

**Picture this: how illustrations define dictionaries**

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## Picture this: how illustrations define dictionaries

This essay surveys developments in the illustration of English dictionaries from the earliest printed editions to the present. Illustrations both support definitions and provide cultural context, especially in dictionaries for learners of English. A development is traced from the use of individual images depicting objects to the wider use of more complex illustrations that depict actions, processes, and systems. The way that these are integrated with the text of the dictionary is also considered. Competition between learners' dictionaries in recent years has led to the increased use of full-page colour illustrations as marketable 'features'.

Illustrations are an integral part of many dictionaries.<sup>1</sup> Yet the selection, placing, and sizing of illustrations has often been highly conservative, and has appeared to reflect the editorial concerns and technological constraints of previous eras.<sup>2</sup> We might start with the question 'why not illustrate?', especially when we consider the ability of an illustration to simplify the definition of technical terms.<sup>3</sup> How do illustrations affect the reader's view of a dictionary as objective, and how do illustrations reinforce the pedagogic aims of the dictionary? By their graphic nature, illustrations stand out from the field of text on which they are positioned, and they can immediately indicate to the reader the level of seriousness or popularity of the book's approach, or the age-range for which it is intended. Illustrations are also expensive to create and can add to printing costs, so it is not surprising that there is much direct and indirect copying from dictionary to dictionary, and simple re-use. This essay surveys developments in illustrating dictionaries, considering the difference between distributing individual illustrations throughout the text of the dictionary and grouping illustrations into larger synoptic illustrations. The graphic style of illustrations and the role of illustrations in 'feature-led' dictionary marketing are also discussed.

### Early attempts at illustration

It is possible to find illustrations in manuscript glossaries, and those in the fifteenth-century *Pictorial vocabulary* (figure 1) seem almost incidental to the text, literally marginal additions: 'a bell, a horse with a saddle and a stirrup, a dragon, a spade, and a scythe [are] agreeable additions to an otherwise unnoteworthy assemblage of words.'<sup>4</sup>

While several early dictionaries have woodcut title-page decorations or devices,<sup>5</sup> Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* (1656) has the first illustrations in a printed English dictionary. The words illustrated in *Glossographia*, as in other early English dictionaries, fall into



Figure 1. *Pictorial vocabulary*, illustrations for *damus* (buck) and *gallina* (hen) (repr. Wright, 1884).

1. The earliest citations in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for 'illustration' in the senses 'pictorial elucidation of any subject' and 'an illustrative picture; a drawing, plate, engraving, cut, or the like' are 1813 and 1816 respectively.

2. 'If today's purchaser of a dictionary expects it to contain many small black-and-white illustrations, his or her expectations derive ultimately from the now obsolete reproductive technology [wood engraving] that made possible the

success, almost a century and a half ago, of Blackie's *Imperial Dictionary*.' (Hancher, 1998, p. 158.)

3. McDermott (2005) asks this question of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*.

4. Burchfield (1985), p. 79. See Stein (1985), pp. 66–73, for a discussion of the text of the *Pictorial vocabulary*, and Wright (1884, repr. 1976), vol. 2, cols. 745–814, for the full text and reproductions of the illustrations.

5. Listed by McDermott (2005), p. 174.

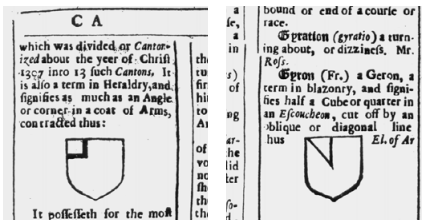


Figure 2. Thomas Blount, *Glossographia* (1656), illustrations for *canton* and *gyron* (from facsimile, linear reduction 50%).

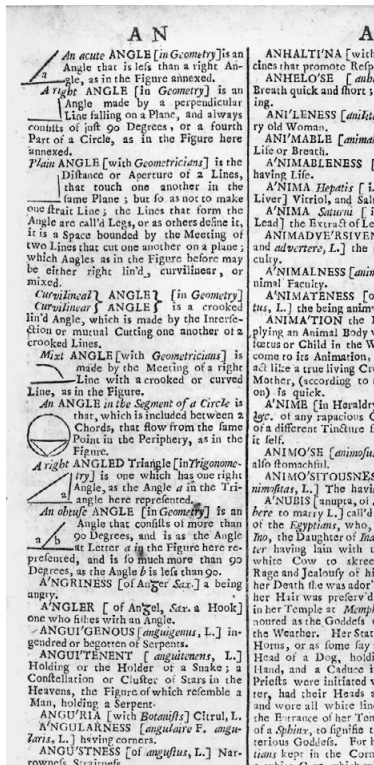


Figure 3. Nathan Bailey, *The Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1727), illustrations for *angle* (60%).

two distinct categories. The first is heraldry: early editions of *Glossographia* contained two illustrations for the heraldic terms *canton* and *gyron* (figure 2). For the fourth edition (1674) Blount added a third illustration, *bend*; in the next edition (1681) he added yet another, *chevron*.<sup>6</sup> The second category, more loosely defined, consists of scientific and technical diagrams. Nathan Bailey considerably expanded the use of such illustrations in a language dictionary in *The Universal Etymological Dictionary of English* (1727), whose title page promised not just ‘Explications, [and] Etymologies’ but also ‘engraven Schemes, where necessary, for the more easy and clear apprehending them’. Bailey later described a ‘scheme’ as

A Model, Draught, &c. or the Representation of any geometrical or astronomical Figure or Problem, by Lines sensible to the Eye.<sup>7</sup>

This definition is itself taken from John Harris’s influential scientific encyclopedia of 1704, *Lexicon Technicum*. Harris adds ‘these are otherwise called *Diagrams*.’<sup>8</sup> Bailey includes some twenty-four small diagrams to illustrate geometrical terms (*acute angle*, *right angle*, *plain angle*, figure 3), and two to illustrate astronomical terms (*Ptolemaic* and *Copernican systems*). But they were outnumbered by the 199 woodcuts used to illustrate heraldic terms and crowns – abstract and schematic rather than representational illustrations.<sup>9</sup>

The focus by Blount and Bailey on heraldry (which continued until the nineteenth century) is not surprising: Hancher argues that heraldry is a system that can be regarded as rhetorical as well as graphic, therefore particularly suitable for inclusion in a dictionary:

Another aspect of heraldic cuts . . . is their linguistic abstraction. They show signifiers and not signifieds; they are not pictures of physical objects but samples of a code, or (better) samples of segments of a code.<sup>10</sup>

Heraldic illustrations also provided information about a system that was bound up with status and privilege in society, and related to anti-quarian and gentlemanly interests. In this sense they were part of the aspirational rather than practical content of the dictionary, much as the elaborate recipes included by Mrs Beeton in her *Book of household management* (which were also illustrated) reflect what a Victorian housewife might be flattered to think she would be called on to prepare.<sup>11</sup> On a more practical level these illustrations were easy to combine with text: the stylized nature of heraldic illustration lends itself to simple, linear, monochrome woodcut illustrations. The linear quality of the illustrations also fits well with the appearance of the

6. Hancher (1992), pp. 1–2.

7. *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730), cited in Hancher (1992), p. 1.

8. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s first citation for *diagram* in the sense ‘an illustrative figure which, without representing the exact appearance of an object, gives an outline or general scheme of it, so as to exhibit the shape and relations of its various parts’, is 1619 (from a text on astronomy). Blount had included the word *diagram*, meaning a musical scale, in *Glossographia*.

9. This information and the citation of Harris are in Hancher (1992). Bailey also

includes a word game, a set of tables to generate Latin hexameters – which seems to run against the concept that an ‘objective’ dictionary should not simply reflect the lexicographer’s interests.

10. Hancher (1992), p. 3.

11. ‘Three pages are devoted to an elaborate recipe for turtle soup, . . . quite beyond the scope of a domestic kitchen. . . These are essentially fantasy recipes, included to give the reader something to aim for – talismans of the pleasure that await them at the top of the social tree.’ Humble (2000), pp. xxii–xxiii.

surrounding type. The technique of woodcut illustration was at this period efficient but hardly beautiful – the development of a wood-engraving technique that would be both informative and visually elegant would have to wait until Thomas Bewick’s work a century later.<sup>12</sup> The technical significance of both woodcut and wood engraving lay in the fact that they were easily integrated with type. Illustrations could be placed exactly in position within dictionary entries, if necessary with type running around them, so that a page containing both text and illustration could be printed in a single operation. Woodcuts were also cheap and quick to produce, though this was less the case with wood engravings.

