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DOST: how we make it and what's in it (1982)[1]

(revised 1994)

Edited by Caroline Macafee, 2015

Editor's note: the original *Dictionaries* article was published at a crisis point in the dictionary's history; it includes a Postscript giving the position at April 1983. The present text incorporates AJA's revisions and additions of 1994, which bring the information up to that date.

A full account of the history of DOST can be found in the 'Preface', vol. XII of DOST.[2] Dareau (2012) discusses in more depth how the editorial philosophy evolved, and see also Dareau and Macleod (2009).

The publication of the final volume of DOST was celebrated with a collection of essays, illustrating the wide range of scholarship that draws upon the dictionary, and inspired by "[f]riendship, collegiality and respect for the tremendous achievement represented by the completion of DOST" (Kay and Mackay eds., 2012: vii).

How to cite this paper (adapt to the desired style): Aitken, A. J. (1982, 2015) '*DOST*: how we make it and what's in it' in †A. J. Aitken, ed. Caroline Macafee, 'Collected Writings on the Scots Language' (2015), [online] Scots Language Centre http://medio.scotslanguage.com/library/document/aitken/DOST_how_we_make_it_and_whats_in_it_(1982) (accessed DATE). Originally published *Dictionaries* 4 (1982), 42–64.

[42] I suppose we could sum the aims of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST) in this way. They are to provide a dictionary entry for every recorded Older Scots word, and each such entry is to display, as far as the existing evidence allows, all of the word's ramifications of form, meaning and collocation, at the same time indicating how these are distributed in time, in place and in genre. This is to be accomplished primarily through the arrangement and presentation of a generous selection of quotations from the original sources, and secondarily by editorial notes and comments pointing out features of the word's form, use or distribution which might not be immediately evident. There have been unevennesses in the thoroughness with which these aims have been attended to in different parts of the dictionary, but for some time we have I suppose been reasonably successful in achieving most of them, as much so as most historical quotation dictionaries of DOST's sort. But there is one kind of distributional information towards which DOST offers only quite crude and

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[1] A paper delivered to the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature (Medieval and Renaissance), University of Stirling, 2–7 July, 1981.

Editor's note: first printed in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature (Medieval and Renaissance)*, edited by Roderick J. Lyall and Felicity Riddy (Stirling and Glasgow, 1981) 33–51; and, in a fuller version, *Dictionaries* 4 (1982), 42–64, from which the present version is revised and updated.

The text has been edited for uniformity of style with other Aitken papers and some bibliographical references have been expanded or added. The original page and note numbers are shown in square brackets. Since digital publication does not suffer the same constraints of space as hard copy, I have laid out the lists of examples more expansively.

[2] Editor's note: hard copy only, not online in full (as of January 2015).

conjectural suggestions: that is, statistical details of distributions, of, say, competing synonyms for a given notion, or competing forms or meanings of a particular lexeme. We do provide suggestions and general indications of some of this, sometimes explicitly in notes remarking that a particular word or form or meaning is common at a certain period or in a certain place or register and uncommon at some other period. But the only dictionaries which offer at all precise and reliable information on this sort of thing are a few modern computer-assisted historical dictionaries, of which DOST is not one. These, then, are the aims, and one deficiency in achieving these aims.

The corpus of texts on which DOST is based is listed in the 'Registers of Titles of Works Quoted' prefaced to the four volumes so far entirely published.[3] The Combined Register published in vol. III in 1963 runs to just over 19 pages and more than doubles the length in pages of the two previous Registers of 1937 and 1951 respectively. This expansion of coverage was my fault. Sir William Craigie's original reading programmes of the 1920s and 1930s included all the most obvious and, one could fairly say, most important [43] sources in print (such as the Scottish Text Society, the publishing clubs, the record publications), as well as some notable literary works and record texts in MS (among them the entire testamentary registers). But when I came along as the young Turk I detected gaps in the regional and topical coverage of the corpus and with the help of a newly enlisted corps of voluntary excerptors set about putting this right by adding both printed and MS works, including, for example, the Fourth Marquess of Bute's publications of Western Scots records, various local records in MS, and manuscript account-books of, among others, skippers and coal-mine managers. One by-product of this was a collection in Edinburgh University Library of photostat and microfilm copies of MS records, mostly local records; another was a substantial body of transcripts of some forty or fifty MS works in the Dictionary's office.[4] My ambition at that time was to have examined all reliable modern printed works containing a substantial body of Older Scots text plus enough manuscript material to complete the geographical and topical spread for at least part of the period. I suppose something approaching this had been achieved by 1964, after which the reading programme was allowed to fall off. In addition to the texts themselves, the contents of something over 120 published and few unpublished glossaries, indexes, philological treatises and editorial commentaries are incorporated in the collections, as well as, from the later 1960s, the computer concordance.[5]

For better or worse, this is the dictionary's corpus. I have estimated that it must amount to substantially more than 200 million words of continuous text. But it is of course far from equalling the total surviving body of all Older Scots text, which must be several times larger than that. The dictionary's actual corpus is only a sample, and only a fractional though we must hope a fairly representative sample, of the total body of surviving Older Scots text, or the very much larger total still of all Older Scots ever written or spoken.

Still, over 200 million words of text is enough to be going on with. Even if we exclude the half of this which consists of examples of a handful of very high frequency words like *and* and *the* and *of* and *he*, this leaves well over 100 million or so word-occurrences for the dictionary's editors to cope with. Some time ago I suggested that the number of examples a historical dictionary editor might reasonably expect to analyse editorially in a year was about

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[3] [Now (1994) seven volumes.]

Editor's note: the final volume, vol. XII, was published in 2002. The earlier 'Registers of Titles' are now replaced by the 'Revised Register of Titles' in vol. XII, and online by the searchable Bibliography.

[4] [1] These are identified by the notation (Transcr.) in the Dictionary's 'Registers of Titles of Works Quoted' of vols. III, IV and V.

