

FUNK & WAGNALLS STANDARD COLLEGE DICTIONARY. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963.

WEBSTER'S SEVENTH NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1963.

DR. JOHNSON may well have said about as much as can be said about dictionaries when he commented that "dictionaries are like watches, the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true." The same might, I suppose, be said about reviews of dictionaries. The reviewer has a difficult task, for he can be sure of the crotchets and idiosyncrasies of his "watch" only after he has owned it a fairly long time. The best he can do is to rely on statements of fact and policy made by the dictionary makers and to engage in a certain amount of spot-checking. The two dictionaries I am to review would seem to have a somewhat different attitude about the validity of the spot check, for Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines the verb "spot-check" somewhat unenthusiastically as "to sample or investigate quickly or at random;" while the Funk and Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary defines the noun "spot check" as having the more respectable status of "an inspection of one or a few typical things out of many, to insure quality, observance of rules, uniformity of product, etc." Neither, incidentally, gives a definition for the word as the part of speech defined by the other.

To guide him in the spot-checking he does, the reviewer obviously needs a set of general standards against which he may test specific instances. For a desk dictionary, it seems to me that the key standards are reliability, convenience, and completeness. These are, of course, important considerations for any dictionary of whatever size, but no dictionary can hope to be all things to all men, and in the comments which follow I have tried to interpret and apply these standards with an eye first of all to the college student and second to the general reader who makes roughly the same demands of his dictionary. (The Standard, indeed, has two editions, one for the college student and one for the general reader, each having different matter in the introduction and appendixes, and it is the former edition which I have examined.)

Both dictionaries have undisputed claims to general reliability. The Merriam-Webster permanent staff has maintained a position of respect through sound scholarship over the years; and the present Collegiate is sired by an illustrious parent, the Webster's Third International. The Standard, though it cannot boast

such a lineage, nonetheless gives assurance of reliability through the names of its supervisory board—Albert H. Marckwardt (chairman and member responsible for etymologies), Frederic G. Cassidy (restrictive labels), S. I. Hayakawa (synonyms and antonyms), and James B. McMillan (pronunciation). In addition, the Standard has an impressive list of names on its advisory board, who, under the chairmanship of Allen Walker Read, "determined the linguistic and lexicographic policies of the dictionary." Though each dictionary may nod occasionally, both are based on sound scholarship.

The standard of convenience involves such diverse matters as typography, format, clarity, and cross-references. The type size for the main body of the dictionary is more satisfactory in the Standard, because it is larger: even though this results in a somewhat larger book, I think it is worth it. Neither has a satisfactory type size for most of the introductory matter and appendixes: one hopes that in some happy future time dictionary makers will not force blindness upon the reader who wishes to read this matter straight through. If such material is worth including, it is worth including in a form which makes it likely to be used. (Both use an acceptable type size for their prefaces and the Collegiate has somewhat larger type in some of the appendixes.) The Collegiate's practice of putting primary stress marks above the line and secondary stress marks below the line is clearer than the Standard's bold face and light face marks to distinguish stress.

The format of the Standard is, on the whole, more convenient. The single alphabetical listing makes more sense, it seems to me, than the Collegiate's appendixes. (To find out all that the Collegiate has to say about Nebuchadnezzar, for example, one must go both to the main body of the dictionary and to the Biographical Names appendix.) In the entries for individual words, the Standard's practice of giving senses in the order of frequency rather than of historical appearance means that a reader is apt to find relevant material sooner; and the Standard's policy of putting etymologies at the end of an entry removes the barrier that the Collegiate's sometimes lengthy etymologies at the beginning of an entry create for a reader.

For clarity in the definitions themselves, the Standard is also often preferable. The Collegiate, standing too deeply in the shadow of its Third International parent, is committed to the single phrase definition. While this may create no problem and has a satisfying compactness and consistency about it, with such words as "feather," "x-ray," "sulfur," and "McCarthyism" it leads to complicated and muddy definitions far inferior to the Standard's simpler and more natural ones which do not have to be limited to a

single phrase. Likewise, the definitions in the Standard are more apt to be self-contained: when the reader looks up "sundew," he is told that it is a genus of marsh plants which "exude from the tips of hairs on the leaves a sticky liquid by which insects are caught;" while the Collegiate tells him that it is a genus of "bog-inhabiting insectivorous herbs having viscid glands on the leaves" and thus sends him off to look up "insectivorous," "viscid," and perhaps even "herb."