For larger or more finely detailed illustrations, engraved metal (copper, or later steel) plates were used. This was a finer technique, and it allowed for much greater definition, precision, and control of inking, but it demanded a completely separate printing process. Engraved metal plates were printed by the intaglio method, as opposed to the letterpress method used for text. So any book involving such illustrations would have to be a two-process operation, with the text and illustrations printed on separate sheets of paper, finally coming together only at the binding stage. The inclusion of engravings necessarily made a book more expensive, a significant cost being that of engraving in addition to the cost of printing the plates.<sup>13</sup> Harris’s *Lexicon Technicum* and Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum* use both techniques. They include small heraldic and scientific illustrations as woodcuts in the text, and full-page engraved plates positioned close to the relevant entry (figure 4).

Unlike many of the dictionaries, encyclopedias, and lexicons from which he drew material, Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* (1755) eschewed illustrations, and McDermott argues that this caused him difficulties in the definition of technical terms, particularly when he was basing entries on those same, illustrated, sources.<sup>14</sup> The boundary between dictionaries and encyclopedias can be fluid – even a language-focused dictionary such as Johnson’s has entries with encyclopedic qualities. Illustrations can be seen positively as a feature that allows encyclopedic material to be incorporated into a dictionary, or negatively as a diversion from the prime purpose of a dictionary to record language in as general a way as possible. The view that the aims of verbal definitions and illustrations are different is well summed up in the introduction to the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*: ‘Words are often best defined in general terms but a drawing has to be of a particular thing and therefore gives an example of the particular use of a word rather than a generalized statement.’<sup>15</sup> Johnson’s ‘plain’ approach to presentation, concentrating attention on the verbal content, was followed by Noah Webster in his 1828 dictionary, by Charles

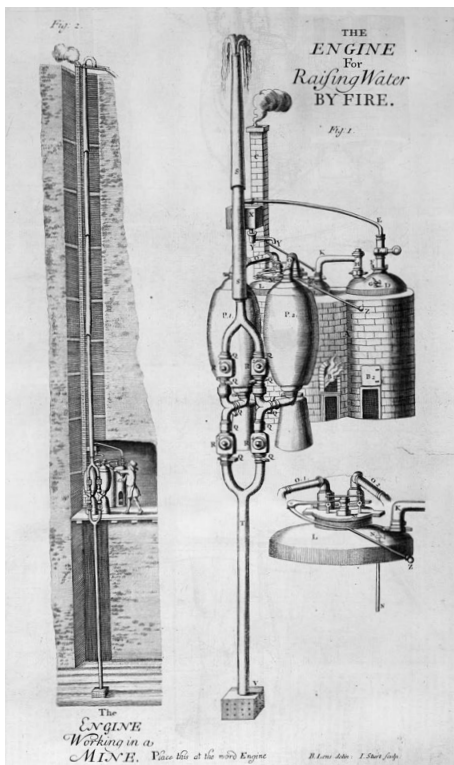


Figure 4. John Harris, *Lexicon Technicum* (fifth edition, 1736), illustration for *engine* (30%).

12. Thomas Bewick (1753–1828) developed the technique of adapting metal-engraving tools to engrave on the end-grain of boxwood. This produced illustrations with a much finer control of both line weight and the representation of light and shade than the earlier method of cutting on the plank of the wood, and which could rival the precision of copper or steel engraving. Bewick did

not invent the technique: ‘his significance lay in the fact that he was an artist and draughtsman of subtlety and strength, blessed with an imaginative and inventive genius.’ (Bain, 1981, p. 18)

13. Ould (2013) discusses the costs of engravings in the eighteenth century.

14. McDermott (2005), pp. 165–8.

15. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1962), p. viii.

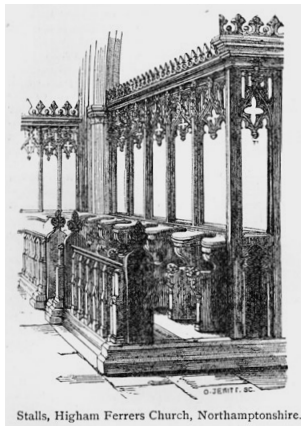


Figure 5. John Ogilvie, *Imperial Dictionary* (1850, repr. 1876), illustration for *stall*, signed by Jewitt (85%).



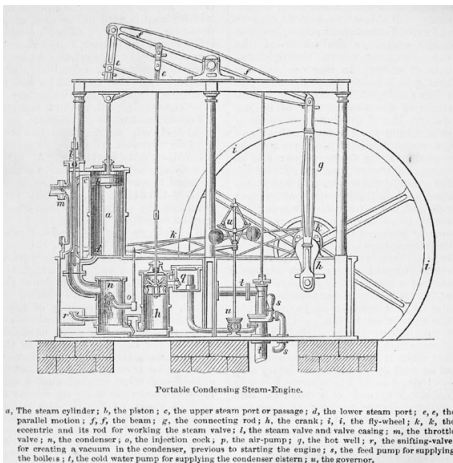
Accolade.



Group of the Laocoön.



Tattooing.



<sup>a</sup> The steam cylinder; <sup>b</sup> the piston; <sup>c</sup> the upper steam port or passage; <sup>d</sup> the lower steam port; <sup>e, e</sup> the parallel motion; <sup>f, f</sup> the beam; <sup>g</sup> the connecting rod; <sup>h</sup> the crank; <sup>i, i</sup> the fly-wheel; <sup>k, k</sup> the eccentric rod and its rod for working the steam valve; <sup>l</sup> the steam valve and valve casing; <sup>m</sup> the throttle valve; <sup>n</sup> the condenser; <sup>o</sup> the injection cock; <sup>p</sup> the air-pump; <sup>q</sup> the hot well; <sup>r</sup> the snifting-valve for creating a vacuum in the condenser, previous to starting the engine; <sup>s</sup> the feed pump for supplying the boiler; <sup>t</sup> the cold water pump for supplying the condenser cistern; <sup>u</sup> the governor.

Figure 6. John Ogilvie, *Imperial Dictionary* (1850, repr. 1876), illustrations for *accolade*, *aggroup*, *tattooing*, and *steam-engine* (67%).

Richardson, by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and, elsewhere, by the great European national dictionaries of the nineteenth century; and this despite the use of illustrations in contemporary popular dictionaries.

### The Imperial Dictionary

The definitive illustrated dictionary of the nineteenth century was John Ogilvie's *Imperial Dictionary* (1850), which in many ways defined what the public would expect of an illustrated dictionary for more than a century. Printed by the Glasgow firm of Blackie & Son, it is in a slightly smaller format than Webster's dictionary of 1828. It added 'about two thousand engravings on wood', which are its main claim to graphic distinction. These were clearly intended to do more than assist in definitions; as stated in the preface, the dictionary aimed to present 'something to interest and instruct . . . so that the charge usually preferred against English Dictionaries, namely, that they furnish but *dry sort of reading*, will not apply to this Dictionary'.<sup>16</sup> Illustrations were a feature, part of the overall marketing mix: in keeping with the period of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the preface also stated that 'The Imperial Dictionary will be found to contain, along with etymologies and the definitions of words and terms, a large amount of useful and interesting information connected with literature, art, and science.'

The illustrations were of a high technical and artistic quality. A large number of the wood engravings were by Orlando Jewitt, who has been described as 'virtually the last wood-engraver active at mid-century who still designed the illustrations he engraved, rather than merely reproducing the drawings of others'.<sup>17</sup> Jewitt signed some of these engravings (figure 5). Jewitt's connection with the architect A.W.N. Pugin and the Gothic revival are clear: many of the illustrations are drawn in a style that reflects the medieval interests of that movement. This impression is emphasized by the continuing presence of a large number of illustrations of heraldic terms. Elsewhere a medieval king awards an *accolade* (figure 6), we see a Gothic *aisle* and *arcade*, and a *battle-axe* being wielded by a medieval knight; a *baldrick* and *balistraria* appear side-by-side; a *draw-bridge* is shown. But the middle ages are not the exclusive time-frame of the illustrations: others reproduce classical artefacts (the Laocoön appears at *aggroup*), and the modern technological world is represented by *differential-coupling* and *steam-engine*. Another theme is the exotic and colonial/imperial (*Buddha* is illustrated, and a Maori chief provides the illustration at *tattooing*).

In general there is a historical, naturalistic, and romantic cast to the illustrations that is markedly different from the technical illustrations of eighteenth-century dictionaries. This is emphasized by the quality of drawing that wood engraving could reproduce. Whereas woodcuts were essentially linear, wood engravings, in the hands

16. *Imperial Dictionary* (1850, repr. 1876), p. viii. Emphasis in the original.