[5] [2] For a brief account of the computer archive ('The Older Scottish Textual Archive') see the Preface to vol. IV of the Dictionary (and also to vol. VI).

Editor's note: in hard copy only, not available online.

10,000. Let us assume between three and four times that number for a cursory examination if we were trying to gallop through a collection of 100 million examples. In that case, DOST's present staff of three editors could expect to clear a total collection of 100 million examples in one thousand years.

So you see we have to have some method of reducing the number of examples to be editorially treated to a more manageable number than 100 million or 200 million or anything in the 100 millions. How we do that of course is to have the examples to be studied by the editors *pre-selected* from the corpus. The process of pre-selecting these examples is called *excerption* and the totality of selected examples or excerpts is called the dictionary's *collection*. With the exception of the *Trésor de la Langue Française* all modern historical dictionaries are based on collections numbering from about half a million (for the *Scottish National Dictionary*) to about 12 million (for the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principles* in Poona). Ultimately the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s (OED's) collection was about 5.8 million. I reckon DOST's total collection at around 1.5 million (of which we have, as I will be explaining later, something like 450,000 examples still to go from early in S).

I have time to deal only very briefly with excerption principles (which at the time were rather less clearly formulated than with hindsight I would formulate them now). The broad plan, which was originated and for the most part carried out by Sir William Craigie in the 1920s, was to have a fraction of the corpus – I reckon about 5 million word-tokens in all – excerpted very fully, at *excerption densities*, to use a piece of technical jargon I have invented for this, of between 8 and 50 per cent, so as to yield, I have estimated, about 600,000 examples. The idea was that this part of the corpus – what I have called the *basic corpus* supplying the *basic collection* – would provide an adequate sample of all the commoner uses of the commoner words – especially those in the middle range of frequency of occurrence – so that this kind of example could with impunity be ignored in reading the rest of the corpus. The remainder of the corpus, about 97.5% of the total, or 195 million words, was read very much more selectively, at very much lower excerption densities, and for rarities only, yielding the remaining 900,000 or so examples of the collection.[6]

The instructions which I drew up in 1953 for excerptors for the second main reading programme, asked for rare words, words used in an unusual way, Scotticisms, self-defining examples and words of 'cultural' or antiquarian interest. I do not know what instructions Sir William Craigie issued to his excerptors. Perhaps he simply referred them to Murray's famous three sentence-paragraphs which he issued to his excerptors in 1879 that you will find in the OED Historical Introduction (p. xv).[7] None of us, I suspect, was at that time sufficiently aware of the need to keep the excerption from all but the basic corpus texts highly selective – so as not to accumulate more examples than we would be able editorially to cope with. Certainly I was not. Fortunately the restraint of my excerptors saved me from an impossibly large collection.

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[6] [3] I have given some account of the logistics of assembling a historical dictionary collection of the DOST type in two articles on computers and historical lexicography, 'Historical Dictionaries and the Computer' (1971) and 'Historical Dictionaries, Word Frequency Distributions and the Computer' (1978), particularly the latter. [Also more recently in 'DOST and the Computer: a Hopeless Case?' (1983).]

[7] Editor's note: this reads:

> Make a quotation for *every* word that strikes you as rare, obsolete, old-fashioned, new, peculiar, or used in a peculiar way.
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> Take special note of passages which show or imply that a word is either new or tentative, or needing explanation as obsolete or archaic, and which thus help to fix the date of its introduction or disuse.
>
> Make *as many* quotations *as you can* for ordinary words, especially when they are used significantly, and tend by the context to explain or suggest their own meaning.

Even so, the second reading programme of the 1950s and 1960s must have added something like 2/5 of the dictionary's total collection. I believe the results, evident in vol. III of the Dictionary, including its Supplement, onwards, have amply justified themselves academically. But some might say that in making an already massive task so much more massive I was guilty of a failure of logistics. The result was to extend the task to the limit of the rather meagre resources the Scottish community was, and is, able to allot to it. I am sorry to say that I failed to foresee this and simply went for academically more ambitious results. Yet even today this sort of logistic consideration is mostly – I think it is fair to say – ignored in historical lexicography, and I know of several new dictionary projects which seem to be blithely assembling collections so massive (and much more massive than those of DOST) that I wonder how they will raise the resources to edit them.[8]

Whatever blame may attach to me for this, nothing but praise is deserved by the 80 or so volunteers and one professional excerptor who between them provided the dictionary's collection of quotation examples, from the most generous and patriotic motives. I have no time unfortunately to discuss the remarkable feats achieved by some of the excerptors.[9] I will mention three names, to stand for the twenty or so most diligent and persistent excerptors. The professional was Miss I. B. Hutchen who between 1921 and 1939 excerpted over 500 printed and several hundred manuscript volumes. Hers is perhaps the most frequent hand-writing on the slips, though she was a quite discriminating and selective excerptor. Miss Hutchen was Sir William Craigie's sister-in-law. His sister, Miss Mary Craigie, was one of the principal collectors of the basic collection, and read a dozen or so volumes at a very high excerption density. However, we did not only rely on female relatives of the editors – my wife also did some excerpting and Lady Craigie helped also. Most members of the editorial staff have done some spare-time excerpting. And to represent the devoted people unrelated to editors who achieved the bulk of the work, I will mention only Miss Mary Taylor, who is still at work after 25 years, during which time she has read over 160 mostly large volumes.[10] Although Miss Taylor is also very discriminating, I suppose she has contributed well over 60,000 quotations to the collection. Outstanding as Miss Taylor's contribution has been, if you study the Dictionary's Prefaces[11] you will see that there are others in the same league, including several who specialized in excerpting and/or transcribing works in manuscript, most notable among the latter the late Professor M. L. Anderson and the late Mr. J. P. Dawson.

