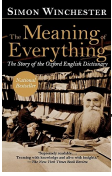


# The Oxford English Dictionary



The Oxford English Dictionary is the premier dictionary of the English language. It is

famous for its easy-to-understand definitions and word etymology, which strives to record the earliest known usage. The seemingly simple verbs *set*, *make* and *put* vie with each other for the longest entries - over 60,000 words each to describe all of the uses and senses!

The current editor of the OED, as it is commonly known, is set to retire later this year. John Simpson was briefly interviewed on *Morning Edition* on NPR yesterday. What makes his position newsworthy is that he is only the seventh editor of the dictionary since the project's beginning in 1879 and has been working in this high profile position of the world's most famous dictionary for more than 35 years.

In addition to some specialized copies of the Oxford dictionaries for foreign languages and picture dictionaries, MCPL owns a compact version of the Oxford English Dictionary. The print is so tiny, you need a zoom text reading machine (which MCPL also owns!) to really read any parts of this mammoth book.

Not that we are advocating sitting down and reading the Oxford English Dictionary. And somebody already beat you to it anyway. Ammon Shea recorded his experiences in *Reading the OED: One Man, One Year, 21,730 Pages*. This short and often funny nonfiction book is for word lovers like Shea and those interested in rare books, lexicography, etymology, and the joys of discovering a new word.

Learning the history of the OED isn't dull and boring either, especially when it involves a convicted murderer locked away in an insane asylum. Well known nonfiction author Simon Winchester wrote two books about the history of the dictionary, *The Professor and the Madman* and the *Meaning of Everything*. Both books are compelling and insightful and are great suggestions for the curious, the fans of oddball history, and the secretive logophiles in your life.

Posted by sbowman on April 27, 2013

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