

## An Abstract

✿ The paper begins by quoting Samuel Johnson's observation "What is out of sight is lost forever" and proceeds to argue to the contrary, pointing out that to the extent that a tradition such as Dr Johnson's is worth being taken over by present-day dictionary-makers, lexicography is a continuum.

✿ A brief review of the lexicographical scene reveals that electronic dictionaries with their easy, fast, and multimedia access, greater user-friendliness, participation in and interaction with the dictionary text on the part of the reader will be the order of the day. But however sophisticated the computer ware is, be it soft, hard, firm or whichever, it ultimately falls back on liveware (people operating the computer) and "wetware" (the human brain) for designing programs and interfaces in developing the state-of-the-art cyber-lexicography. The OED Online is cited as an

- In so far as we live more or less in the shadow of “what is out of sight” and the past is NOT “lost forever”, a critical account is made of Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language and, to a lesser degree, the OED. Emphasis is placed on definitions and illustrative examples with a view to helping explicate an English lexicographical tradition of literary realism (using real English culled from the assembled matter of literacy and canonicity) and its hoped-for impact on present-day practice of dictionary-making by creating a sense of literary transcendence over what is mechanical and mundane in an age of science and technology and breathing some uplifting air into the undertaking. With Johnson as an example and drawing from time to time on the author’s own experience, also discussed is what is required of a lexicographer worth his salt. Mentioned among other things are bibliophilism, polyglottism, an extraordinary resolve plus pliant mutability when and where necessary, readiness to take up a dozen compilation-related labours and chores, and an open mind to critical feedback.
- To present a balanced picture, Johnson’s inadequacies and limitations are briefly dwelt upon.
- It is loudly deplored that a humanistic spirit is conspicuously absent from China’s utilitarian education today. Hopefully, this paper will make for cultivation of such a spirit by conjuring up memories of a less materialistic past. *There were giants in those days*, as the proverb goes.

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# Fig I

(Willinsky, 211, 215)

## Top Five Authors by Citation in Johnson's *Dictionary* (Vol. I)

<i>Author</i>	<i>Citations</i>	<i>Leading Title, Publication Date (Citations)</i>
1. William Shakespeare	8,694	<i>King Lear</i> , 1605 (584)
2. John Dryden	5,627	<i>Virgil's Aeneid</i> (tr.), 1697 (568)
3. John Milton	2,733	<i>Paradise Lost</i> , 1667 (1,661)
4. Francis Bacon	2,483	<i>History Naturall and Experimentall</i> , 1638 (878)
5. Joseph Addison	2,439	<i>The Spectator</i> , 1711-14 (789)

Total 21,976 or 39.3% of citations in Vol. I (55,932)

# Top Twenty Authors by Citation in *OED1*

(Willinsky, 211)

Author	Citations	Leading Title, Publication Date (Citations)
● 1. William Shakespeare	32,868	<i>Hamlet</i> , 1597 (1,580 citations)
● 2. Walter Scott	15,877	<i>The Heart of Midlothian</i> , 1818 (941)
● 3. John Milton	12,293	<i>Paradise Lost</i> , 1667 (5,760)
● 4. John Wyclif	11,921	the Bible (tr.), 1382, 1388 (8,000)
● 5. Geoffrey Chaucer (1,258)	11,696	<i>Troilus and Criseyde</i> , c1374
● 6. William Caxton	10,172	<i>The Golden Legende</i> (tr.), 1483 (1,369)
● 7. John Dryden	8,987	<i>Virgil's Georgics</i> (tr.), 1697 (2,023)
● 8. Philemon Holland (tr.), 1601, (3,034)	8,095	<i>Pliny's Historie of the World</i>
● 9. Charles Dickens	7,490	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , 1865 (808)
● 10. Alfred Tennyson	6,827	<i>In Memoriam</i> , 1850 (688)
● 11. John de Trevisa 1398 (3,914)	6,408	<i>Bartholomeus De proprietatibus rerum</i> (tr.),
● 12. Thomas Carlyle	6,370	<i>The French Revolution</i> , 1837 (1,468)
● 13. Edmund Spenser	5,988	<i>The Faerie Queene</i> , 1596 (4,025)
● 14. Alexander Pope	5,860	<i>Homer's Odyssey</i> (tr.), 1726 (1,443)
● 15. William Langland (5,513)	5,855	<i>Piers Plowman</i> , 1362-93
● 16. William Cowper	5,843	<i>The Task</i> , 1784 (1,753)
● 17. Thomas Macaulay (4,375)	5,444	<i>The History of England</i> , 1849
● 18. Jehan Palsgrave 1530, (5,211)	5,402	<i>Lesclarcissement de la langue françoise</i> ,

# A Comparison of the Top Twenty Authors by Citation in *OED1* & *OEDS*

## ● *OED1*

- 1. William Shakespeare
- 2. Walter Scott
- 3. John Milton
- 4. John Wyclif
- 5. Geoffrey Chaucer
- 6. William Caxton
- 7. John Dryden
- 8. Philemon Holland
- 9. Charles Dickens
- 10. Alfred Tennyson
- 11. John de Trevisa
- 12. Thomas Carlyle
- 13. Edmund Spenser
- 14. Alexander Pope
- 15. William Langland
- 16. William Cowper
- 17. Thomas Macaulay
- 18. Jehan Palsgrave
- 19. Samuel Johnson
- 20. Miles Coverdale

## ● *OEDS*

- 1. George Bernard Shaw
- 2. Rudyard Kipling
- 3. James Joyce
- 4. P. G. Wodehouse
- 5. D. H. Lawrence
- 6. Mark Twain
- 7. Aldous Huxley
- 8. William James
- 9. Charles Dickens
- 10. H. G. Wells
- 11. W. H. Auden
- 12. Julian Huxley
- 13. Charlotte M. Yonge
- 14. William Faulkner
- 15. Arthur Koestler
- 16. Graham Greene
- 17. T. S. Eliot
- 18. Ezra Pound
- 19. J. B. Priestly
- 20. G. M. Hopkins

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**Fig II**

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# Samples of Johnsonisms

- [Johnson] requires his interlocutor to "expulse" all "agglomerated asperities" lest they "obthurate the porches of your intelligence with the adscititious excrement of critical malevolence". He warns that whoever dares criticize him shall feel his cudgel, which "with reiterated repercussions ... shall soon disseminate, by a rapid eventilation, the brains in his pericranium, blood in his pericardium, marrow in [his] periosteum, and intestines in his peritonium".
- **dignotion** (distinguishing mark)
- **amatorculist** (a little insignificant lover)
- **sciomachy** (a battle with a shadow)\*
- **deosculation** (kissing)
- **shapemith** (one who undertakes to improve the form of the body)
- **subderisorious** (scoffing with tenderness and delicacy)
- **vaticide** (a murderer of poets)
- **bicipitous** (having two heads)
- **extispicious** (relating to the inspection of entrails in order to prognostication [sic])
- **latirostrous** (broad-beaked)
- **rhabdomancy** (divination by a wand)
- **suppedaneous** (placed under the feet)
- **anatiferous** (producing ducks)
- **potvaliant** (heated with courage by strong drink)
- **uxorious** (infected with connubial dotage)
- Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

\* **A word that is made fairly popular by the recent cinematic popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien written in the mid-1950s.**