Managing a team of volunteer excerptors proved to be something of an art. The excerptors naturally varied in their reliability and perceptiveness and in the kind of examples they tended to pick up. So one had to consider which book was most suitable to which excerptor and sometimes have the same book read by two people whose styles complemented each other. Unhappily neither Sir William Craigie nor I were able to spare the time from editing to vet the excerption that in an ideal world we should have. Indeed, in an ideal world we would not have had to depend mainly for the excerpting on unpaid volunteers at all, but rather on a team of professional academics working in the dictionary's office over a long spell of years, like most recent lexicographical projects on a similar scale. This would have had advantages in a slightly more complete collection – one with slightly fewer oversights of unusual uses of common words – and one lacking the miscopyings of various sorts of which some of our excerptors are occasionally guilty. But I believe we do succeed in meeting and overcoming these hazards by various means at the editing stage, at only a small fraction of the cost of professional excerpting. And of course in an ideal world the whole collection would have

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[8] Editor's note: this paragraph cancelled in edited copy.

[9] Editor's note: this sentence cancelled in edited copy.

[10] [Miss Taylor finally ceased her work for the Dictionary in 1985, after 32 years. - AJA]

[11] Editor's note: in hard copy only – the original prefaces are not available online.

been assembled before any editing began, rather than, as in our case, gradually built up as the editing proceeded.

The mechanics of collecting for and editing DOST are of course in the main the traditional method inherited immediately from the OED but in fact going back at least as far as Johnson in British lexicography and much further on the Continent. What our collectors were asked to do was to read through the texts allotted to them, selecting examples of word-use according to the criteria they had been asked to apply, and then copy the example as a quotation with its keyword and reference onto a dictionary slip (a piece of paper 6 in. by 4 in. in our case). The bundles of slips were then delivered to the dictionary office and in due course sorted and merged into alphabetic sequence of the keywords so that all the examples of the same keyword came out together. The bundles of each word then go to the dictionary editors for analysis. Some, though far from all, modern historical dictionary projects are operating a somewhat different mechanics, with a computer rather than people doing the collecting and sorting, but in every case it is still bundles of paper slips which the editors treat at the editorial stage.[12]

It would be possible to say a great deal more about the theoretical and practical problems involved in assembling the dictionary's collection and about the various processes which come after the editing.[13]

I will take space to describe only one of these, since it is a rather crucial and unusual feature of the Dictionary's procedure. From what I said earlier you may reasonably have assumed that, since each quotation-example goes onto a paper slip, the number of slips and the number of examples is the same. This is not so, and it because it is not so that the figures I gave above are necessarily only quite approximate. On the one hand, there are, for various reasons, many duplicate slips. On the other, many quotations contain useful examples of more than one keyword. An example is the following quotation from a MS testament of 1611:

> The said James to enter hame to the said George Flemminge in houshald.

In this quotation the examples of both *hame* and *houshald* are of interest, that of *hame* especially so, since this is by 50 years the earliest noted occurrence of this application of this word.

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[12] [This was true in 1981, when this paper was first submitted. - AJA]

[13] [4] These and other aspects of the work of the Dictionary (such as the general history of the project, details of its excerption methods, and the principles of sense-analysis employed) I have dealt with more fully in the following writings:

'Completing the Record of Scots' (1964) (an account of the two large Scottish dictionaries compared with their chief predecessors);

'Sense analysis for a historical dictionary' (1973a, 2015);

'Definitions and citations in a period dictionary' (1973b);

'Le dictionnaire d'ancien écossais: aperçu de son histoire' (1973c);

'Textual problems and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*' (1977, 2015);

'On some deficiencies in our Scottish dictionaries' (1980) (on principles and practice of excerption for DOST and smaller dictionaries, and inadequacies in past practice for DOST, remediable however only at unacceptable cost).

In addition, Meier (1969) on entry-division, sense analysis and definition, in historical dictionaries of English, is principally devoted to DOST. Two important reviews are those by Meier (1962) and Fenton (1966).

For details of the Dictionary's history, see also the Prefaces to the several published volumes.

Editor's note: see also the 'History of DOST' in vol. XII, abbreviated online under 'About DSL > The source dictionaries'.

There are two alternative methods one may adopt with multiple-keyword quotations of this sort. One is to make a separate copy of the slip for each of the wanted keywords. The other is to make do with a single slip and once it has been used for the first keyword – say *hame* – it is taken out and inserted in the material for the next keyword – say *househald.* This is the procedure we call in the dictionary 'sending on'. Sir William Craigie chose the second of these options, that is, the 'sending on' option. Both I and in due course J. A. C. Stevenson have always regarded this as a great nuisance and it was in an attempt to alleviate what I saw as some of its troublesome effects that I introduced the computer concordance to the system in the late 1960s. Its harmful effects are to introduce an additional procedure into the system which we could well do without. It also ensures that when an article is first edited by one editor, some of the material for it will be unavailable because it is locked up in the material being edited by another editor or simply not yet sent on from earlier edited material. This slows down the finalisation of the copy.

But there is consolation. The fact that we have to look again at all used slips for 'sending on' gives the editors a further chance of picking up useful examples which the original excerptor may have overlooked and which are less likely to be noted in the course of editing (when one's attention is all on the keyword) than in the subsequent scrutiny for 'sending on'. Indeed, the instance of *hame* and *houshald* cited above was not at first supplied as a multiple-keyword slip, for the original excerptor, Miss Hutchen, had failed to spot the interest of *hame* and taken the quotation only for *houshald.* It was in the course of sending on that the *hame* example was spotted, though unfortunately only in time for the Supplement, not the main Dictionary. This drawback does not however apply when, as in most cases, the keywords of the sent on example(s) lie further ahead in the alphabet than the keyword of the example originally selected.

So the net effect of this procedure is to slow down the editing to a limited but perceptible extent, but with some compensating gain in completeness.

