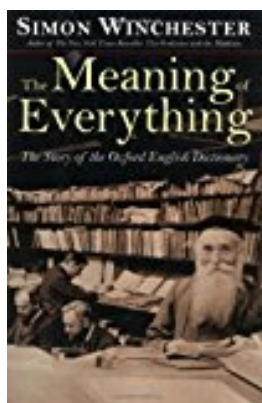


[PDF] The Meaning Of Everything: The Story Of The Oxford English Dictionary

SIMON WINCHESTER - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly With his usual winning blend of scholarship and accessible, skillfully paced narrative, Winchester (Krakatoa) returns to the subject of his first bestseller, *The Professor and the Madman*, to tell the eventful, personality-filled history of the definitive English dictionary. He emphasizes that the OED project began in 1857 as an attempt to correct the deficiencies of existing dictionaries, such as Dr. Samuel Johnson's. Winchester opens with an entertaining and

informative examination of the development of the English language and pre-OED efforts. The originators of the OED thought the project would take perhaps a decade; it actually took 71 years, and Winchester explores why. An early editor, Frederick Furnivall, was completely disorganized (one sack of paperwork he shipped to his successor, James Murray, contained a family of mice). Murray in turn faced obstacles from Oxford University Press, which initially wanted to cut costs at the expense of quality. Winchester stresses the immensity and difficulties of the project, which required hundreds of volunteer readers and assistants (including J.R.R. Tolkien) to create and organize millions of documents: the word bondmaid was left out of the first edition because its paperwork was lost. Winchester successfully brings readers inside the day-to-day operations of the massive project and shows us the unrelenting passion of people such as Murray and his overworked, underpaid staff who, in the end, succeeded magnificently. Winchester's book will be required reading for word mavens and anyone interested in the history of our marvelous, ever-changing language. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From The story of the making of the *Oxford English Dictionary* has been burnished into legend over the years, at least among librarians and linguists. In *The Professor and the Madman* (1998), Winchester examined the strange case of one of the most prolific contributors to the first edition of the OED--one W. C. Minor, an American who sent most of his quotation slips from an insane asylum. Now, Winchester takes on the dictionary's whole history, from the first attempts to document the English language in the seventeenth century, the founding of the Philological Society in Oxford in 1842, and the start of work on the dictionary in 1860; to the completion of the first edition nearly 70 years, 414,825 words, and 1,827,306 illustrative quotations later. Although there is plenty of detail here about the methodology (including the famous pigeon holes stuffed with quotations slips from contributors around the world), the emphasis is on personalities, in particular James Murray, who became the OED's third editor in 1879 and died in 1915, "well into the letter T." The project backers complained loudly about the slow pace over the years, but the scrupulous care taken by Murray and the many others who worked on the OED gave us what is arguably the world's greatest dictionary. Publication of this book coincides with the OED's seventy-fifth anniversary, even as work on the third edition is under way. *Mary Ellen Quinn*

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