The reader can trace his way through the entry for "sundew" in either case, but he may resent the kind of "hidden cross-reference" he finds in the Collegiate. I will have more to say below about the useful cross-references to be found in each dictionary—especially those for synonyms and etymologies—but at this point I would like to say a word about the Standard's "collateral adjectives," which give useful information in a form which eliminates the need for more elaborate cross-references. Under the entries for such words as "flea," "horse," "kidney," "liver," "parrot," and "rain," this dictionary gives the collateral adjectives (pulicene, equine, etc.) which differ radically in form from the nouns. Thus convenience merges imperceptibly with completeness.

Completeness is the most elusive standard, the most difficult to apply, the one that can ultimately be tested best only through innumerable cases and use over a long period of time; for the mere number of entries (about the same for the two if one counts the Collegiate's appendixes) is no real guide to usefulness. The impressions of the reviewer in this area are admittedly shakier, often open to more question. And the specific needs of the user of a dictionary are more problematical. Does he need to be told, as the Standard tells him, that the Jolly Roger is a pirate flag, or is the Collegiate's description of the flag itself enough? Is he more apt to want an entry for Mr. Micawber (which he will find only in the Standard), or for Colonel Blimp (which he will find only in the Collegiate)? Does he find it useful to know, as the Collegiate tells him, which words belong to the International Scientific Vocabulary? The Standard will give him entries for "weak sister," "must" (in reference to male elephants), "koto" (which the Collegiate gave in earlier editions but has not retained), and "Bwana," while the Collegiate will not. But the Collegiate will give him entries for "jungle gym," "jello," "Svengali," "hightail," "high-water," "sumo," "bonsai," "cabbage" (in the slang sense of money), and "geek," while the Standard will not. He will find a better entry for "horse" in the Standard, a better entry for "abalone" in the Collegiate. Neither will tell him what "tagmeme" means. The Standard gives him a table of the major wars of history under "war;" the Collegiate

gives him a table of the currencies in different countries under "money." In the Standard he will find the fact that "chimley" (and "chimbley") are dialectal variants for "chimney," while in the Collegiate he will find the broader meaning for "metaphor" of "figurative language" and the information that cholesterol has been "implicated experimentally as a factor in arteriosclerosis."

Obviously the wheel of chance enters in here, but the reviewer may, at the same time, note some general policies in regard to the encyclopedic material, the handling of points of usage, and the different parts of the definitions themselves.

The Collegiate has an appendix of "Biographical Names" and a "Pronouncing Gazetteer," while the Standard includes entries of this sort in the main body of the dictionary. The Collegiate appears to have about twice as many entries in its Gazetteer as the Standard includes in its geographical entries (I base this statement on a check of the letters "A," "P," and "Q"), though the Standard gives some places of historical interest which the Collegiate does not include (e.g., Jamestown, Va.; Concord, Mass.; Virginia City, Nev.; Alamo); and in other cases the Collegiate fails to give historical significance while the Standard does (e.g., Hiroshima, Little Big Horn, Lourdes). The Standard is much more apt to cite the year for its population figures and, where the two differ, to give the more recent figure (e.g., the Standard's figures from the early '60's for Seoul, Manila, Plymouth, Qatar). The Standard also gives nicknames and dates of admission into the Union for states.

In the number of names in its biographical section, the Collegiate would seem to be ahead. It leads the Standard 7-4 on Andersons, 4-2 on Browns, 8-6 on Joneses (though it doesn't include Casey Jones, as the Standard does). It trails on Smiths, 10-14, but has 7 Johnsons (including Lyndon Baines) to the Standard's 4 (no entry for Lyndon Baines Johnson). Both have entries for Yuri Gagarin, John Glenn and Alan Shepard. Both give Nelson Rockefeller, but only the Collegiate gives Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon. Neither makes its identifications as complete as it might: the reader has to turn elsewhere to learn that Wendell Willkie was defeated for the presidency or that the death of Arthur Henry Hallam inspired Tennyson's In Memoriam. Only the Standard tells the reader that Alben Barkley was "called the Veep," while only the Collegiate mentions that Henry Wallace was vice-president.

The Standard has, in general, more complete encyclopedic information on the Bible and mythology. It tells more about Icarus, Isis, Persephone, Circe, and the Minotaur, and has entries, where the Collegiate doesn't, for Antinous, Nausicaa, Ogygia, Ascanius, Creusa, Jael, Nathan, Nathanael, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

The Standard likewise has more illustrations—40 to the Collegiate's 22 for "G," 36 to the Collegiate's 22 for "L"—and gives an indication of size with the illustrations of animals, while the Collegiate does not. The Standard includes a useful "Guide to Reference Works" by Donald A. Sears in an appendix.

The Standard claims to have "some 260" grammar and usage notes "totaling over 25,000 words" and hence contains a kind of miniature handbook. This information is especially valuable for the student (see, e.g., "else," "either"), although it is only fair to point out that sometimes the Collegiate includes the same kind of discussion in its main entry (e.g., "can," "ain't"), and indicates those nouns which are often used attributively. Kenneth G. Wilson's introductory essay in the Standard, "English Grammars and the Grammar of English," gives a clear account of the presently competing views of grammar. The Standard gives a further guide to usage through its larger number of usage labels for "Slang" and "Informal." The Collegiate uses only the "Slang" label and uses it much more sparingly—see, for example, the entries for "wacky," "raunchy" (which the Standard does not give and the Collegiate does not label), "chintzy," and the series of compounds formed with "john" and "monkey." No desk dictionary can include all the slang words in use in the language, and the basis for inclusion or exclusion must perhaps remain somewhat mysterious. All one can say is that the Standard seems to include more slang than the Collegiate (though this is especially hard to determine because of the Collegiate's reluctance to use the "Slang" label), and in general to be less prim than the Collegiate in the kind of word it includes (e.g., jazz, ass, rubber, crap, can). The freer use of the labels "Slang" and "Informal" in the Standard gives the student a valuable guide to appropriateness for his own writing.

Synonymies are another valuable guide for the student, and here the Collegiate appears to be more complete. Under the letter "R," for example, the Collegiate gives more than 150 cross references for synonyms and 40 full-fledged synonymies; while the Standard has about 90 cross-references, 27 lists of synonyms, and 27 full-fledged synonymies. (For the letter "J" I counted 19 cross-references and 3 synonymies in the Collegiate to 11 cross-references and 4 synonymies in the Standard.) Two additional facts should be pointed out: the Standard is apt to give antonyms where the Collegiate does not; the capped words in the definitions in the Collegiate give, in effect, numerous additional cross-references. Discriminations in the synonymies are equally satisfactory in the two dictionaries, though neither usually has space to give illustrative sentences.

Etymologies sometimes give more information in the Collegiate—especially about cognates and prehistoric sources of native words—and in addition contain numerous cross-references to etymologies of related words. The more streamlined etymologies of the Standard identify doublets, however, and sometimes give the literal translations for proper names and words borrowed from other languages (see judo, hara-kiri, Jacob, Jonah, Jehovah, Jerusalem artichoke, Joel, Jonathan). (Literal translations for many proper names may also be found in the Collegiate, but in an appendix.) The Collegiate for some reason does not give individuals credit for coined words; one would have to go to the Standard to find H. L. Mencken credited for creating "ecdysiast," Rep. Maury Maverick for "gobbledygook" and Lewis Carroll for "chortle." The introductory sections on etymologies in both give clear statements about the procedures which have been followed, while the Standard's "Brief History of the English Language" by Marckwardt provides a valuable context for the etymologies.

The differences between the two systems of pronunciation are not very great; each system seems logical enough, and neither is any more complicated than it has to be. Both dictionaries give a good many alternative pronunciations, the Collegiate, in general, significantly more than the Standard (see and compare children, yes, leg, Juliet, literature, hurry, great, weir). Both also discuss pronunciation in prefatory sections. The discussion in the Standard by Charles K. Thomas, concentrating on "Regional Variations in American Pronunciation," is somewhat simpler and more readable; the Collegiate's "Guide to Pronunciation" is somewhat more complete and sometimes more technical.

Some years before he compared dictionaries to watches, Dr. Johnson wrote: "He that undertakes to compile a Dictionary, undertakes that, which, if it comprehends the full extent of his design, he knows himself unable to perform." Even in these days when large staffs of experts have replaced single authors, any dictionary must take shape from a series of compromises and the purchaser should be aware of this fact unless he can afford to have several dictionaries on his shelf. Neither of the two I have been talking about has made any serious compromises with the standard of reliability; both have been forced to make some compromises with the standard of completeness. The Standard comes closer to meeting the demands of the average student through its greater convenience, though the purchaser may ultimately want to base his decision upon the nature of the inclusions and exclusions in each dictionary.

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