What converts the bundle of quotation material on paper slips for each word from raw data into the finished dictionary entry is the process of editorial analysis. The bundles of slips for the different words which the editor has to analyse of course vary in size from those consisting of a single example up to massive bundles like that for *Lord* which amounted to around 4000 examples, stood 14 inches high, took nearly 3 months to edit and produced an entry 16 pages long. About a quarter of all the entries, I suppose, run to 20 or more examples. It is these bigger articles which set the complex problems of analysis and so take up more than their proportionate share of editorial time.

Though there have been exceptions to this, historical dictionaries like DOST normally analyse in the first instance by what the editor perceives as differences of meaning or function, so as to yield what we call the different senses of the word within the entry. There are other possible criteria for primary analysis which would be far less taxing for the dictionary editor to apply, but also far less helpful to the user of the dictionary – analysis by topic under discussion in the text from which the quotation is taken, for instance.

In practice what the editor does is to divide his large bundle of slips into a number of smaller sense-bundles each of which he perceives as sharing the same meaning or function. This sub-grouping follows on a study of both the immediate and the wider contexts of the keyword in each example; in effect it is a grouping by common semantic or functional context. While the editor is doing this he is also excogitating a verbal definition for each sense-bundle, as exact as possible, neither too general nor too specific. This definition must discriminate the bundle of examples it defines from all other bundles. It may also be worded so as to indicate what the editor perceives as semantic connections or derivational links between senses.

The purpose of this part of the analysis is of course far more than simply to provide translation equivalents for each of the word's senses. It should achieve two things: to expose the word's semantic map; and to make clear the distributions of each of the senses in the time and place and in any other dimension in which its distribution is restricted – the essential business indeed, of a historical dictionary. To exemplify the first of these requirements: we all know that the word *lug* means the ear of a person or animal. It turned out that nearly all of our 200-odd examples of this in DOST refer to an appendage which could be cut off, nicked, pulled or boxed, but only after 1581 and then rarely is the reference directed to the organ of hearing. Is the semantic area encompassed by the Older Scots word *lum* co-extensive with that of modern English 'chimney': does it include all of 'chimney piece', 'flue', 'chimney stack', 'chimney top', or only some of these? Only a careful analysis and display of the quotations will determine this. The application-ranges of the noun or the verb *mind,* the noun *monster,* the noun *nois* and the verb to *nod,* are not quite the same in Older Scots as in Modern English; and the sense-range of Older Scots *month*, the word for, roughly, 'mountain', is not identical with that of *mountain*.

Part of our job is to provide the chronological limits of recorded evidence not only for the individual senses but indeed for every kind of detail included in the dictionary. So the dictionary contains thousands of antedatings of Scottish phenomena over the OED, partly perhaps because we still lack an Early Modern English Dictionary but partly also because Scots did in fact come first in lots of individual items and details. For example, it is possible to assemble a large number of Latin-derived words in which DOST antedates OED and for some of these this is certainly because Scots anticipated English in borrowing them, including such familiar words as *commiseration, emendation, immediate, intricate, liquidate, location, narrative, occult, occur* and the adjective and noun *pagan.* Another form of antedating which DOST regularly provides is pre-literary occurrences of words in early place- and personal names and vernacular phrases in the early Latin documents: so, for example, to confine ourselves to personal names only, there is *Johannes Barbour* in the second half of the 14th century or *Henry Thekar* (the roof-builder) or *Alexander Wytleyir* (lit. fault-finder), who was burgh-procurator of Aberdeen in 1317, or *John out with the swerd,* or *John pak be the fire.*

We have also similarly to attend to the geographical distribution of every detail and to take note ourselves and if necessary point out to the readers those words, applications or forms which show signs of localisation. Every fascicle contains a number of these, practically none of which have been pointed out anywhere before, for example:

kirkmaister, which had one general Scots meaning, and also a meaning special to Kirkcudbright and another special to Edinburgh and Glasgow;

or *lokman* (a hangman) which occurs only in the South and in Orkney (other districts had their own words for this officer: he was the *marschal* in Elgin and the *staffman* in Stirling);

or the word *muremont* which appears in the Sheriffhall Colliery Records for the 1670s, and then reappears a century later, as *mairmint,* in connection with the same colliery;

or, among a number of instances with literary connections, there is *cumling* (an incomer), found only in Perth and in the Peter legend in the Scottish Saints' Legends;

lowand-ill the name of a disease of cattle, in Haddington and in the writings of John Knox;

and *inspreth* furnishings of a house (west from Linlithgow and in Ninian Winʒet, Robert Sempill and Zachary Boyd).

And there are also plenty of localised forms, like the form *maik* beside *mak* for that verb, and *mait* beside *mete* for that noun.

And of course there are those words and forms which are restricted to particular literary registers or play a special part in verse of various modes, and we try to take note of these as well – like the different stylistic distributions of

lyte and *litill,*

morow and *morn,*

pas and *gang,*

mouth and *mow* (the form *mow*, incidentally, is unrecorded in a dictionary before DOST),

and you will no doubt think of others. And of course there are other words with special restrictions of currency, for example, promotional trade-names for types of cloth or dye, such as *lillikins, nane so prettie* and *pleismadame.* Many words have their special group of proverbs, so that the dictionary provides by far the largest collection of Older Scots proverbs, like the ten or so for the noun *mete* (food), such as 'Better bellie burst nor gude meit spilt' or 'I have my meate and my mense baith', which is what you say when you invite someone and he can't come, with the result that you keep your food yet also get the *mense* (or credit) of hospitality.

Though the primary analysis is almost always by sense, on DOST we do not of course limit ourselves to this level of subdivision. Many senses of common words prove to favour particular collocations – turns of phrase, formulae, syntactical arrangements favoured by that sense of that word. If there are many examples to treat, we commonly display these as a series of separate numbered paragraphs within the main sense-division, just as we do also with the several orthographic and morphological forms of the word. DOST is almost unique, among dictionaries of English at least, in this rather detailed descriptive feature.

