reference book... *The Guardian*

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Appeals

Words or phrases which appear on the Appeals List are those currently being drafted or revised for the *Oxford English Dictionary* 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 turned up by a general reader in popular or non-specialized 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.

chance would be a fine thing
antedate 1981

Fred Nerik (*imaginary person*)
antedate 1990

jus (*sauce or gravy, in English context*)
antedate 1965

N.B. (*North Britain (i.e. Scotland) or North British*)
postdate 1930

mishit (*ball, etc.*)
antedate 1978

moon-box. (*theatre - device to produce representation of the moon*)
any evidence

moony, moonie (*act of exposing the buttocks*)
antedate 1990

nip and tuck (*cosmetic surgery*)
antedate 1980

nippily
antedate 1961 (possibly used earlier by P. G. Wodehouse in unsourced quote 'A panther could not have moved more nippily'.)

OED APPEALS AND SUBMISSIONS

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