

CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
Oxford English Dictionary- DRAFT 2.15.15
Spring 2015

In Spring 2015, selected members of the Council of Chief Librarians, Electronic Access to Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of Oxford English Dictionary. Ratings are based upon the potential value of the product to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Database description

The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* is widely regarded as the accepted authority on the English language. It is a guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of 600,000 words— past and present—from across the English-speaking world. Added last year is the Historical Thesaurus, which is now integrated with the OED Online.

As a historical dictionary, the *OED* is very different from Dictionaries of current English, in which the focus is on present-day meanings. You'll still find present-day meanings in the *OED*, but you'll also find the history of individual words, and of the language—traced through 3 million quotations, from classic literature and specialist periodicals to film scripts and cookery books. Today, the dictionary is in the process of its first major revision. Updates revise and extend the *OED* at regular intervals, each time subtly adjusting our image of the English language.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION for COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

- #1 --- Not recommended
- #2 --- Recommended with reservations as noted
- #3 --- Recommended
- #4 --- Outstanding offer

The following features were examined and rated on a four point scale (1=Poor; 2= Needs Improvement; 3=Good; 4=Excellent):

- **DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT:**
Consider functionality, appropriateness of format, database content, adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.
- **SEARCH INTERFACE:**
Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?
- **USER SUPPORT SERVICES:**
What types of customer and technical support are available for end users and library administrators?
- **COST:**
If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?
- **AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE:**
Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate? Is product accessible to users with disabilities?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: 3, 3, 2.8

This resource seems most useful for support of specialized English language literature classes, and to support research in history and folklore, especially at the transfer level.

**ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR DATABASE REVIEWS
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DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT: 3, 3, 3

With over 600,000 words and entries covering the history of meaning as well as quotes from published examples exhibiting usage, the OED lives up to the title of being the “definitive record of the English language”. It is especially useful as a resource for obscure, historical and regional words. The *OED Historical Thesaurus* is also incorporated into the *OED Online*. However, there does seem to be lag on incorporating current slang. While “hashtag” and “selfie” are in the Oxford English Dictionary, searches for “sexting” and “crowdfunding” yielded no results.

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SEARCH INTERFACE: 3, 3, 2

OED contains both a **Quick** and **Advanced** search interface. Most students will undoubtedly use **the Quick Search**, which is very straightforward and easy to use. However, one impressive feature about the **Advanced Search** interface is the keyboard option under the search boxes. This contains shortcuts to input some of the more common letters with diacritics used in non-English languages employing the Latin alphabet. A **Lost for Words?** option, which links to randomly selected entries in the OED for the serendipitous searcher, is a great way to browse surrounding entries.

Results sets are very well laid out and there is the option to sort by entry or by date. One nice feature is the **Jump to:** section on the right side of the page, which allows for browsing of nearby alphabetical entries. Options for refining a search such as by part of speech, date of first citation, and language of origin are also available to the right of results set.

On full-text results pages, there is the option to view results as outline or full entry; the full entry includes etymology of the word. There is also the option to show or hide the quotes of published examples of a given word in order by date. The option to increase size of text available on results page is also available. Print, Save and Email are offered for entry retrieval. However, when the email function is used for retrieval, the full-text of the dictionary entry is not sent. Instead a link is sent to the email recipient giving short-term access to the full-text dictionary entry. The save function is also not typical of other databases: the dictionary entry is saved to the personal profile, if created, on OED, a file is not created for download to a computer or device. A citation tool with exporting options to formats such as Endnote is available but the only citation styles included are Chicago and MLA, leaving out one of the major styles used in the Social Sciences (APA).

It would be helpful if OED provided a link in full-text entries to definitions of abbreviations or eliminate use of abbreviations altogether as is done with many online dictionary resources.

