

Samuel Johnson and his Dictionary

Resource Guide

Editions of Johnson's Dictionary, Boswell's Life of Johnson, works related to the production of the Dictionary of the English Language, and related material in the Sheridan Libraries

"It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employments of life, to be rather driven by the fear of evil, than attracted by the prospect of good; to be exposed to censure, without hope of praise; to be disgraced by miscarriage, or punished for neglect, where success would have been without applause, and dilligence without reward.

Among these unhappy mortals is the writer of dictionaries... "

-Samuel Johnson, from the Preface

lexicographer: A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original and determining the significance of words.

oats: a grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

Both a monument to scholarship and to Johnson himself, the Dictionary of the English Language (1755) stands as one of the most important books ever printed. Erudite, witty, moralizing, the Dictionary bears witness to 18th century British culture, while mapping and taming the wilderness that was the English language.

The Sheridan Libraries own important editions of Johnson's Dictionary, as well as many works related to its production and to Johnson himself.

This guide is in seven parts:

1. Precursors to Johnson's Dictionary
2. Editions of Johnson's Dictionary
3. Works Related to Johnson's Dictionary
4. Editions of Boswell's Life of Johnson
5. Artifacts and specialized teaching resources
6. Selected Bibliography of Secondary materials
7. Relevant Electronic Resources and Web sites

Precursors to Johnson's Dictionary

Elyot, Thomas, Sir (1490?-1546). Bibliotheca Eliotae (1548).

Facsimile of the revised and enlarged edition of the 1538 Latin-English dictionary, one of the first dictionaries for English speakers.

Libraries Service Center: PC 365 .E5E6 1975

Florio, John, and Arnold Hatfield. A World of Wordes, Or most Copious, and Exact Dictionarie in Italian and English. London: Printed by Arnold Hatfield for Edw. Blount, 1598.

An early precursor to Johnson, Florio's work was a huge Italian-English dictionary which included quotations as illustration to words.

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 453.2 F638W 1598

Mulcaster, Richard. Mulcaster's Elementarie. London,: The Clarendon press, 1925.

Mulcaster, in his "First part of the Elementarie" (1582), called for "a thing verie praiseworthy..if som one well learned... would gather all the words which we use in our English tung...into one dictionarie, and...wold open unto us therein, both their naturall force, and their proper use."

Mulcaster, a headmaster, drew up a table of 8000 words "we commonlie use" and provided encouragement to the project of linguistic order.

D Level: PO 2719 .M7 E4

Cawdrey, Robert. A Table Alphabeticall,Conteyning and Teaching the True Writing, and Vnderstanding of Hard Vsual English Wordes. At London: Printed by I. R. for Edmund Weauer, 1604.

The first monolingual English dictionary with 2449 definitions. Included no words beginning with W, X, or Y. Cawdrey was a schoolmaster, like Mulcaster, and created this small lexicon "for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other unskillfull persons."

Libraries Service Center: PN 1620 .C3 1604bf (Photocopy)

Wilkins, John. An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language. London: Printed for S. Gellibrand etc., 1668.

Wilkins, bishop of Chester, proposed a new orthography, like shorthand, and a more logical system of word formation. It was an artificial system and confusing. One of the features though of the Essay is an "Alphabetical Dictionary", a descriptive lexicon that sought to record the true breadth of English. Johnson admired Wilkins and quoted from his work frequently in the Dictionary.

Special Collections: P 101 .W6

Defoe, Daniel. Essays upon several Projects, Or, Effectual Ways for Advancing the Interest of the Nation ... London: Printed for Thomas Ballard, 1702.

Originally published in 1697, as Essays upon Projects, Defoe's work calls for the creation of an academy, like the French *Académie*, that would undertake a dictionary to codify the English language. He lamented the proliferation of lewd terms in English which he considered "the Vomit of the Brain".

Special Collections (Hutzler Collection): PO 3404 .E85 1702

Bailey, N. An Universal Etymological English Dictionary: In Two Parts: Containing I. an Additional Collection of some Thousands of Words Not in the Former Volume . London: Printed for T. Cox, 1727.