17. 'An important exponent of the Gothic revival and the Oxford Movement, who engraved many of the illustrations in polemical and antiquarian works

by A.W.N. Pugin and his associates.' (Hancher, 1998, p. 164) Hancher also notes that Jewitt's work for the *Imperial Dictionary* is not mentioned in Harry Carter's *Orlando Jewitt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

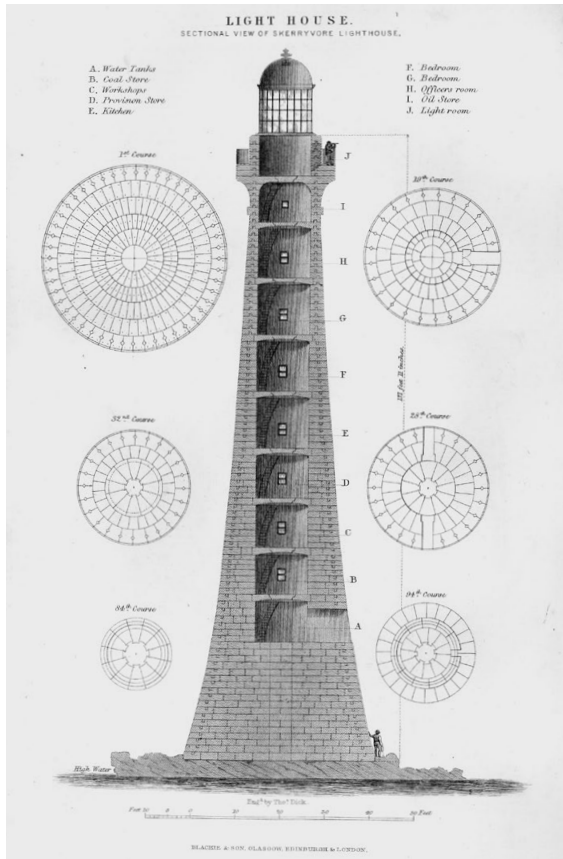
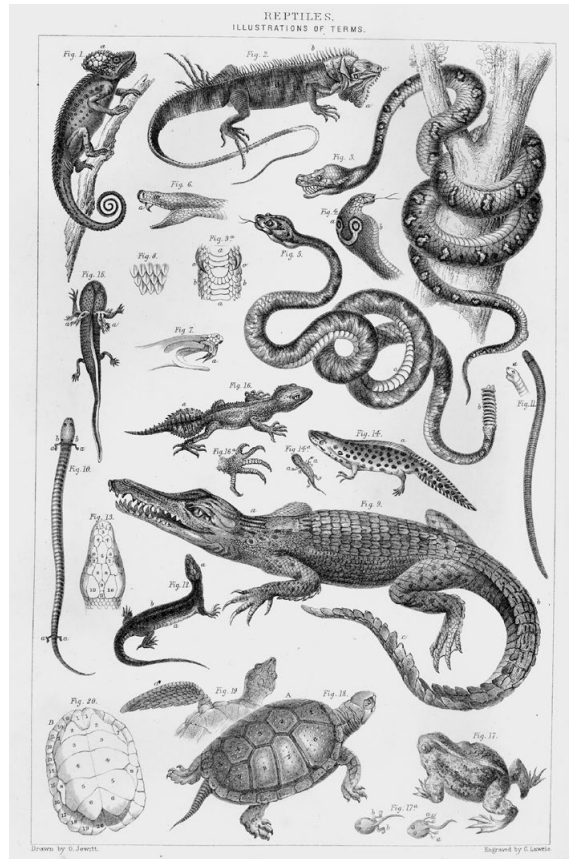


Figure 7. John Ogilvie, *Imperial Dictionary* (1850, repr. 1876), illustrations for *lighthouse* and *reptiles* (50%).



of an expert such as Jewitt, were capable of a dramatic tonal range as well as a high level of detail and fidelity to the original drawing. These illustrations are small and precious, and reinforce the formal and architectural page design. The narrative content of the illustrations – the sense that an object or action is being carefully situated in a place and time, and not being abstracted – adds to the impression that the *Imperial Dictionary* is a ‘window on the world’ for its Victorian readers.<sup>18</sup> The *Imperial Dictionary* reflects a world-view that gives pride of place to Britain, with its empire bringing tribute to the mother country, as it did for the Great Exhibition.<sup>19</sup>

Jewitt also drew some of the illustrations that were reproduced as full-page engravings. Instead of being distributed throughout the text, these are gathered together, with explanatory letterpress pages, at the beginning of each of the two volumes. We can divide these into two categories, synoptic and taxonomic. Synoptic illustrations are large and detailed, showing component parts of a complex object or system such as *lighthouse* (figure 7). Taxonomic illustrations present an overview of a class of objects such as *birds*, *fishes*, and *reptiles*. Jewitt does not just combine matching individual drawings of whole creatures, but in the case of *reptiles* also includes details and depictions of behaviour. The *Imperial Dictionary* therefore combines highly

18. For a discussion of the value of context in dictionary illustrations, see Hancher (1988).

19. ‘They tell us as much about the Victorian reader as they told that reader about the meanings of English words. ...

Emblematic of national pride and global expansiveness, the many engravings marked this new dictionary as “imperial” indeed.’ (Hancher, 1998, p. 159). By the 1882 edition, however, many ‘medieval’ images had been removed.

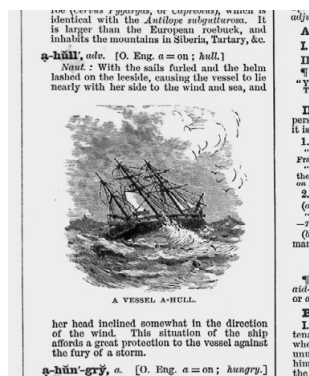


Figure 8. Robert Hunter, *Encyclopædic Dictionary* (1879–88). Illustration for *a-hull* (60%).

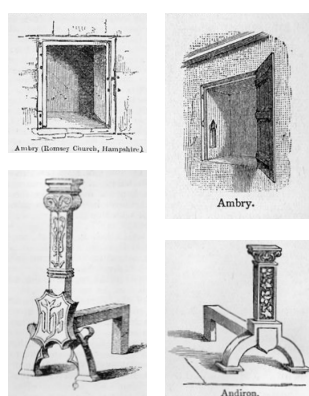


Figure 9. John Ogilvie, *Imperial Dictionary* (1850, repr. 1876, left) and *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1901, right), illustrations for *ambry* and *andiron* compared (reduced).

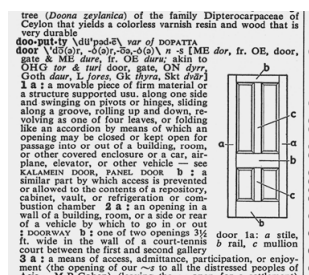


Figure 10. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1961), illustration for *door* (60%)

individual illustrations, distributed among the range of entries, with plates that bring together visual information about an area of knowledge. The plates enable the taxonomic aspects of the illustrations to be explicit, whereas the effectiveness of a set of illustrations (birds, for example) to explain similarities and relationships is diluted when they are distributed across many hundreds of pages. The balance between these two approaches, and the related balance between linear and tonal techniques, is one that we will see in later dictionaries.

The influence of the *Imperial Dictionary* can be detected in later nineteenth-century dictionaries, often with less impressive results.<sup>20</sup> Robert Hunter's *Encyclopædic Dictionary* (1879–88) unusually combined an open and spatially articulated typographic style with wood-engraved illustrations in the text, in a style that is clearly derived from the *Imperial* (figure 8). Similarly, *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1901) includes wood engravings, but these are feeble imitations of the *Imperial* style, losing the subtlety and depiction of depth in Jewitt's work (figure 9). Taking as a sample illustrations for words beginning with the letter A, the indebtedness of Chambers to the *Imperial* is revealed. Of the fourteen words illustrated in Chambers, ten are illustrated in the earlier work, and only three are not; and the one further word illustrated in Chambers does not have an equivalent entry in the *Imperial*. But the pressure to eliminate illustrations from serious, concise dictionaries had begun. The editor of later editions of the *Imperial Dictionary*, Charles Annandale, had eliminated them altogether from his *Concise Dictionary* (1886), in spite of its being nominally a condensation of the *Imperial*.