Among the many puzzles and problems which constantly confront us as we edit are some inherent in the nature of Older Scots handwriting or Older Scots spelling. There is the case of the doublets *mark* and *merk, market* and *mercat,* since many of the examples of these are written *m* followed by the abbreviation which can mean either *ar* or *er*: you will be able to think of lots of parallel cases, for example, *parson* and *person.* In Older Scots manuscripts, *c* and *t* are I believe commonly indistinguishable: so what about the word *practik* or *prattik*? Is not the form *Mounday* often merely due to minim-miscounting for the more regular *Monunday?* And is *lowabill* to be counted as an example of *lovabill* (from the verb *love* from OE *lofian* to praise) or of *louabill* (from the Old French verb *louer* to praise)? There are scores of other examples of this sort of thing, as well as cases of egregious but frequent editorial mistranscription, such as the several cases of editorial *linitstane* for *lunt-staue* (a staff for holding a *lunt,* or match for a gun), or *inuentioun* for *munitioun. How* we deal with such things you can see by looking up the relevant entries.

These more or less linguistic considerations are our main business as editors of DOST. But since they are achieved by a display of quotations from the original texts we cannot but also provide incidentally, through the quotations, information about the things or concepts denoted by the words treated. Since we treat the entire vocabulary, it follows that this encompasses every aspect of Older Scots life in the dictionary's period. Since the letter H we have tried to make our definitions of precise terms of whatever specialty as accurate as possible and have added a large number of descriptive notes to technical terms of this sort. Naturally this often requires research in secondary literature, and one of the abilities we have to acquire is that of applying a guillotine to the temptation to prolong this secondary research. Much of the results of all this is, among dictionaries, unique to DOST. Fascicle 24, for

example, explains and illustrates what a *maiden* in a witches' coven was, and also shows incidentally that Morton's *maiden* (another sort of maiden) long pre-dated Morton's regency, and the same fascicle similarly describes, inter alia, *mair of fee,* various special uses of *maister*, *magistrand*, a *mantill* of furs, the *mark Scots*, the numerous terms with *mark-* as the first element, the Earl *Marschal* and the Queen's *Mary's*. The entry *ortographie* is revealing as to attitudes to good and bad spelling. The ultimate destiny of Flatterie in Lyndsay's *Satire* is paralleled in a quotation from one of our 33 quotations for *lokman* (hangman), from the Haddington Burgh Records for 1545.

Leaving aside the sporadic need to undertake short bursts of secondary research, you can see that attending to all these details involves the editors in repeated readings of all the quotation-examples for each word: one or two readings through to decide on the broad lay-out of the entry, another to allocate the examples to the individual senses, maybe another or others for subdivision within senses and to ensure that all the nuances and stock collocations are displayed, another to check definitions against examples for fit and substitutability, at least one other to decide which examples and references to print and which to leave out, but this last one often involves comparing back and forth weighing one quotation against another for inclusion or rejection. So it is little wonder that the output norm for the individual editor of a dictionary of this sort is only around 10,000 to 15,000 examples per annum, as I mentioned earlier.

There are some other tasks and considerations I have not yet mentioned, which also of course take time. One is the derivation. Mostly this merely entails assembling details from OED and other previous dictionaries and setting these out in summary form. But we also of course make new etymological discoveries and aperçus, and every fascicle contains a number of these. Among what is now quite a substantial number of my own favourites in recent fascicles include *mair* (sheriff-officer), *mudgeoun* (a grimace), *nefare* (a barter), and *outhall* (udal tenure); and two earlier ones were *jougis* (the iron collar as a punishment) and *jockteleg* (claspknife). And though we almost never give an explicit phonetic rendering for each word, since this would entail speculative reconstruction, we commonly provide the spelling and rhyme-evidence which would enable a knowledgeable reader to work out the pronunciation, and sometimes reinforce this with an elucidatory note: for example, for the various words spelled <mede> or <mete>, or for the only recorded rhyme for *methe* /miːð/ (a boundary marker), which confirms that pronunciation rather than the other possibility, */miːθ/. Similarly we have notes on the verse-evidence for the stress-patterns of many words such as the doublets *mainer* and *manére,* or the adjective *mischévous.*

Of course there is no point in any of this unless we substantially improve on our predecessors as dictionaries of Older Scots, much the most important of which is of course the OED. Every one of the considerations I have been mentioning and the points made about the examples I have been giving are exclusive to the DOST. There are a very substantial number of whole entries which appear for the first time in DOST. There are 25 such words and important compounds in the first 40 pages of L, 17 such in the first 60 pages of O, including about 10 represented by upwards of 20 quotations each, like *odman*, *ofhent*, *ogang*, *ogeour*, others again quite rare, like *octolapse* – a person's eighth occasion of falling into the sin of fornication. But of course far more of our entries are not exclusive to us in this way but shared with OED and also naturally Jamieson (1808, 1825). But for these shared items we commonly dispose of and display dozens or scores of examples to a mere one or two in our predecessors. This enables us to display all the kinds of information I have been illustrating – including distributions – which they can not. So, for example, OED has no record at all of *mow* (mouth) or of a number of the other words I mentioned, it has no Older Scots examples of *morow* though twelve of *morn,* it has three Older Scots examples to our 34 of *kirkmaister,* it has five examples of *lokman* (hangman) to our 33, it has six examples of *month* (mountain)

to our 56, and so on through every one of the individual words I instanced. It follows that it is simply impossible for the OED either to identify or to display the kinds of detail of application or distribution for these words that DOST can. This abundance of quotation examples is what enables us to achieve the improvements in the record of Older Scots I have been illustrating, and also to give full and detailed analyses of long and complex words such as the modal verb *may* or the negative adjective *na*.

That is how we have been making DOST and what is now in it.[14] But *tempora mutantur et nos in illis*. The bulk of the financial provision to the Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council which manages the dictionary has for some time come chiefly from six of the Scottish Universities, though the Carnegie Trust makes an annual grant of £1000 and for some years now the British Academy has been granting £5000 each year.

