Multi-volume English dictionary, which provides a detailed historical record of each word, with usage and senses illustrated by quotations. It is subject to continuous revision (and now computerization). Originally called the New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, it was first conceived by the Philological Society in 1858. The first part appeared in 1884 under the editorship of James Murray and the final volume appeared in 1928.


The generic label (often abbreviated to OED) for the most ambitious of all English dictionaries. It has appeared under more than one title as well as in several editions. The first, originally called a New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (hence the abbreviations NED and HED), appeared in 125 parts between 1884 and 1928. It fulfilled a project begun by the Philological Society in 1857. Editors and co-editors included Herbert Coleridge, F.J. Furnivall, Henry Bradley, William Craigie and C.T. Onions, though the nick-name 'Murray's dictionary' acknowledges the unique contribution of James Murray. The Oxford English Dictionary, a 12-volume edition, appeared together with the first supplements in 1933. A 20-volume second edition or New Oxford English Dictionary (1989) is known as the NOED, though it may also be nicknamed 'Burchfield's dictionary' in tribute to R. W. Burchfield's 4-volume Supplement (1972–86), which it incorporates.

Since its first publication the OED has been uniquely important in providing a full survey of the English vocabulary from 1150 and looking back to the earlier history of words in use at that date. Full dialect coverage is given into the 15th century. Each main entry identifies spelling, variant forms and pronunciation, and provides etymological information. Senses are listed according to their chronological emergence, illustrated by at least one or two quotations per century of usage. Conceived as an aid to reading English literature, the 's bias has made it a valued quarry for writers and literary scholars.

The most notable of many abridgements and adaptations is the two-volume Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, retaining the most essential historical information, first published in 1933.
APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA