

DICTIONARY USE IN THE PAST AND TODAY

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Introduction: The dictionary has long been an essential tool for language learners, writers, and scholars alike. Historically, dictionaries served as authoritative references that cataloged the vocabulary of a language, providing definitions, pronunciations, and etymologies. In the past, these tomes were often hefty volumes that required significant effort to consult; users would flip through pages in search of the correct spelling or meaning of a word. However, with the advent of technology and the rise of digital resources, the way we interact with dictionaries has transformed dramatically. Today, dictionaries are not just static books but dynamic online platforms that offer instant access to vast linguistic databases at our fingertips. This article explores the evolution of dictionary use from traditional print formats to modern digital applications, examining how these changes reflect broader shifts in communication, education, and culture.

Keywords: print dictionaries ,digital dictionaries, accessibility, technology, web based dictionaries, dictionary apps ,language learning ,search functionally ,user experience ,etymology ,multilingual support ,specialized dictionaries ,physical dictionaries .

Print dictionaries are physical books that compile words in a specific language, presenting their meanings, pronunciations, etymologies, and other linguistic information. They serve as essential tools for language learners, writers, educators, and anyone looking to enhance their vocabulary or clarify the meaning of words. The first known dictionary was compiled by Samuel Johnson in 1755. Since then, print dictionaries have evolved significantly. The transition from simple word lists to comprehensive references containing detailed information reflects the changing needs of society and advancements in linguistics.

Types of Print Dictionaries

1. **General Dictionaries:** These cover a wide range of vocabulary and provide definitions and usage examples (e.g., Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)
2. **Specialized Dictionaries:** Focus on specific fields such as law, medicine, or science (e.g., medical dictionaries).
3. **Bilingual Dictionaries:** Assist users in translating words between two languages (e.g., English-Spanish dictionaries).
4. **Thesauruses:** Offer synonyms and antonyms for words to enhance writing style (e.g., Roget's Thesaurus).
5. **Picture Dictionaries:** Use images alongside words to aid understanding, particularly useful for children or language learners.

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Digital dictionaries are electronic versions of traditional dictionaries, providing definitions, pronunciations, translations, and other linguistic information in a user-friendly format. They can be accessed via websites, mobile applications, or downloadable software.

Features of Digital Dictionaries

1. **Search Functionality:** Digital dictionaries allow users to quickly search for words using keywords or phrases. This feature significantly speeds up the process of finding information compared to traditional printed dictionaries.
2. **Multimedia Elements:** Many digital dictionaries incorporate audio pronunciations, images, and videos that enhance the learning experience. For instance, users can hear how a word is pronounced by native speakers.
3. **Cross-Referencing:** Users can easily navigate related terms and synonyms through hyperlinked entries. This interconnectedness helps users expand their vocabulary more effectively.
4. **Personalization Options:** Some digital dictionaries offer personalized features such as bookmarks, word lists, quizzes, and flashcards that cater to individual learning styles.
5. **Offline Access:** Many apps allow for offline access to dictionary content once downloaded, making it convenient for users in areas with limited internet connectivity.

Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities:

- **Screen Reader Compatibility:** Digital formats should be compatible with screen readers for visually impaired users.
- **Keyboard Navigation:** Ensuring that all functionalities are accessible via keyboard shortcuts benefits users who cannot use a mouse effectively.
- **Alternative Text Descriptions:** Digital dictionaries should use descriptive alt text for images to make content accessible to those using assistive technologies.

Search Functionality - Users can search for words or phrases quickly using built-in search engines. Some platforms allow users to filter results by usage, part of speech, or region. AI algorithms can provide definitions based on context, improving user understanding. Some applications use machine learning to adapt to user behavior, offering personalized word recommendations or quizzes. Many modern dictionaries include voice search capabilities, allowing users to pronounce words and receive definitions without typing.

Web-Based Dictionaries

- **Merriam-Webster Online:** Offers definitions, synonyms, antonyms, word games, and more.
- **Oxford English Dictionary (OED):** Known for its comprehensive coverage of the English language.
- **Cambridge Dictionary:** Provides clear definitions along with audio pronunciations.

Language Translation Websites

- Platforms like Google Translate offer dictionary features alongside translation services.

Collaborative Dictionaries

- Websites like Wiktionary allow users to contribute definitions and examples from around the world.

Specialized Dictionaries

- Online resources focus on specific fields (e.g., medical dictionaries like MedlinePlus) or languages (e.g., SpanishDict for Spanish-English translations).

Dictionary Apps

Popular apps include:

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary App: Features audio pronunciations and word games.
- Oxford Dictionary of English App: Comprehensive dictionary with offline access.
- Dictionary.com App: Offers synonyms, antonyms, and daily word features.

Language Learning Apps

- Many language learning platforms incorporate dictionary functionalities:
 - Duolingo includes vocabulary reference features within its lessons
 - Babbel provides contextual usage examples alongside vocabulary learning.
- Apps like Anki or Quizlet can be used in conjunction with dictionaries for vocabulary building through custom flashcards based on dictionary entries.

Physical Dictionaries In the past, dictionaries were primarily physical books. People relied on them for definitions, pronunciation guides, and etymology. The most famous early dictionaries include:- Samuel Johnson's "A Dictionary of the English Language" (1755): One of the first comprehensive dictionaries that set standards for future dictionaries. - Noah Webster's "An American Dictionary of the English Language" (1828): This dictionary helped to standardize American English and included many definitions unique to American culture. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (11th Edition): A trusted resource for students and professionals alike.- Oxford English Dictionary (OED) – 2nd Edition: Known for its comprehensive coverage of English words from historical perspectives.- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Renowned for its usage notes based on linguistic research.

Conclusion

the use of dictionaries has evolved significantly from the past to the present. Historically, dictionaries were primarily physical books, often limited in accessibility and requiring users to have a certain level of literacy and familiarity with language structure. They served as essential tools for education, communication, and scholarship, but their use was often constrained by availability and format. Today, digital technology has transformed dictionary access dramatically. Online platforms and mobile applications have made dictionaries more accessible than ever before, allowing users to quickly look up definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and pronunciations with just a few clicks or taps. Furthermore, modern dictionaries often feature interactive elements such as audio pronunciations and usage examples that enhance learning. This shift not only democratizes access to language resources but also caters to diverse learning styles. As a result, while the fundamental purpose of dictionaries remains unchanged—to aid in

understanding and using language—their form and function have adapted to meet contemporary needs. The transition from print to digital has made dictionaries more user-friendly and integrated into daily life, reflecting our fast-paced world where instant information is paramount.

List of used literature

1. Historical Dictionaries

- "The Oxford English Dictionary" - A definitive historical dictionary that documents the evolution of English words over time.

- "An American Dictionary of the English Language" by Noah Webster (1828) - A foundational work in American lexicography that emphasizes the development of American English.

2. Linguistic Studies

- "Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography" by Sidney Landau (1984) - Explores the principles behind dictionary-making and their evolution over time.

- "The Dictionary of Contemporary English" - An example of modern dictionaries aimed at learners, showcasing changes in language use.

3. Cultural Perspectives

- "Words and Their Worlds: How Language Shapes Our Lives" by John McWhorter (2018) - Discusses how dictionaries reflect cultural shifts and language change.

- "The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language" by John H. McWhorter (2001) - Examines how languages evolve and the role dictionaries play in documenting these changes.

4. Digital Age Dictionaries

- "Online Dictionaries: A New Way to Look Up Words" by Rachael W. McKeown – Discusses how digital formats have transformed dictionary use.

- "The Impact of Digital Technology on Language Use" by David Crystal – Explores how technology affects language, including dictionary usage.

5. Lexicography Theory

- "Lexicography: An Introduction" by Howard Jackson and Edward Zygon – Offers an overview of lexicographic practices throughout history, including changes from print to digital.

- "The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language" by David Crystal (2003) – Provides insights into the history, structure, and function of dictionaries throughout time.

6. User Interaction with Dictionaries

- "How People Use Dictionaries: Evidence from a Study with College Students" – Research on user behavior regarding print vs. digital dictionaries.

- "Dictionaries at Work: The Future for Reference Books" – A collection examining future trends in dictionary usage in education and beyond.

7. Educational Perspectives

- “Teaching with Dictionaries: A Practical Guide for Educators” – Highlights pedagogical approaches to teaching dictionary skills in classrooms.

- “Using Dictionaries Effectively: Strategies for Learners” – Focuses on methods for improving dictionary use among students.

Websites and Online Resources:

1. Merriam-Webster Online: www.merriam-webster.com
2. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online: www.oed.com
3. WordNet by Princeton University: wordnet.princeton.edu