### Modern illustrated dictionaries

The various concise Oxford dictionaries of the early twentieth century took their lead from the *Oxford English Dictionary* and were unillustrated. This meant that a leading range of dictionaries, in the growing concise and smaller sector of the market, had abandoned a feature thought essential at the end of the previous century, and which continued to be treated as important in the United States. There, even the larger 'unabridged' dictionary retained its requirement for illustrations: the controversial *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1961) was illustrated exactly in the style of the *Imperial Dictionary* of a century before, with individual in-entry line illustrations and separate full-page illustrations (figures 10 and 17). Oxford's view of the place of illustrations in dictionaries was confirmed when, in 1962, it finally published the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*. This had been planned since before the Second World War, as a dictionary which would 'combine the essential features of an encyclopedia and of a dictionary in the ordinary sense' and which would be 'copiously illustrated'.<sup>21</sup> It was clearly not a priority in Oxford's dictionary publication programme, as its gestation took nearly 25 years. In spite of its solitary position as an Oxford illustrated dictionary in the 1960s, the book does have some interesting features. While there are some straightforward single illustrations (*aarvark*, *adze*, and *alembic*) that show complete objects

20. An exception is the *Century Dictionary* (1889–91); see Hancher (1996).

21. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1962), p. v.

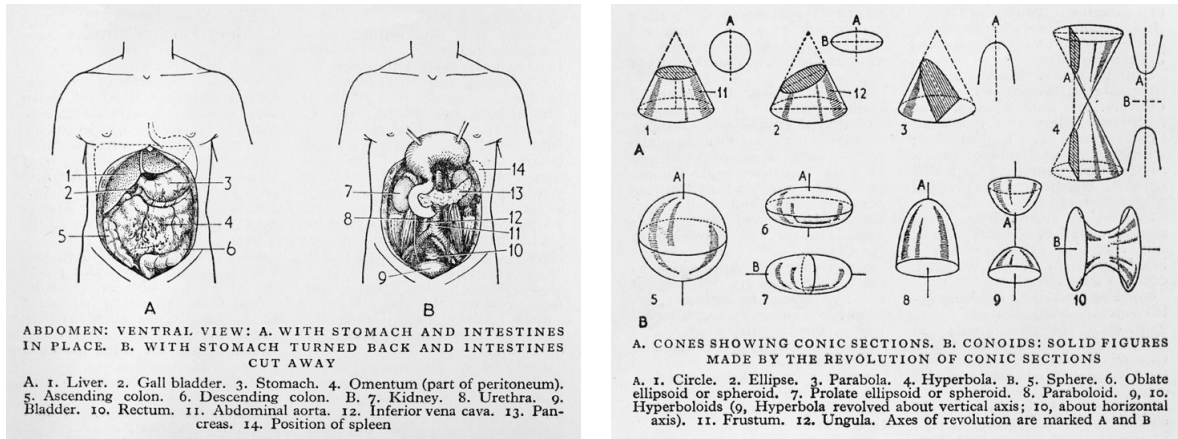


Figure 11. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1962), illustrations for *abdomen*, and for *cones showing conic sections* and *conoïds* (85%).

without any further explanation, the majority of illustrations either have details or labelling, or are synoptic illustrations of one kind or another. This is explained in the introduction:

each of [the illustrations] is independent and self-explanatory.... To avoid wasteful repetition many subjects have been grouped together, especially where the members of a group help to explain one another: the picture of a machine, for example, will not only illustrate the machine itself but will exhibit the nature of its parts, and their relation to one another and to the whole. In some cases illustrations demonstrate how things work, but only where this helps to define the words.<sup>22</sup>

*Abdomen* shows two views of the human abdomen, with internal organs labelled (figure 11). Labelling, which necessarily illustrates words out of their alphabetic sequence, requires careful cross-referencing. In the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* there is cross-referencing to illustrations from words at other places in the dictionary, but there is some inconsistency in this. For example, while the entry for *platelet* correctly has a cross-reference to the illustration at *blood*, the entry for the word *urethra* only has a cross-reference to the illustration at *pelvis* when the word is included in the illustration labels at both *abdomen* and *pelvis*.

The *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* is at its most interesting when it illustrates groups or classes of objects: it shows three *anchors*, not one, and five *cranes*; a dozen *cones showing conic sections* and *conoïds* are illustrated. Its illustrations are also detailed: *corms* are shown with leaves present and removed, and in cross-section. The illustration for *motor-car* is a ‘transparent’ outline of the bodywork with the mechanics revealed, and with numbered leader lines indicating the relevant parts named in a separate list. This is combined with small drawings of different bodywork styles. Where most dictionary illustrations say nothing about relative scale (because objects are shown out of context and without being juxtaposed against something whose size is familiar), the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* shows *string instruments* together so that the relative sizes can be judged. This does not prevent it showing a *tapir* and the much smaller, lemur-like *tasier* with no indication of relative size at all, the definitions simply stating both are ‘small’. The *Random House Dictionary* (1966, figure 12) shows how size can be indicated verbally within illustration captions.



Figure 12. *The Random House Dictionary* (1966), illustrations for *capuchin* and *capybara* (100%).

22. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1962), p.viii.



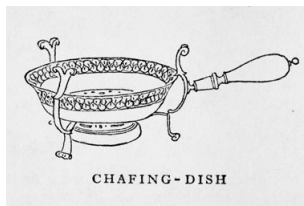
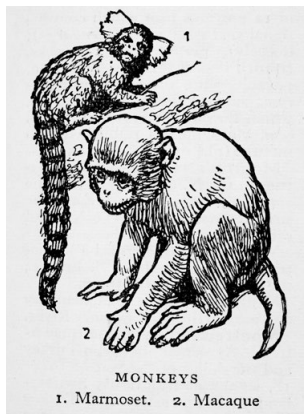


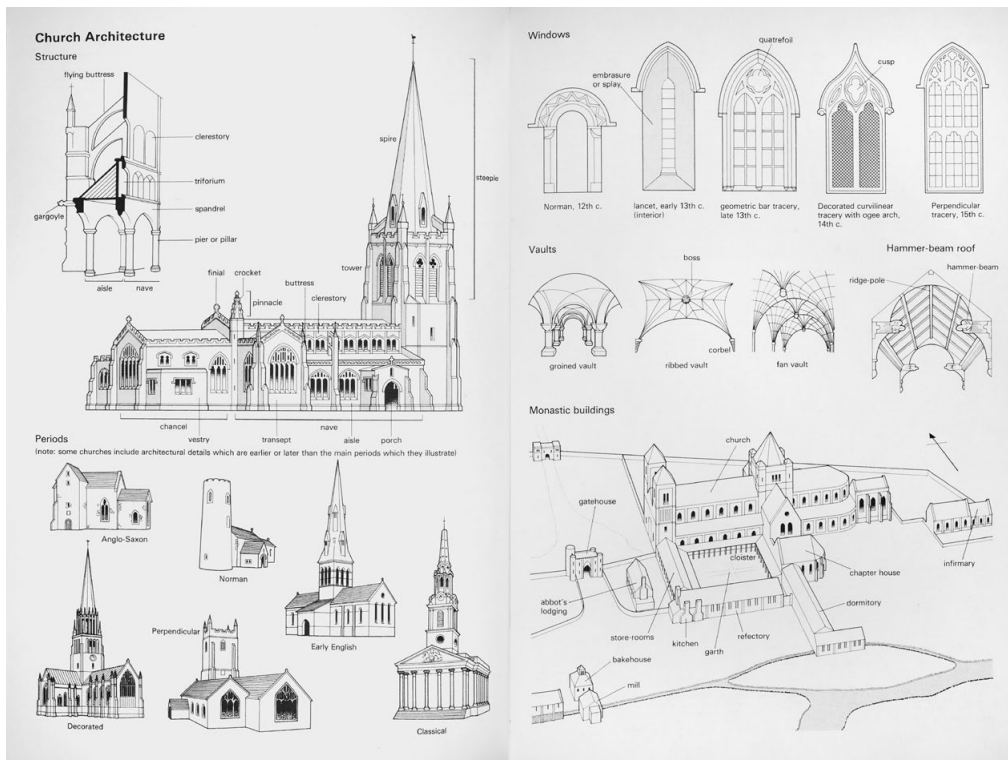
Figure 13. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1962), comparison of drawing styles for monkey and chafing-dish (80%).

(In relation to explaining scale, the narrative style of the *Imperial Dictionary*, which frequently included humans in the illustrations, had some advantages over a nominally ‘objective’ style.) The *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* even attempts to illustrate some physical processes (at *aeronautics*, it shows aircraft manoeuvres, and it illustrates *swimming strokes*). Importantly, all these illustrations, whether single items or grouped, are within entries; there are no separate full-page plates at the beginning or end of the book.

The drawing style of the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* is a spectrum between technical drawing and relatively freehand pen-and-ink illustration. Usually monoline, with shading indicated by stipples and hatching, the illustrations have a neutral, impersonal feel, but there is an inconsistency of line-weight, caused by the varying weights and sizes at which individual pieces of artwork were drawn, and the varying percentages by which they were reduced. (Compare the heaviness of the relatively freely drawn *monkey* with the lightness of the ‘technical style’ for *chafing-dish* in figure 13.) In spite of these imperfections, this dictionary demonstrates that it is possible to conceive illustrations that do more than illustrate single objects and yet can be integrated into the entries themselves by using a cross-reference system.