The financial needs of DOST at present are of the order of £50,000 per annum. By world standards, if one compares the budgets of similar enterprises elsewhere – let us say, the *Middle English Dictionary* which has a budget for its staff of 17 at least four times as large as ours for a staff of five, or the *Trésor de la Langue Française,* the budget of which, for its staff of over 160, must be about 40 times as large as ours, or modester operations, like the *Dictionary of Old English* with a staff of eight to our five, or enterprises like the Modern Icelandic Historical Dictionary, which are still only at the collecting stage and yet have staffs as large as ours – by comparison with these DOST's financial provision is very small, in fact financially it is right at the bottom of the league. Nevertheless, as we all know, the Universities are being subjected to a succession of reductions in their incomes and the Dictionary is naturally, and you may feel properly, not immune to the effects of this. It appears that we cannot count on University support beyond 1988, and the Universities also hope to reduce their support to us even before then, in particular by not replacing Jim Stevenson and myself when we retire – which we are both due to do between now and 1988. The Joint Council will shortly be appealing both to the Universities and to trusts and perhaps also to industry for the funds we will need to complete the work. But the Joint Council I think feels that these appeals could not hope to achieve more than provide the means to maintain our present editorial strength, if that.

Troubles come not single spies. On the publication side, parts 30 and 31 which take us to *Pn* are held up in proof by a dispute between the publisher, The University of Chicago Press, and the printer, Oxford University Press, over the cost of printing these fascicles. I have no doubt that one way or another this problem will be overcome, but not alas overnight. Meantime we are asking the National Library of Scotland to accept a proof copy of parts 30 and 31 to be available for consultation.

One consequence of the publication shake-up is that we will certainly have to look to cheaper methods of printing the Dictionary than the present hot metal method. I rather expect (and hope) that the outcome will be some form of computerised typesetting.[15] But I should say that the suggestion has been made – and no doubt this would be much cheaper to produce and for purchasers to buy – of printing the Dictionary on microfiche.

At present the Dictionary has three copy-producing editors, which I reckon equals what has been about the average since 1954 (for comparison the *Dictionary of Old English* has five, the *Middle English Dictionary* formerly five or six, now about twelve) Though we have printed, in the shape of the suspended Parts 30 and 31, only to *Pn,* we have at least eight more fascicles in an advanced state of preparation, taking us to *Sa*. That, however, leaves to clear,

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[14] Editor's note: MS notes alongside AJA's edited copy indicate that he meant to replace the following account of the 1980–81 crisis with a somewhat shorter version, which was to be integrated with and partly replace the Appendix. I have let the fuller and more personal version stand.

[15] Editor's note: for an account of the completion of the dictionary, see 'History of DOST' in vol. XII, abbreviated online under 'About DSL > The source dictionaries'.

from S to Z, the equivalent of 4700[16] pages of OED – between ¼ and ⅓ of the whole of OED – or some 450,000 examples in our collection. If you have attended to my earlier remarks about output rates, you will see that this equals some 45 'lexicographer-years' by our present methods. So if all three of the present editors were able to continue we might just about complete the job in 15 years from 1982, if all went well. But, as I have indicated, it is certain that Jim Stevenson and I will not continue so long, and, even if we are replaced, our successors will naturally take time to work up to a similar pace, and so are bound to take longer.

I ought at this point to bare my soul and confess my own total responsibility, as a bad prophet and a compulsive perfectionist, for this situation. Of course, the editor of a dictionary like DOST spends his life in a cleft stick – between the need to maintain what he considers adequate academic standards and his paymasters' concern for speed and economy. The Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council is not to blame, however, for they have throughout left the devising and implementation of editorial policies entirely to the Editor or, as we now are, Editors.

Recriminations apart, we now have to confront this dilemma. Do we aim to continue a prolonged and no doubt reluctantly supported effort to complete the last third of the Dictionary according to its present method, when at best this is likely to take several decades more on any level of support we are likely to obtain? If we try to hold on in this way we risk discouraging any potential backers with apparently excessive and endless demands at this time of despair. Or must we sell the pass and attempt to complete the dictionary by some speedier and cheaper method?

When I first delivered a shorter version of this paper at a conference in July 1981, I had come round to the view, as had Jim Stevenson, that we ought to aim to get what I admit would be a somewhat makeshift completed dictionary to scholars of this generation, leaving it to some future generation to complete their own better dictionary, if they so decide, rather than hold out stubbornly, and it must seem to some unrealistically, for a more perfect work which would seem to take forever. I felt there was a strong chance that the latter course would lose all support, but there was some chance of retaining enough backing to complete the work in a speedier, makeshift way.

So, early in 1981, we devised a method for rapidly completing the dictionary, much less demanding than the one I have described in this paper. We call this the OED-Dependent Method (the present method we call the Autonomous Method). What the Dependent Method entailed was that we accept OED's sense-analysis and definitions as given and simply assign our quotations as best we can to their places in the OED scheme, providing our own definitions only for those additional words and applications which we cannot fit into the OED scheme. This would save several studyings of the material – those to determine the lay-out of the entry, the one to check the accuracy of the definitions and the one to check that all nuances and collocations are adequately displayed, because when we were in any doubt we would simply include the quotation. And we proposed to offer no etymological note and to undertake no research to ensure the precision of definitions or to provide encyclopedic notes and comments beyond those already in OED. But we proposed to continue to provide exemplifications, at least as copious as now of all words, senses (according to OED's analysis), forms and collocations, with all their distributions. So a good deal of what we now offer would still appear. Indeed, many entries would lose little or nothing over and against the method.