First published in 1721, and a very popular work. It went through 30 editions over the course of the next 81 years. More useful and wide-ranging than other dictionaries of the early c18 (which tended to be hard word glossaries of technical, obscure, foreign, or obsolete words), but its definitions were often poor "Cow: a creature well known". "Black: a colour".

Special Collections: PN 1620 .B29 1727 C

18th Century Editions of Johnson's Dictionary

The First Edition:

A Dictionary of the English Language : in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated with their different significations by examples from the best writers : to which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar. By Samuel Johnson.

London : Printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knapton ; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755. **Folio**

Garrett Library: PN 1619 .J6 1755a FOLIO

The Second Edition:

A Dictionary of the English Language : In which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar. By Samuel Johnson.

London : Printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knapton, 1755-56. **Folio**

Special Collections: PN 1619 .J6 1755

A Dictionary of the English Language : In which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writers in Whose Works they are found. Abstracted from the folio edition by the author Samuel Johnson, A.M.; to which is prefixed. A grammar of the English language.

London : Printed for J. Knapton, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, A. Millar, W. Strahan, R. and J. Dodsley, and M. and T. Longman, 1760. **Octavo**

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 423 .J69 1760

The Third Edition:

A Dictionary of the English Language;...Abstracted from the Folio Edition. The 3rd, carefully revised ed. Dublin: Printed by W. G. Jones for T. Ewing, 1768. **Octavo**

Special Collections: PN 1619 .J6 1768

A Dictionary of the English Language : In which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar. By Samuel Johnson.

London : Printed by W. Strahan, for A. Millar, T. Longman, J. Dodsley...[and 14 others], 1765.

Folio

Special Collections: PE 1620 .J6 1765 FOLIO

The Fourth Edition:

A Dictionary of the English Language: In which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writers in Whose Works they are found. 4th, corrected edition. London: Printed for W. Strahan etc., 1770. **Octavo**
George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 423 J69a

The Sixth Edition:

A Dictionary of the English Language : In which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writers in Whose Works they are found : In Two Volumes. The sixth edition, corrected by the author. London: printed for W. Strahan, J. F. and C. Rivington, J. Hinton, L. Davies, W. Owen and 20 others in London, 1778. **Quarto?**

Special Collections: PN 1619 .J6 1785Q

A Dictionary of the English Language : In which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writers in Whose Works they are found : In Two Volumes. The sixth , correct by the author ed. London: printed for W. Strahan, J. F. and C. Rivington, J. Hinton, L. Davies, W. Owen and 20 others in London, 1778. **Octavo - 2 copies**

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 423 .J69a2

George Peabody Library: 423 .J6371 1778

Works Related to Johnson's Dictionary

Law, William. A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. Adapted to the State and Condition of all Orders of Christians. London: Printed for W. Innys, 1729.

A book Johnson read while a student at Oxford, and the first book that compelled him to seriously think about religion. It had a profound effect on him, and he used many quotations from it in the 4th edition of the Dictionary, following Law's death. Johnson's encounter with this book helped form his determination later in life to make of the Dictionary a pious and educational work.

Special Collections: BV 4500 .L41 1729

Watts, Isaac. Logick: Or ,the Right use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth, with a Variety of Rules to Guard Against Error, in the Affairs of Religion and Human Life, as Well as in the Sciences. 3rd ed. London: Printed for J. Clark and R. Hett etc., etc., 1729.

One of the books from which Johnson drew many quotations. Watts' Logick was widely used in schools as a primer. Johnson effectively paraphrased Watts in the Preface to the Dictionary, in describing his view of definition: "it must be universal, ...proper and peculiar to the thing defined,...clear and plain...and short". Also "it must have no tautology in it, nor any words superfluous." First published 1725.

Special Collections: BC 101 .W34 1729

Johnson, Samuel. The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language; Addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield. London: Printed for J. and P. Knapton 1747.

Johnson's map of his project, printed after he had accepted the task but before he actually began work. In it, he lays out his goals, discusses the obstacles, and presents the current state of the English language.

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 423 J69p 1747 DUODECIMO

The Gentleman's Magazine. London: Printed by F. Jefferies etc., 1731.