The *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* approach was modified for its successor, the *Oxford Reference Dictionary* (1986), which abandoned individual illustrations entirely, relying on full-page illustrations, each with a theme. This thematic approach was seen as enhancing the encyclopedic qualities of the dictionary, and included topics such as *church architecture*, *body*, *hallmarks*, and *mathematics* (figure 14). These composite illustrations both categorize and label sets of objects and detail the constituent parts of objects. There are also conceptual illustrations showing organizational relationships,

Figure 14. *Oxford Reference Dictionary* (1986), illustrations for church architecture (40%).



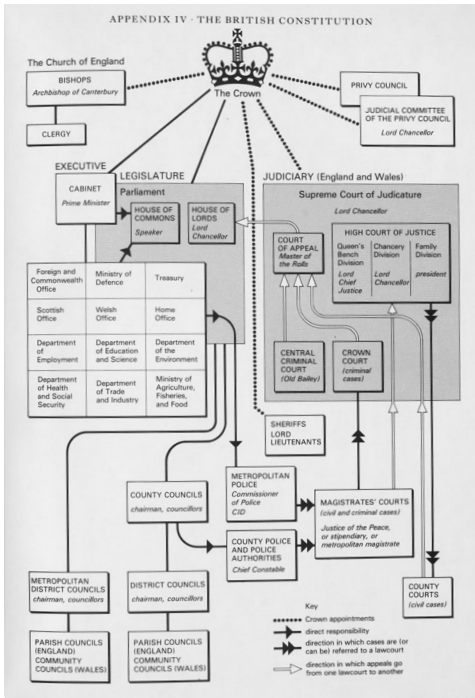


Figure 15. *Oxford Reference Dictionary* (1986), illustration for *British constitution* (40%).

sometimes called organigrams, for example *British constitution* (figure 15). All the full-page illustrations are placed close to a relevant entry, distributing them throughout the book, but thereby reducing their impact. While the illustrations themselves are more than competently drawn, the line illustrations have relatively little shading, which creates light-grey pages that are not graphically prominent, and the illustration pages can easily be missed by a casual browser. Furthermore, the reader no longer ‘discovers’ illustrations while consulting a particular entry, but has to follow a cross reference from a word to the relevant illustration. The costs of researching, planning, and drawing these more complex illustrations was far greater than simply commissioning artists to produce individual in-entry illustrations from standard sources, and heavily restricted the overall number of illustrations. Some illustrations were subsequently combined with a different text in the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (1995), where they were relegated to an appendix along with lists of prime ministers and royal genealogies. This concentrated their impact, but also indicated just how peripheral illustration pages had become to the language-based content of the dictionary. The very different approaches of the synoptic, taxonomic, and organizational illustrations, and their juxtaposition with text-based material, added to the impression of a confused collection of items brought together to fill up the last pages of the dictionary.

A different approach is taken by the Duden pictorial dictionaries. These are essentially updated versions of Comenius’ *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658) where illustrations are the core of each dictionary rather than an additional feature (figure 16).

An illustration will help the reader to visualize the object denoted by the word and to form an impression of the way in which objects function in their own technical field or in [everyday life]. . . . Each double page of the dictionary contains a list of the vocabulary of a subject together with a picture illustrating this vocabulary.<sup>23</sup>

23. *Oxford-Duden Pictorial English Dictionary* (1987), foreword (unpaginated).

The Duden dictionaries are certainly thorough, but perhaps not as uniform in their style as this makes it sound: the illustration panels

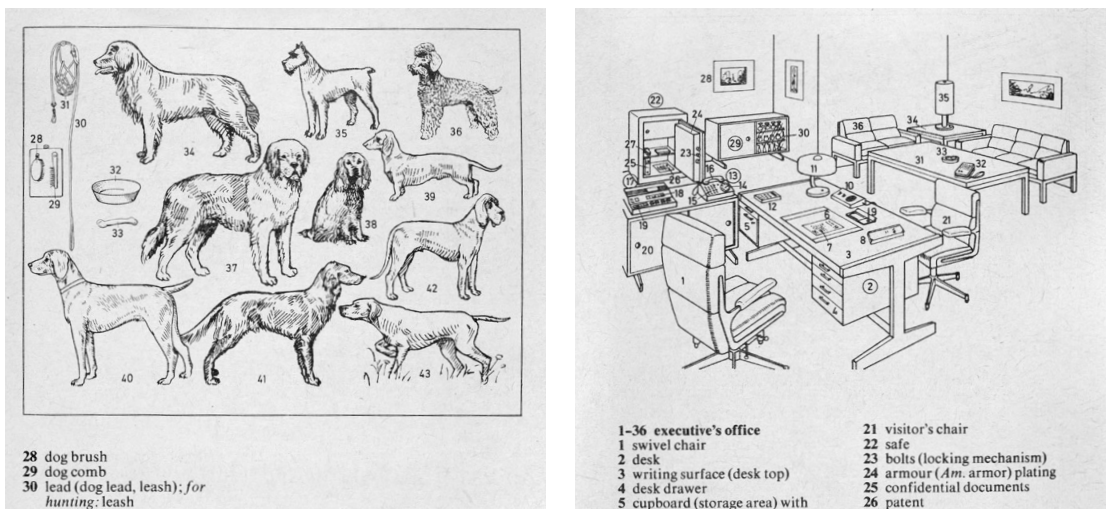


Figure 16. *Oxford-Duden Pictorial English Dictionary* (1981, repr. 1987), illustrations for *breeds of dog* and *office* (67%).

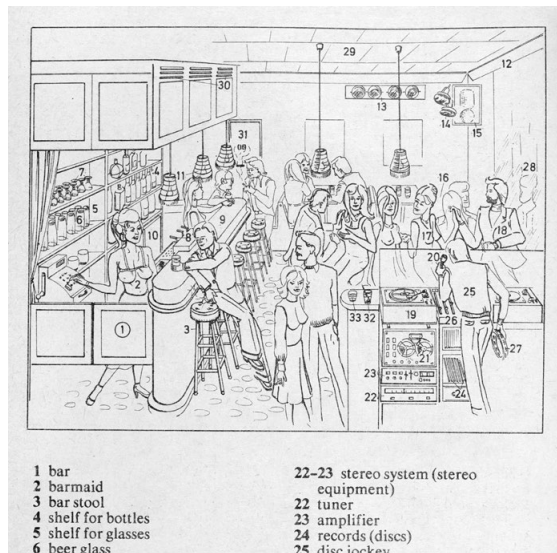
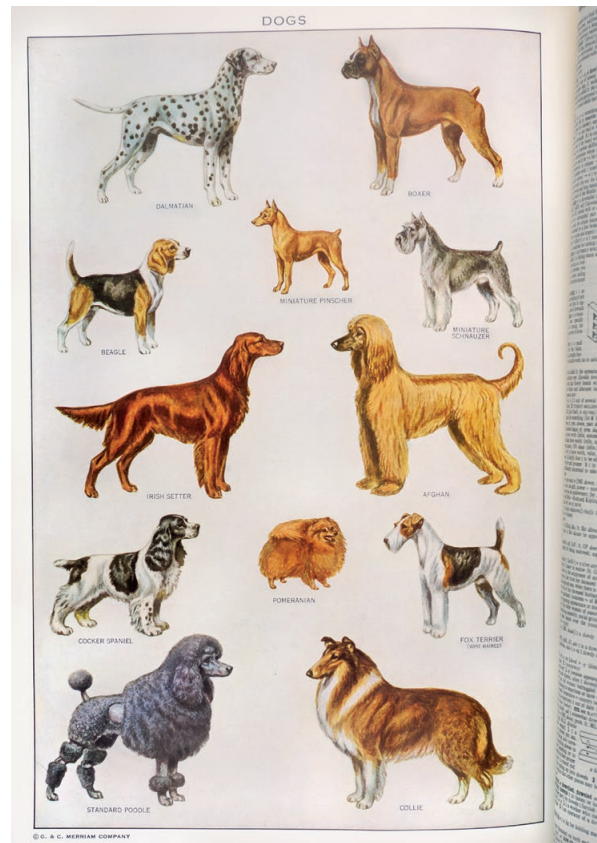


Figure 17. *Oxford-Duden Pictorial Dictionary* (1981, repr. 1987), illustration for *discotheque* (67%), and *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1961), illustration for *dogs* (38%).



