

OED2e

A new edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* is a rare event. Because the publication of the second edition is so important, it has received excellent attention in the media, but by the nature of things this attention is fleeting and hard to gather in one piece.

Because of its price (£1,500 a set), the *OED* is not something that interested people can look at whenever they feel like it. Few can afford it. Libraries are the main purchasers, but getting to them in order to check on a word is not always as easy as one would like.

As a result, the *OED* in any of its forms (original fascicles, first edition, supplements, compact editions, CD-ROMs, second edition) is venerated, even loved, but is not seen and used as often as its editors, past and present, might have hoped. Even the compact edition of the first edition is pricey, and needs the mediation of a good magnifying glass.

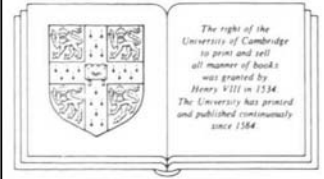
OED2e is like a second edition of the Grand Canyon. It is a wonder of the world, but is as hard and expensive to visit, and as difficult to take in, as the Pyramids.

In *ET* we would like to do something about this. In the year of publication of the second edition, we propose to look at this gargantuan work in some depth. In this and the next issue, we are devoting space to several aspects of the book. In this issue, we have a specially commissioned article by John Simpson, co-editor with Edmund Weiner (both of whom have contributed to *ET* in the past). John Simpson's article is accompanied by our own chronology of the project, some sample entries, and a selection of excerpts from early reviews. In October, Dr William Barker will provide an analysis of how the *OED* works and I will look at it as part of the history of lexicography and discuss its influence on dictionaries that we more commonly use.

Meantime, work has already begun in Oxford on *OED3e*, and the presence in this issue of the latest 'call for words' from its editors shows that *English Today* will continue to take an appropriate interest in this unending epic.

Tom McArthur

The editorial policy of *English Today* is to provide a focus or forum for all sorts of news and opinion from around the world. The points of view of individual writers are as a consequence their own, and do not reflect the opinion of the editorial board. In addition, wherever feasible, *ET* leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the magazine itself is that of Cambridge University Press.



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