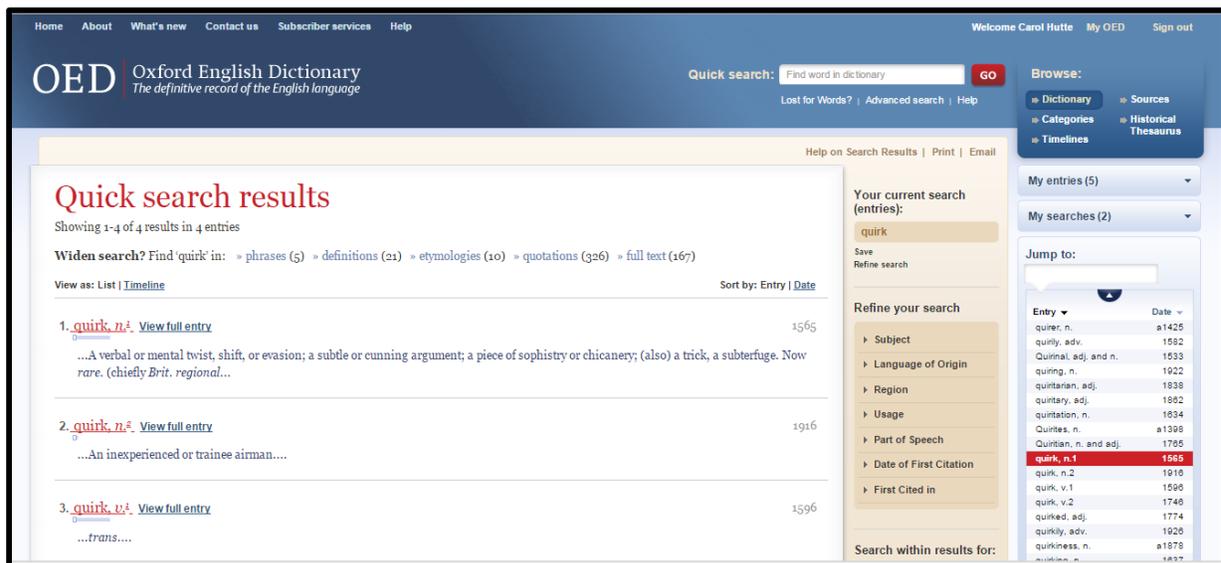
And while the link to a pronunciation table using IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) with examples of the sounds is helpful, audio of the pronunciation would be a nice addition.

There currently does not seem to be a mobile-friendly version or app for OED. Regarding compatibility with Macs, and various browsers, this reviewer experienced no difficulty with access. OED does offer the option to install as a search bar in browser as well as embed a search box in a site. OED does allow for creation of a personal profile but it seems to be limited to archiving previous searched items in the same session and saving entries. Permalinks to entries do not seem to be available.

Homepage:



Quick Search Results:



Sample email retrieval:

The screenshot shows the Oxford English Dictionary website with a modal window titled "Send an email from Oxford English Dictionary". The modal contains the following fields and text:

- Title:** Send an email from Oxford English Dictionary
- Text:** This will send an entry link to a chosen email address, with an additional message if you choose to include one.
- Recipient's Email Address:** [Text input field]
- Subject:** Link to the Oxford English Dictionary
- Your Email Address:** [Text input field]
- Copy Me:**
- Message (140 character limit):** [Text area]
- Footer:** This link will allow free access to the OED Online entry **quirk, n.1** for the next three days.

The background shows the OED website interface with the entry for "quirk, n.1" visible. The entry includes pronunciation, forms, etymology, and a definition: "I. A twist or turn; a sudden or unexpected change of direction or course." and "a. A verbal or mental twist, shift, or evasion; or chicanery; (also) a trick, a subterfuge. Now only in a proverbial sense." The right sidebar shows a list of related entries with dates, including "quirk, n.1" highlighted in red.