Johnson wrote for the magazine in London, and had been a reader of it before moving to London.

Special Collections : AP 4 .G33 [1731-1800]

Johnson, Samuel. The Rambler. London:, 1749.

Almost entirely written by Johnson, so that its title became one of his sobriquets. During the period he was also working on the *Dictionary*, Johnson published many essays in *The Rambler*. Journalism provided an income, and the essay format allowed him to develop ideas in greater depth than in a dictionary definition. In the *Dictionary*, he defines essay as 'a loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition'. However, the essays in *The Rambler* are much more; they essentially works of moral instruction.

Special Collections: PO 1365 .R3 [no.1 (1749:Mar. 20)-no.208 (1752:Mar.17)]
PO 1365 .R3 1767 [v.1-4 (1767)]

The Adventurer. London: Printed for J. Parsons, 1752.

Johnson contributed many essays to this periodical during the 1750's, during which time he was also writing for *The Rambler*. In the October 1753 issue, he wrote of those who would undertake great projects. He or she "unites those qualities which have the fairest claim to veneration, extent of knowledge and greatness of design." A fitting self-portrait.

Special Collections: PO 1365 .A24 1793 [no.1 (1752: Nov. 7)-no.140 (1754: Mar. 9)]

The Idler. The 3d ed. London: Printed for T. Davies etc., 1767. "By the author of the Rambler" (e.g. Johnson).

Weekly essays which first appeared in the Universal Chronicle, April 15, 1758 to April 5, 1760.

Twelve papers were contributed by Johnson's friends, Warton, Langton, Reynolds, and others.

Special Collections: PO 1365 .I4 1767C

Cibber, Theophilus (Robert Shiels). The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland : To the Time of Dean Swift. London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1753.

Johnson used the services of 6 amanuenses. One of them, Robert Shiels, a Scotsman, was a hack writer whose principal achievement was this 5-volume work. He was denied credit for it however, for the publisher had paid Theodore Cibber, a disreputable playwright in a debtor's jail, 10 guineas for the right to use his name. Cibber's father, Colley Cibber, was the Poet Laureate at the time, and the publisher hoped the gullible public would think the work was by him. The fraud was exposed, but Shiels died in December of 1753 and never reaped any benefit from his work.

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 928.21 C567

MacBean, Alexander. A Dictionary of the Bible, Or, an Explanation of the Proper Names & Difficult Words in the Old and New Testament. 1st American ed. Worcester: Printed at the press of and for Isaiah Thomas Jr., 1798.

One of Johnson's amanuenses. MacBean also published a geography of the ancient world, for which Johnson wrote the preface. He also organized the library of the 3rd Duke of Argyll (Archibald Campbell).

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room: 220.3 M118 1798 DUODECIMO

Peyton, V. J. Les élémens De La Langue Angloise. Philadelphie: Imprimé par Wrigley & Berriman; pour Mathew Carey, no. 118, Rue de Marché., 1794.

V. J. Peyton was another of Johnson's amanuenses, the only Englishman. Very little is known of him. However he did publish a history of English and a guide to its grammar (this work presumably, translated here into French), in the years following the publication of Johnson's Dictionary.

A/V Center: Micro- fiche C no. 1240 Evans 27498 (Early American imprints. First series ; no. 27498)

Editions of Boswell's Life of Johnson

Boswell, James, and Samuel Johnson. The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL. D. containing some poetical pieces by Dr. Johnson, relative to the tour, and never before published ; a series of his conversation, literary anecdotes, and opinions of men and books; with an authentick account of the distresses and escape of the grandson of King James II in the year 1746. London : Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly ..., 1785.

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room : 914.117 B747 1785

Boswell, James. The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D. Comprehending an Account of His Studies and Numerous Works in Chronological Order; a Series of His Epistolary Correspondence and Conversations with Many Eminent Persons; and various Original Pieces of His Composition, Never before Published; the Whole Exhibiting a View of Literature and Literary Men in Great-Britain for Near Half a Century during which He Flourished. in Three Volumes.... 2d. , revised and augmented ed. London : Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly, 1793.

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room : 920 J69B 1793.