But there would certainly be losses in virtually all the entries for frequently recorded words, say those for which we have hundreds rather than dozens of quotations. This is

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[16] Editor's note: corrected on the edited copy from 470.

because we would simply accept the OED's sometimes imprecise definitions and its often incomplete or otherwise inadequate sense-analysis. If we consider some of the entries I have been mentioning, using this method, a fair number of the detailed applications of *lord* would not be exposed, nor would the various specific references of *lum,* and the regionalisms of sense of *kirkmaister* might well be overlooked. In our trial run of this method one of the entries tested was *pak* noun. Using the Dependent Method a second homonym, of separate derivation and special application, got subsumed in one sense of the first homonym – in effect, it was totally lost except as some examples mingled with those of the first homonym. Similarly, by the Dependent Method, the several different sorts *of markland* and *pennyland* would all be mixed up together, as they are, very summarily, in OED, and would entirely lack their present full and precise definitions and accompanying encyclopedic notes. I estimate that at least 16 important entries in the section *ma* of the Dictionary would suffer similar losses, such as the noun *maister*, the noun *mark* (the unit of weight), or the verb *may.* Also by this method we would no longer attend to details of derivation and pronunciation, such as I illustrated, and palaeographic and orthographic puzzles would simply be ignored, as they are in OED. Nevertheless, most of the quotations on which a full sense-analysis could have been based would be given, albeit in more miscellaneous groupings, and we would, within the limits of the OED's analysis, subdivide by form and collocation as now and indicate the distributional limits of these as well as any stylistic restrictions of distribution which were evident. And any examples that could not be forced into the OED's mould would be presented and defined separately. So most of the data would still appear. And any complete words not in OED would get the same full treatment as they now do. The losses would be virtually confined to the larger and more complex entries and even there they would be far from irremediable, since the data would still be presented.

This method was far less demanding and far quicker than the one we had been using. We reckoned we could edit by it at least two and a half times faster than by the old method. So the three editors could, if all were spared, clear the rest of the alphabet in this way certainly before, probably well before, the end of the 1980s.

When I delivered this paper in 1981 the Joint Council and the two Editors were strongly in favour of adopting this method for the remainder of the dictionary from early in the letter S. However, the proposal to adopt the Dependent Method has been condemned by virtually every interested scholar who knows of it – including almost everyone who attended the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance (1981) where this paper was first delivered, and several other scholars of great distinction. It seems that the Joint Council and the Editors must therefore reconsider their decision. At the time of writing I do not know what the final decision is likely to be, between the three options which seem to be on offer – to continue with the present method so that completion of the dictionary must take a large amount of effort (and time) still, to aim for a speedy conclusion by the Dependent Method, leaving it to a future generation to complete the work in a less imperfect way, or to abandon the project altogether in the hope of resumption in better times in the future.

APPENDIX

The following statement of the history and administration of the Dictionary, taken from a leaflet prepared for the conference at which the paper was given, is perhaps worth appending here, since these matters are only alluded to in the paper itself.[17]

***A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* History (Editorial)**

The history of the enterprise goes back at least to January, 1915, when Dr (as he then was) William Craigie announced to William Grant in a private letter his intention of tackling an Older Scottish dictionary after the *New English Dictionary*[18] (of which Craigie was then an Editor) was finished. Craigie's first public declaration of this intention was given in the course of his historic communication of 4 April 1919 to the Philological Society, when he included "a proper dictionary of the Older Scottish", to be edited by himself, among the "new dictionary schemes" which he put forward to the Society. By this time he already had several volunteer excerptors at work toward the collection of quotations. In 1921 he was able to appoint his first paid assistant, Miss Isabella Hutchen, who continued to work as excerptor and organiser of others' excerpting, till 1945.

With the assistance of Mr George Watson and Mr Otto Schmidt, Craigie began editing from the collections as far as then available in the winter of 1925–26, in Chicago, where he then was as Professor of English and Editor of the *Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles.* Thereafter editorial work proceeded alongside the work of collection down to the time of the Second World War, when printing and shortly afterwards editing had to be suspended for the duration; this followed the appearance of Part IX, near the end of D. Following the appearance of Part X in 1946, Craigie, now in his eightieth year, worked on for two years unassisted in the house in Oxfordshire to which he had retired in 1936. In the autumn of 1948 A. J. Aitken, then aged 27, became his assistant and in the following six years the main responsibility for the work was gradually transferred to Aitken. Sir William Craigie, now 86, finally ceased editing in 1954. He died in 1957.

In 1952 and 1955, Craigie handed over to the University of Edinburgh the entire body of quotation slips he had assembled (amounting to some 500,000 of these for the letters J to Z), along with a valuable library of between 400 and 500 Older Scottish books; these are still in daily use in the Dictionary's present premises within Edinburgh University. In 1952 came the setting up of the Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council, which had the task of overseeing and administering the work of the two Scots Dictionaries, the DOST and the SND (see further below). In 1955 the Carnegie Trust began making the Joint Council an annual grant of £5000, thus enabling the Council to build up a small staff of editorial assistants to the Editors of both the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and the *Scottish National Dictionary.* Another important event of the 1950s was the launching by A. J. Aitken of a second major excerpting programme to make good the gaps in the original collections which had by then become apparent. For the details of this and the other matters mentioned the reader is referred to the Preface to vol. III of the Dictionary.[19] The 1960s saw the establishment, originally by A. J. Aitken and Paul Bratley, of the Older Scottish Textual Archive [OSTA] of computer-readable texts (the equivalent of some sixteen printed volumes of works very frequently quoted in the Dictionary), which has made possible the partial elimination of a weakness in the

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[17] Editor's note: this paragraph cancelled in AJA's edited copy.

[18] Editor's note: subsequently known as *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

[19] Editor's note: see also the 'History of DOST' in vol. XII, abbreviated online under 'About DSL > The source dictionaries'.

Dictionary's methods and also provides a convenient means of ensuring the completeness of coverage of these texts.[20]

In 1984 a copy of the OSTA was transmitted to the Oxford Text Archive of the Oxford University Computing Service, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6NN, so that it may now be accessed either in Oxford or in Edinburgh.