24. Colour plates had added encyclopedic visual content to nineteenth-century dictionaries. The 1882 (repr. 1896) edition of the *Imperial Dictionary* included a double-page full-colour lithographed plate in each of its eight volumes: *national coats of arms, decorations of honour, illuminated writing, language map of the world, architectural ornaments, precious stones, colour, and signal flags*. Other plates were printed in black with a stone background tint. The *Century Dictionary* included sixteen colour plates depicting flora and fauna, *flags, signals, colors of the spectrum and of pigments, and color-types of the races of men* (Hancher, 1996, p. 109).

include collections of objects, drawn in a 'neutral' linear style, but the presentation varies. Some are simply collections of individual drawings on a neutral field, with no indication of absolute scale or whether the individual elements are consistently scaled (*breeds of dog* and *art*). Some are perspective scenes with naturalistic spatial relationships (*bakery* and *office*). Some combine schematic, blueprint-like drawings with perspective drawings (*railway line*). Stability and longevity is important in dictionary illustration, given the tendency for publishers to reissue editions over a long period of time. The more taxonomic or table-like the illustration, the less likely it is to date, especially if the subject is some aspect of the natural world. Technological applications are particularly likely to date, and the lifespan of Duden illustrations, with heavy coverage of areas of technology and industry, is therefore compromised. As time passes, the illustrations that give context by showing street scenes, household rooms, the interior of a discotheque, and so on suffer from precisely the specific allusions to the period of their drawing that originally provided up-to-date appeal and contextualization (figure 17). Perhaps this is the reason for the highly conservative approach to illustration found in dictionaries such as *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1961), whose illustrations would not have looked out of place in the *Imperial Dictionary*. *Webster's Third* was particularly careful to select topics that would not date for its full-page, taxonomic colour plates. These cover stable categories such as *cats, dogs, flags* (perhaps not quite so stable but easily correctible) and *gems*.<sup>24</sup>

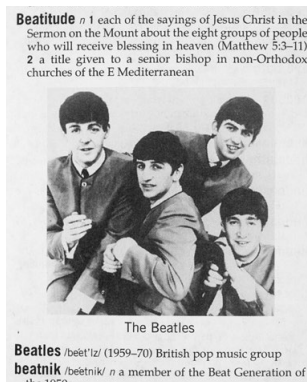


Figure 18. *Encarta Concise Dictionary* (2001), illustration for *Beatles* (75%).



Figure 19. *Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1948), illustrations for *akimbo* and *alignment* (75%).

25. 'The likenesses reproduced in the [*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*] were to be "visually rich as well as informative", so selections were not restricted to head-and-shoulder or half-length studies. Full-length portraits were chosen where these seemed more revealing. Costume, background, accessories, and period stylization were seen, along with likeness, as part of what "constitutes the portrait as a representation of a given individual". Consequently the reproductions included in the Dictionary show in almost all cases

The *American Heritage Dictionary* (third edition, 1992) and the *Encarta* dictionaries demonstrate how publishers respond to the marketing requirement of making dictionaries relevant to their audience – or perhaps of ensuring that there is consumer recognition of the dictionary content. The 'modern' aspect of these dictionaries is the widespread use of photographs. The subjects for photography are chosen to accord with the principle of not dating too rapidly. In the *American Heritage Dictionary*, which has a considerable encyclopedic content, some are portraits of famous people, works of art, or buildings (*Maria Callas*, a De Kooning painting, *Abu Simbel*). These have a high recognition factor, and can be thought of as iconic, saying something about the concern of the dictionary to connect with its readership, rather than being genuinely explanatory. This is reinforced by the choice of specific, familiar portraits for individuals: in the *Encarta Concise English Dictionary* (2001) the *Beatles* are shown in 1963 (figure 18) and *Margaret Thatcher* at her election victory in 1979. These thumbnail reminders, tightly cropped, are an interesting contrast to the rigorously selected images of subjects for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which, with far greater resources of time and space, chose to concentrate on the significant but less obvious portrait, or the image which contextualized the sitter.<sup>25</sup>

#### Illustrations in learners' dictionaries

The development from the alternatives of individual in-entry illustrations or separate, full-page illustrations to something altogether more complex and interesting can be seen in the successive editions of A. S. Hornby's *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.<sup>26</sup> Hornby's original *Idiomatic and Syntactic Dictionary* (1942) was republished by Oxford as the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* in 1948, with the title of later editions simplified to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. The 1948 edition claimed to include 1406 illustrations. All but three of these are in-entry line illustrations (the remainder showing the range of the human voice and musical instruments, and soccer, rugby, and cricket pitches as an appendix). They are almost all drawings of objects, and are a relatively conservative basic selection with a few items useful to the target audience of non-native learners of English. Occasionally they are used to discriminate sense (at *bar* chocolate bars and prison bars are shown, at *tablet* both medicinal tablets and a memorial tablet are shown) but mostly they are in the familiar range typified by *abacus*, *armour*, *centaur*, *vaulted roof*, and *woodpecker*. The dictionary's emphasis on current vocabulary does sometimes influence the illustrations, for example *tuxedo* and *cash register*. A few adjectives are illustrated, for example *akimbo* and *upside down*. *Alignment* is illustrated by one of the few diagrammatic illustrations in the dictionary (figure 19). If we divide the illustrations in the 1948 edition into sixteen general categories,<sup>27</sup> then it becomes

the complete original composition.' 'Selecting the images', from 'Introduction to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography', available at <http://global.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/print/intro/intro4/> (accessed 9 September 2013).

26. See p. 171 for a full list of editions.

Cowie (1999) traces the book's history.

27. The categories are: adjectives, agriculture/technology, architecture, anatomy, astronomy/mathematics, botany/zoology, domestic objects/furniture, dress, food, history/mythology, jobs, military, music, nautical, transport, sports.

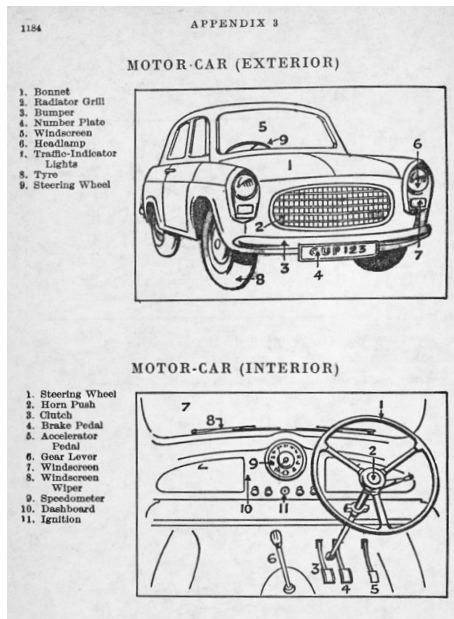


Figure 20. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, second edition (1963), illustrations for *motor-car* (57%).

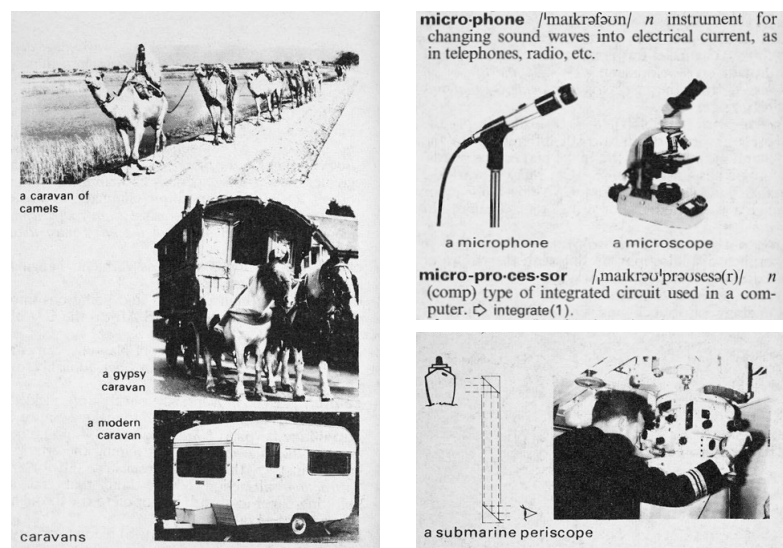
clear that botanical/zoological illustrations are by far the greatest proportion, covering 14 of the 40 illustrations in the letter A, and 54 of the 214 in the letter S. Other well-represented categories in the letter S are technology/tools/agriculture (40), domestic objects/furniture (28), dress (24), architecture (12), and military (11).

