

Foreword

The art of the lexicographer is further displayed in the help that is given the user of the dictionary who must decide the aptness of any term or phrase to the use he wishes to make of it. The editors of this work believe that one who consults a college dictionary is entitled to the informed collective determination by the staff as to whether a particular term is appropriate to a standard or formal context or is suitable only in an informal context or as an item of slang, whether a given word is current or obsolete or archaic or now rare, whether it is current only as a regional, or dialectal, term, and whether it is, in spite of widespread usage, held in low repute by those who take a stricter, or purist, view of these matters. The issue is not one of "permissiveness" versus "authoritarianism." No lexicographer, at least in this country, has been given a mandate either to permit or to disallow any usage. He has, however, assumed the responsibility of informing the public of the state of the language as of the time during which his dictionary was being compiled. The status of any usage, as determined by the trained lexicographer after a careful study of current writings and speech and disregarding the crotchets and prejudices of individuals, is a part of the record and should be incorporated among the data made available to the writer and student.

The absence from this dictionary of a handful of old, well-known vulgate terms for sexual and excretory organs and functions is not due to a lack of citations for these words from current literature. On the contrary, the profusion of such citations in recent years would suggest that the terms in question are so well known as to require no explanation. The decision to eliminate them as part of the extensive culling process that is the inevitable task of the lexicographer was made on the practical grounds that there is still objection in many quarters to the appearance of these terms in print and that to risk keeping this dictionary out of the hands of some students by introducing several terms that require little if any elucidation would be unwise. In a similar vein, it was decided in the selection process that this dictionary could easily dispense with those true obscenities, the terms of racial or ethnic opprobrium, that are, in any case, encountered with diminishing frequency these days.

The vocabulary entered was chosen to meet the needs of students and others in this particular period of history, and so it will be seen that there is here a heavier proportion of terms from the sciences than was true for the previous edition. In response to numerous requests, it was decided to include the taxonomic designation, or scientific name, for every animal and plant entered. The taxa shown herein reflect the process of continuous adjustment and reclassification that is taking place in this discipline. In general, the technical definitions were written by, or prepared in direct consultation with, leading specialists in every field.

Population figures for geographical entries and other similar statistical data have been checked with authoritative sources. Unofficial estimates have been avoided; only the latest official counts or estimates were considered reliable.

On the editorial staff page preceding this foreword are listed the names of those who labored to produce the dictionary. Titular designations, however descriptive in intention, often fail to describe adequately the roles and responsibilities carried out. For example, Dr. Mitford M. Mathews, dean of American lexicographers and editor of the *Dictionary of Americanisms*, has over the past decade had a lively impact on nearly every aspect of this work to a degree improperly conveyed by the designation "Special Consulting Editor."

A major advantage in the preparation of the second edition of a dictionary is the inevitable exposure to the collective wisdom of those who have put the first edition to the test of repeated usage. Over the years we have benefited immeasurably from the suggestions, queries, emendations, and citations offered by scholars, experts, and lay people throughout the United States and, indeed, throughout the world. However desirable, it would be impractical to attempt to acknowledge individually those many who have given us, and in many instances continue to give us, aid and advice. They will know who they are and, we trust, will accept our generalized thanks.

Special acknowledgment must be made of those scholars who participated in the staff's planning sessions and whose good counsel has served us so well in the execution of those plans: Professor Charlton Laird (whose article *Language and the Dictionary* on p. xv you are urged to read), Professor Donald Lloyd, and the late Professor George Grauel. Our thanks are also herewith extended to the many individuals at institutions and agencies, private and governmental, who so graciously served as sources of information and verification, and to those persons who served as regular informants on matters of pronunciation and usage. Special thanks are due the editors and custodians of the unpublished records of the Linguistic Atlas of the North-Central States for making those materials available to us, to Miss Dorothy Fey, of the United States Trademark Association, for her invaluable help in determining whether terms suspected of being trademarks do currently in fact have such status, and to Professor Frederick McLeod for his expert assistance in the preparation of the supplementary "Guide to Punctuation, Mechanics, and Manuscript Form." For their helpful cooperation in solving a number of problems in typography, thanks are due to Mr. Donald M. Snyder and Mr. Willis Larson of the American Typesetting Company.

The editors of *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, Second College Edition, firmly believe that the years of work expended on its production will be well justified by the many services it will perform for those who turn to it. To ensure that the greatest possible benefit is obtained from this reference work, the user is urged to read the "Guide to the Use of the Dictionary" on the following pages.

David B. Guralnik
Editor in Chief

SECOND COLLEGE EDITION

**WEBSTER'S
NEW WORLD
DICTIONARY**
OF THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

DAVID B. GURALNIK, *Editor in Chief*

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Published by New World Dictionaries/Simon and Schuster

A Simon & Schuster Division of Gulf & Western Corporation

Simon & Schuster Building

Rockefeller Center

1230 Avenue of the Americas

New York, New York 10020

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Manufactured in the United States of America

5 6 7 8 9 10

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

CATALOG CARD NO.: 81-85763

Webster's New World Dictionary.

New York: Simon & Schuster

1728 p. College ed.

8201

811119

0-671-41809-2 cl., indexed

0-671-41807-6 cl., plain edge

0-671-41811-4 Pbk.