---. The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. :Comprehending an Account of His Studies and Numerous Works, in Chronological Order; a Series of His Epistolary Correspondence and Conversations with Many Eminent Persons; and various Original Pieces of His Composition Never before Published : The Whole Exhibiting a View of Literature and Literary Men in Great-Britain, for Near Half a Century, during which He Flourished ... London : Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly ..., 1791.

Garrett Library : PO 3533 .B65 1791 QUARTO
Special Collections : PO 3533 .B65 1791 QUARTO

---. The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.,Comprehending an Account of His Studies and Numerous Works in Chronological Order; a Series of His Epistolary Correspondence and Conversations with Many Eminent Persons; and various Original Pieces of His Composition, Never before Published .. The third revised and augmented ed. London : Printed by H. Baldwin and son, for Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, 1799.

George Peabody Library, Rare Books Room : 920 J69B 1799.

Artifacts and specialized teaching resources

Leaves from Johnson's Dictionary of the English language

Several individual, loose, leaves from a folio edition of the dictionary. Handmade paper. watermarks, 18th century typography are easily illustrated with these leaves.

Cage, with teaching materials

Copper engraved plates.

Examples of how most book illustrations were made in the 18th century:

- John Knox's house, early c20. Line-engraved.
- Reliquary of St Martha/Holy family, French, c18. Line-engraved.

Cage, with teaching materials

Type and Composing Sticks / Galley tray and Furniture

Artifacts from hand-press printing, illustrating how books were printed in the 18th century.

Cage, with teaching materials

L'esprit de L'encyclopédie, ou, *Choix des articles les plus agréables, les plus curieux et les plus piquans de ce grand dictionnaire.*

A set of 12 volumes from 1798, all in **original paper wrappers**, with paper spine labels. A striking illustration of the physical state of books as they were sold and bought in the 18th century.

Cage AE 4 .E56 1799

Selected bibliography of secondary materials

Clingham, Greg. The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
PR 3534 .C34 1997

DeMaria, Robert. Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
PE 1617 .J633 1986.

Fleeman, J. D., and Samuel Johnson. A Bibliography of the Works of Samuel Johnson : Treating His Published Works from the Beginnings to 1984. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2000.
Z 8455.8 .F54 2000

Hitchings, Henry. Defining the World : The Extraordinary Story of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
PE 1617 .J7H58 2005

Murphy, Arthur, and Thomas Longman. An Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. London: Printed for T. Longman, B. White and Son ... and 35 others, 1792.
Special Collections: PR 3533 .M8 1792.

Reddick, Allen Hilliard, and Samuel Johnson. The Making of Johnson's Dictionary, 1746-1773. Rev. ed. Cambridge England ;New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
PE 1617 .J7R4 1996

Sledd, James H., and Gwin J. Kolb. Dr. Johnson's Dictionary :Essays in the Biography of a Book. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.
George Peabody Library: 423 .J69S

Relevant Electronic Resources and Web sites

Johnson, Samuel. A Dictionary of the English Language. 1st ed. Oakland, Calif.: Octavo, 2005.
CD-ROM facsimile of the copy of the Dictionary held by the Warnock Library, and of the Plan of the Dictionary held by the Library of Congress. Text is searchable.
Newly acquired: PE1620.J6 2005

A Guide to Samuel Johnson
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Johnson/Guide/>

Johnson's texts online.
Includes the Dictionary, articles, poems, fiction, and Lives of the English poets. Part of the 18th Century E-Texts project.
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/18th/j.html#johnson>

A Bibliography of Johnsonian Studies

From 1986 to the present. Updates Fleeman's essential bibliography (above).

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Johnson/sjbib.html>

The Johnson Society

<http://www.lichfieldrambler.co.uk/>

The A to Z of Samuel Johnson

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4393709.stm>



Other Resource Guides available:

Encyclopedism of the 17th and 18th Centuries

The Scholar's Bookshelf : The Middle Ages

French Theater Collections

Forthcoming:

The Scholar's Bookshelf : The Renaissance

Manuscript Books in The Sheridan Libraries

German Theater Collections

Dante

Don Quixote

Revised: 11 August 2006