In 1979 the so far unpublished part of the Dictionary's collection of quotation slips, numbering approximately 600,000, were microfilmed by D.H.M. Microfilm Services Ltd, and the master copy of this microfilm deposited in the National Library of Scotland. During the summers of 1983 and 1984 the backlog of 'sending on' of quotations retained from previously edited material (see above) was cleared by several specially engaged temporary clerical assistants, with the help of a special grant from the Scottish Arts Council. This initiative of J. A. C. Stevenson finally eliminated a weakness in the original methods of the Dictionary which had constituted a brake on editorial progress. [21]

In 1971 A. J. Aitken was appointed part-time Senior Lecturer (subsequently Reader) in English Language in the University of Edinburgh and between then and 1979 was able to devote only part (about half) of his daily working time to the Dictionary. Meantime, however, Dr J. A. C. Stevenson had been appointed Associate Editor in 1970; then full Editor, jointly with Aitken, in 1973. In October 1979 Aitken ceased to be Reader in English Language and returned full-time to the Dictionary. After 1971, those members of the Dictionary's staff who resigned were not replaced, because of the uncertain financial situation of this period. But in 1979 a new full-time Assistant Editor, Mr. H. D. Watson, was appointed. At the time of writing the staff consists of two Editors (Aitken and Stevenson), an Assistant Editor (Watson), a Clerical Assistant (Miss E. Finlayson), and a part-time Clerical Assistant (Mrs. M. Richie).

Present position

So far 29 fascicles are in print and fascicles 30 and 31 are in proof, carrying publication to *Pn*, in some 3800 large quarto pages in double columns, and already including some 300,000 citation examples. Editing is well advanced as far as *Sa*.

Administration and funding

The editorial work of the dictionary is carried on in premises provided by the University of Edinburgh under the supervision of the Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council, with Emeritus Professor Angus McIntosh as its Chairman (as he has been since the Council's foundation in 1952: see above) and Mr. M. J. H. Westcott of the University of Edinburgh as its Secretary. The Council is funded by grants from the Carnegie, the MacRobert and the Russell Trusts, the British Academy, and from time to time by private donors. Shortfall between this income and expenditure has been provided jointly by the Universities represented on the Joint Council, viz. St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee and Stirling, and formerly (before 1976) also Strathclyde. So far the Dictionary has been published by the University of Chicago Press and printed for them by Oxford University Press Printing Division.

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[20] Editor's note: described in Aitken and Bratley (1967).

[21] Editor's note: preceding two paragraphs inserted in edited copy.

Postscript (April 1983)

Since the submission of the above account in October 1981 there have been several important changes in the Dictionary's situation.

In November, 1981, the Scottish Dictionaries Joint Council decided to abandon the experiment in the 'Dependent Method' which had been proceeding for part of the letter S, and to revert to the 'Autonomous Method'. The proposal to adopt the Dependent Method had been unanimously opposed by a panel of distinguished lexicographers and authorities on Older Scots whom the Joint Council invited to report on the matter in September 1981, as well as by almost all other interested scholars.

The uncertainty resulting from the withdrawal on 6 March 1981 of our former publisher, the University of Chicago Press, was finally resolved, following lengthy negotiations with the signing of an Agreement on 3 February 1983 with Aberdeen University Press (a member of the Pergamon group), whereby AUP took over responsibility for the publication and distribution of the Dictionary (both previously published and subsequent parts). Printing of Parts 30 and 31 (to P), which had been suspended since March 1981, has now been resumed, and these parts, which complete volume V, are expected shortly. In the near future we expect delivery of machinery to be provided by AUP for preparation of edited copy for typesetting by modern methods. (It is, however, firmly intended by AUP that the format of the work will be maintained as near as may be to its former style.)

Editing (by the Autonomous Method) is now at *Sa*, *Sc* and *Se*. The as yet unpublished part of P (from *Po*) has been fully press-prepared, and all of Q and R fully edited ready for press-preparation. This amounts to 9 or 10 fascicles, or two full volumes, of P, Q and R, beyond Part 31 (vol. V); so far the edited portion of S amounts to the equivalent of about three fascicles.

As early as 1981, a proposal had been made to launch a body of supporters of the Dictionary, 'Friends of the D.O.S.T.' primarily to assist the Joint Council by raising supplementary funds. While publication was in abeyance, this proposal had to be held in suspense. With the publication issue resolved, this proposal is now being energetically advanced (by Dr. A. Fenton, Director of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, and others), and it is likely that, before this is published, the 'Friends' will have been launched.[22]

It will be seen that prospects have in these several ways greatly improved since October 1981.

Update (1994)

In 1983 A. J. Aitken retired from full-time Editorship of the Dictionary, but continued as part-time joint Editor without administrative responsibility till his final retirement in 1986. In 1983 Dr. J. A. C. Stevenson became administrative head of the Dictionary and received the new title of Editor-in-chief, and Harry D. Watson, Assistant Editor since 1979, was given the title Editor. When Dr. Stevenson retired in 1985 he was succeeded as Editor-in-chief by Mr. Watson. Dr. Stevenson died in 1992.

In 1984 Mrs. M. G. Dareau, a former Assistant Editor of the Dictionary who had left in 1979, rejoined the staff full-time, with the title of Editor from November 1984. At the time of writing (1994) the staff consists of H. D. Watson (Editor-in-chief), M. G. Dareau (Editor), Miss E. M. Finlayson and Miss Lorna Pike (Assistant Editors), and Miss Marjorie McNeill

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[22] Editor's note: a list of the Friends 1984–2001 can be found in Vol XII, hard copy only (not online). Prof. Fenton laboured mightily to secure the funding, and the DOST staff worked at superhuman pitch to complete the Dictionary.

and Heather G. Bree (part-time Assistant Editors[23]). This is rather smaller than the average size of staff since 1955.

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[23] Editor's note: listed in Vol. XII as Editorial Assistants.

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