The second edition (1963) continued with much the same approach as the first edition, but with a smaller overall number of illustrations, 'about 1000';<sup>28</sup> these were re-drawn, but in much the same style and with much the same distribution. The appendix retained the illustrations for sports fields and added one for *baseball*, and drawings were added of *full-rigged sailing ship*, *sailing dinghy*, *motor car* (exterior and interior, figure 20) and *aeroplane*, all showing component parts labelled with numbers and leader lines. This reduction in the number of illustrations matched the overall approach to the design of the dictionary: its text content was very much increased, and the typography became both more cramped and less graphically articulated.

In the third edition (1974) the overall number of illustrations was reduced yet again, with the introduction talking simply about 'a large number', so that only about a quarter of the first edition's total remained. In a radical departure, taking advantage of the offset lithography printing process, many of the illustrations were now photographs, and the additional line illustrations were completely redrawn in a much more controlled, mechanical style. As well as this technological change, we can see a more considered approach to illustration. There is a more systematic attempt to disambiguate senses rather than simply identify a headword. For example, *caravan* shows a caravan of camels, a gypsy caravan, and a modern (car-drawn) caravan (figure 21), while *reel* shows a cotton reel, a fishing reel, and a cable reel. Groups of related objects are shown as simple taxonomies at *arachnid*, *mollusc*, and *reptile* (without indication of absolute or relative scale). In a retrograde change, illustrations are sometimes grouped simply to save space, so that a *palette* is shown next to a *paling*, and a *microphone* next to a *microscope*, only because those entries are in the same column. A drawing and a photograph

28. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, second edition (1963), p. vi.

Figure 21. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, third edition (1974, repr. 1985), illustrations for *caravan*, *microphone*, *microscope*, and *periscope* (80%).



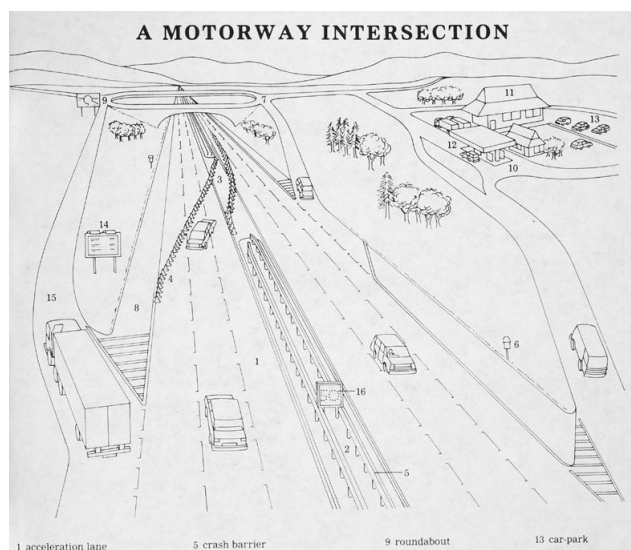
are combined to illustrate *periscope*, the drawing being a linear diagram of the light-path, the photograph showing the way a submarine's periscope is handled by the operator and indicating its scale.

The opportunities that photographs offer to show a higher level of detail in the depiction of an object are not realized in the third edition, however. Through several reprints the quality of offset lithography reproduction is poor, and the contrast of most of the photographs is extreme, so that highlights are bleached out and shadow areas filled in, reducing detail overall. *Concertina* (mostly black) and *maggot* (mostly white) are nearly impossible to decipher. The bleaching out of highlight detail causes particular problems when the photograph is a cut-out, as at *kimono* and *tool*, because it becomes impossible to discern the true outline of the object. Occasionally the reproduction quality makes it impossible to tell if the illustration is a photograph or a drawing (*safety-pin*).

These issues were evidently understood because the fourth edition (1989) abandons photography altogether. While the illustrations still disambiguate senses and provide taxonomies, they are now drawn with a heavier overall line-weight, which combines with the stronger Nimrod typeface and improved printing to give a denser, less contrasty page. The number of illustrations is increased (1,820 are claimed) and an art editor, two illustration editors, and ten illustrators and studios are named as contributors.<sup>29</sup> How the total number of illustrations is calculated is not clear because there are only 58 illustrated entries in the letter S, compared with 172 in the second edition, which only claimed 'about 1000' overall. But if the number of *words* appearing in illustrations is the criterion, this would enable the illustration for *tennis court* to cover *baseline*, *centre mark*, *centre service line*, *double sideline*, *net*, *net judge*, *service line*, *single sideline*, *tramlines*, *racket*, and *umpire*, and that at *turnip* to cover *swede* and *parsnip*. A few more illustrations are added in the appendix, of the synoptic kind with numbered and labelled keys. In this edition their usefulness to the overseas learner is further indicated by captions such as *some typical British homes* and *wild animals common in Britain*. Even a particularly British motorway junction is depicted (figure 22),

29. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, fourth edition (1989), p. vi.

Figure 22. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, fourth edition (1989), illustration for *motorway intersection* (67%).



complete with *cones* and a *contraflow*. The fifth edition (1995), while innovative in its overall design, retains about the same number of illustrated entries as the fourth, but claims, more accurately, '1700 words illustrated' (although there are no more than 500 separate illustrations).

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* faced increasing competition in the 1990s and 2000s. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (third edition, 1995) introduced a large number of innovations in illustration, which were matched almost immediately by Oxford and Macmillan in their equivalent dictionaries. The other competitor in the field, the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, appeared in the same year as the Longman dictionary, and was visually far less successful.

In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* illustrations have a function to expand and relate vocabulary as well as to identify objects, disambiguate homonyms, discriminate senses, and (for foreign learners) indicate particularly British instances of familiar objects. The overall graphic style is still linear, with a drawn black line on white ground. There are some single-object illustrations (*acorn*), synoptic illustrations (*aircraft*) and disambiguations (*nucleus*). But there is a noticeable change of graphic style. For illustrations of human actions (at *arm* we are shown *arms folded*, *arm-in-arm*, and *arms akimbo*) the drawings are now more casual and cartoon-like (figure 23). The most prominent innovation is the introduction of full-page illustrations printed as three full-colour sections, each of eight pages, which fall at about one-third and two-thirds through the book. Printed on thicker matt paper than the rest of the dictionary, these sections are visible even when the book is closed because the illustrations bleed, and can be easily spotted even by the casual bookshop browser.

These illustrations are mostly composites, like the Duden pictorial dictionary illustrations, but with a wide range of configurations, each suited to the word-groupings being illustrated. The simplest are naturalistic, perspective composites: *kitchen* has over forty items or actions labelled (actions such as *roast* and *fry* are set in capitals to distinguish them from nouns, and British and US English variants are shown). *Landscapes*, *office*, and *restaurant* follow a similar style. Somewhat less naturalistic are the compositions for *fruit* and *vegetables*. *Verbs in the kitchen* and *driving* are grids of individual drawings. Actions are shown by details of hands with utensils (*chop* and *slice*), or of driver or vehicle actions (*change lanes* and *slow down*) respectively. *Types of walk*, *physical contact*, and *sound* are similar, with naturalistic drawings tightly cropped to the action and with neutral backgrounds, except for some *physical contact* and *types of walk* illustrations where context is required (a river for *wade*). *Patterns and fabrics* and *describing clothes* are naturalistic taxonomies. *Position and direction*, *describing people*, *broken*, and *colours* are altogether more inventive (figure 24, opposite). *Position and direction* consists of a full-page naturalistic perspective drawing, but instead of being a composite of objects, it is a composite of spatial relationships, which are numbered and explained in a text panel on the facing page. The text is a narrative commentary on the bicycle race depicted in the picture,

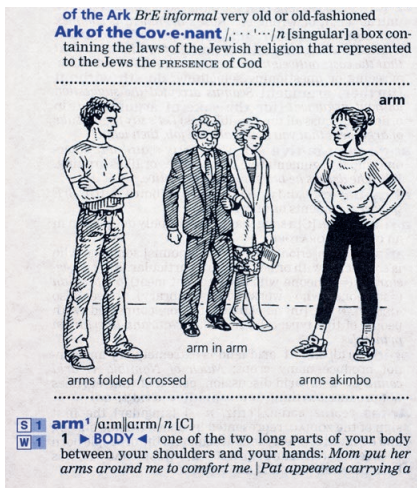


Figure 23. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995), illustration for *arm* (77%).

Figure 24. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995), illustrations (from top to bottom) for position and direction, broken and physical contact, and house and colours/colors (35%).





explaining who is *beyond* whom, who is *among* the crowd, and so on. *Describing people* works in a similar way, with a set of family photographs in a *trompe-l'œil* composition, with a narrative text describing each family member. *Broken* again uses the naturalistic perspective to depict a living room where every object has seen better days (such as *ripped* and *crumpled*). *Colours* is a naturalistic perspective of an artist painting a picture, allowing all the colours in her paint-box, and on her palette and canvas, to be labelled. Finally, illustrations with a quite different purpose (and which appear in no other learner's dictionary) are the small histograms showing frequency-of-occurrence data for particular words and combinations. These are placed in small panels next to the relevant entry.

The sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, a direct response to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, promised '1,700 words illustrated, many in groups, to introduce you to related vocabulary'. In this role, illustrations are joined by text-only pages that 'show the vocabulary you need for topics such as sport and computing', and by explicit boxed lists of 'word families' in certain entries. Photographs are still avoided, and the most prominent groups of illustrations are those presented, as in the Longman dictionary, on full-colour pages. Again they are separately printed, on smooth coated paper, and inserted together about one-quarter of the way through the dictionary in the middle of letter D. While this is convenient for binding and may achieve impact for browsing readers in a bookshop, it is quite without regard to relating illustrations to specific entries. The paper surface reproduces saturated colours better than the Longman dictionary, and emphasizes the techniques of hyper-realist painting and computer-aided rendering.

The configuration of illustrations differs from Longman's: in the sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* there are only taxonomies. *Bread, cakes, and desserts* and *fruit and vegetables* are brightly coloured, and *clothes and fabrics* is rendered in a hyper-realist style. *The animal kingdom* is drawn in the friendlier manner of a children's picture book, while *games and toys* returns to the hyper-realist style. But in a nod to perspective, everything is drawn as a three-dimensional object, casting a shadow on the white ground of the page (figure 25, opposite). The most recent edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the eighth (2010), re-used some of the sixth edition's illustrations with some reorganization, and developed the computer-rendered hyper-realist style in perspective illustrations such as *living room* (figure 26). The influence of children's infotainment illustration, as practised by publishers such as Dorling Kindersley, is clear.<sup>30</sup> (Dorling Kindersley produced its own subject 'visual dictionaries' from 1991, which consist of double-page spreads of labelled illustrations, figure 27). These were organized thematically, not alphabetically.

In comparison, the black-only line drawings that still appear in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* are relatively conservative, except for illustrations in an informal cartoon style used to show human actions or emotions, for example *trolley rage* in the insert on new words (figure 28), *shrug* (*one's shoulders*), *stamp* (*one's foot*), *wring out*, *wrinkle* (*one's forehead*). Apart from these, almost no illustrations

30. The cut-out style used by Dorling Kindersley publications owes a great deal to the need for illustrations to be reusable from book to book; photographing objects on a white background allows them to be re-contextualized more easily.

Figure 25. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, sixth edition (2000), illustrations for fruit and vegetables and clothes and fabrics (35%).



Figure 26. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, eighth edition (2010), illustrations for fruit and vegetables and living room (35%).



Figure 27. Dorling Kindersley, Ultimate Visual Dictionary (1994), illustration for carnivores (20%).

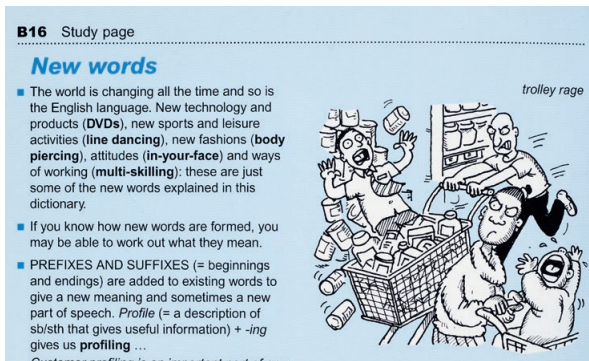


Figure 28. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, sixth edition (2000), illustration for trolley rage (60%).

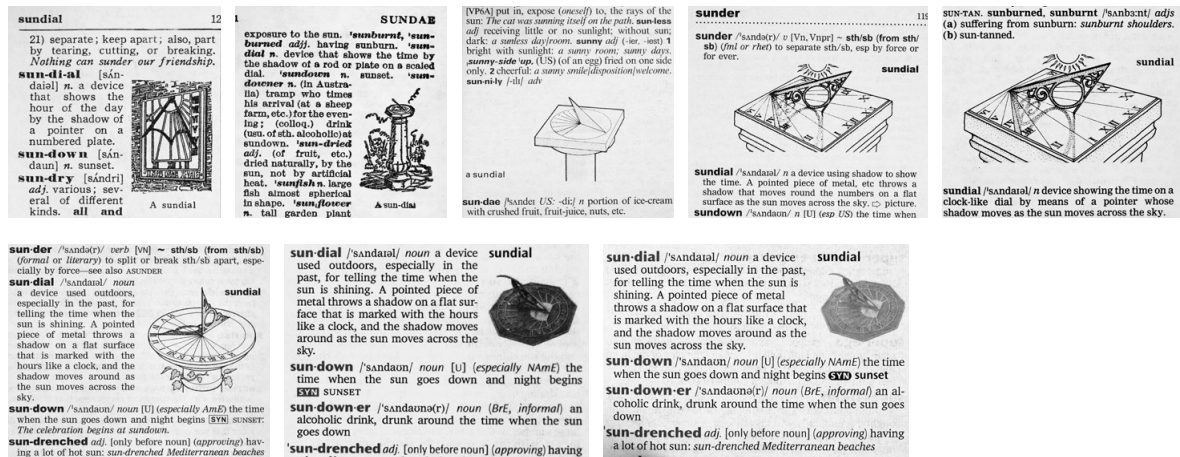


Figure 28. Illustrations for *sundial* in successive editions of *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (50%).

remain illustrating a single word; some twenty-nine entries in the letter S are illustrated, but almost all are disambiguations or taxonomies. The sole 'single object' illustration in the letter S is the old stalwart *sundial*, possibly included for sentimental reasons, for it has appeared in all eight editions from 1942 to 2010 (figure 28).



Figure 29. *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2002), illustrations for *fire* and *catch* (60%).

The *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2002) adopted an approach very similar to the sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*: it has a section of glossy, full-page colour taxonomies in a hyper-realist style (again with very similar topics and content, but the lack of colour edge-strip or bleed means that the section is not as visible to the casual browser as Oxford's or Longman's), and a number of in-entry illustrations. These make greater use of tints and shading, and of the second colour (red) used throughout the dictionary. Some are taxonomies (*chair*) or are synoptic (*body*), some disambiguate senses and words (a single illustration group shows *burn*, *light*, and *set fire to*), and some show the sequences of some actions (*catch* and *dodge*) (figure 29). A cartoon-like drawing style is used more freely for these than in other dictionaries. A tiny residue of single-object illustrations remains (for example *bonsai* and *crutch*). The *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995) used the unusual technique of white line on black illustrations, causing problems with the reproduction of fine detail, and leading to the disconcerting presentation of 'white goods' as black at *cleaning* (figure 30).

### Reinforcing dictionary content

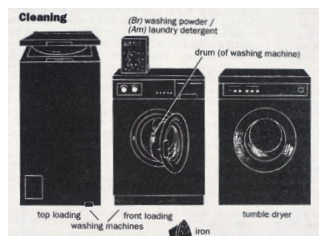


Figure 30. *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), illustration for *cleaning* (55%).

The leading UK English language dictionaries that are contemporary with these learners' dictionaries (*Collins English Dictionary*, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, and the *New Penguin English Dictionary*) remain resolutely unillustrated. Illustration can therefore be seen as reserved for semi-encyclopedic dictionaries such as the *Encarta* series, children's dictionaries and learners' dictionaries. Children's dictionaries have their own market requirements for a complex mix of graphic elements, dictated by teachers' expectations and the need to support the classroom teaching of English. Similarly, learners' dictionaries have recently developed an approach to illustrations that allows them to have a stronger pedagogic

function, so that they can help the reader by expanding vocabulary, reinforcing the connections between words, and embodying semantic networks. The use of colour illustrations, particularly when concentrated in sections printed on coated paper, certainly provides a marketing opportunity to promote the attractiveness and up-to-dateness of the dictionary, but the illustrations still function as reinforcements for the verbal content of the dictionary. In moving away from the discrete, single-object, in-entry illustration that was commonplace from the 1650s to the 1970s, learners' dictionaries have ensured that in-entry illustrations disambiguate as well as depict, have offered new approaches to composite illustrations, and have clearly demonstrated that illustrations can help dictionaries define actions, moods, emotions, and processes as well as objects.

### Acknowledgements

Figures 1 and 2 are reproduced from the online and facsimile editions respectively (listed below). Figures 3 and 8 are reproduced from books in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (figure 3: 302 f. 42; figure 8: 30254 d. 19). Figure 2 was photographed by Paul Lucas in the *Oxford English Dictionary* library with the permission of the *OED* librarian. All other photography by Laura Bennetto.

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