

Afrilex 2015: Michael Rundell paper: handout

Summary

Editorial policies in dictionaries have evolved over hundreds of years, developing at a time when dictionaries were printed books of finite dimensions. In many cases, styles which we take for granted as “natural” features of dictionaries can be seen merely as expedients designed to compress maximum information into limited space. Lexicography is now in a turbulent phase, as dictionaries gradually migrate from print to digital media. Once a dictionary makes this move, space constraints disappear and all sorts of opportunities present themselves. The question then arises: do we need to revisit and re-evaluate the entire range of editorial policies and conventions in the light of changed circumstances? This talk looks at familiar editorial and presentational conventions, and asks which are no longer appropriate in the digital medium - and what might replace them.

Outline

1. The dictionary landscape in 2015
 2. Dictionaries’ origins in the print medium: its effect on policies and conventions
 3. Current practice: a mixed picture
 4. Going digital: general principles
 5. Going digital: some specific issues
 6. Conclusions: redefining “dictionary”
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