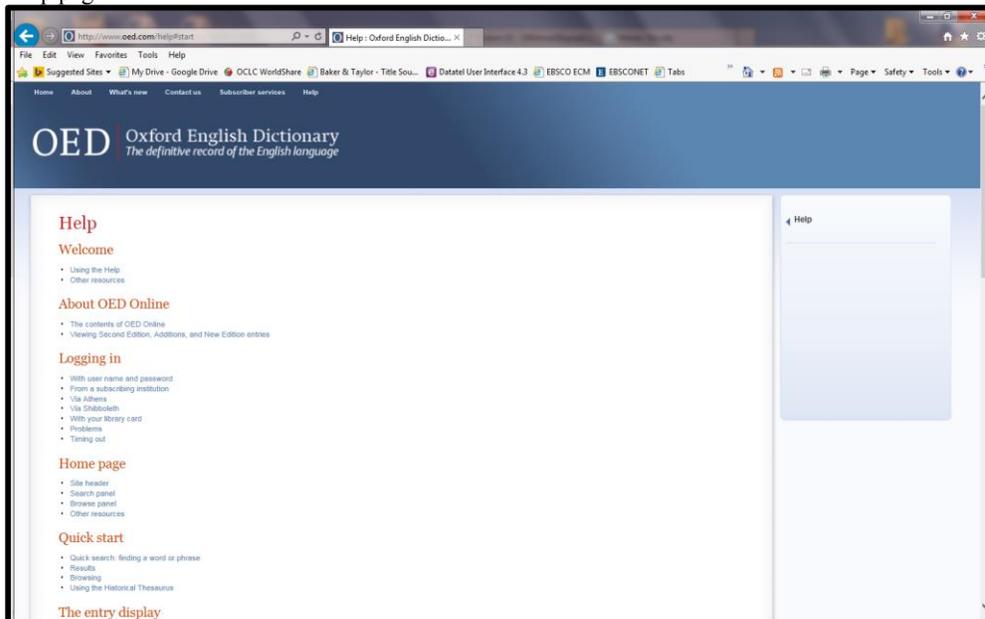
Advanced Search, diacritics:

The screenshot shows the Oxford English Dictionary website's "Advanced search" interface. The "Search in:" tabs are set to "Entries". The "Search the text of OED entries:" section includes a search input field and a dropdown menu set to "Full Text". A diacritics keyboard is open, showing various accented characters. Below the keyboard, there is a "Text" dropdown menu and a "Remove row" button. The "Case-sensitivity" checkbox is unchecked. The bottom of the page shows the start of a table with columns for "Subject" and "Date of entry".

Resource Center. Online webinars are scheduled, although additional training (online and in-person) can be scheduled through [OUP's Online Resource Training](#) contact page.

The [CCL program announcement page](#) provides helpful information that is not easily located on the OED Online website, such as prominently displayed contact information and the licensing agreement (see rights and restrictions). Phone and email assistance is available Monday-Friday 6am-2pm. A link to the email for support is available on the OED Online website through the contact us link on each page. Changes to the OED Online database are reported on the website in an update box on the homepage and through a What's New link. A full list of new words are available to review. Additionally, the [Librarians Resource Center](#) website includes several ways to stay connected with Oxford University Press (Facebook, Twitter, RSS, Email list, etc.) for updated on OED Online and other Oxford Press resources.

Help page:



COST: 3, 3, 3

Pricing is for a subscription term (July-June) and cost is based on FTEs with a minimum amount cost. The product is reasonably priced for community college budgets.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 3, 3

Oxford University Press makes its websites accessible and tries to comply to a level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG) and to Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act. Access to this database is controlled via IP address ranges for on-campus users and remote authentication subscribers can use EZproxy with usernames and passwords. Usage reports for Oxford English Dictionary are available in COUNTER-4 format. OED offers the option to install as a search bar in browser as well as embed a search box in a site.

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

Adams, M.A. (2013). Oxford English Dictionary Online. *Library Media Connection*, 32(2), 97. Retrieved from *Academic Search Premier*.

Bentsen, E. M. (2011). Oxford English Dictionary Online. *Choice*, 48(9), 1652. Retrieved from *ProQuest*.