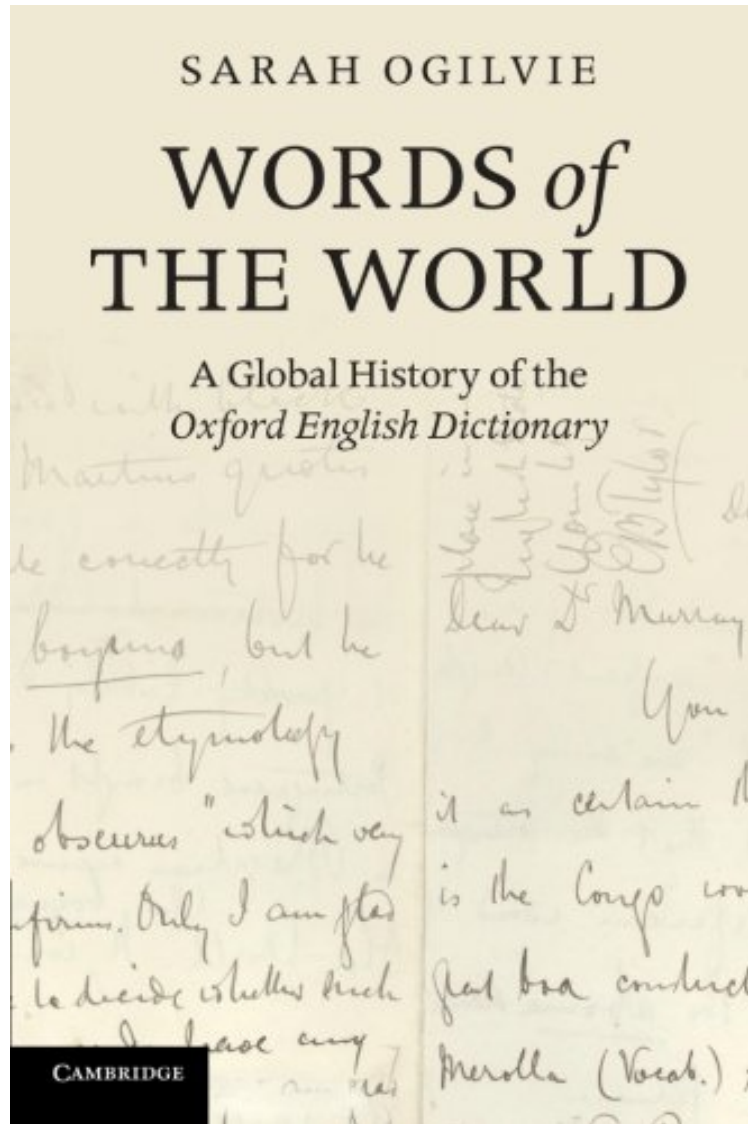


Words of the World: A Global History of the Oxford English Dictionary

Dr Sarah Ogilvie

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Dr Sarah Ogilvie : Words of the World: A Global History of the Oxford English Dictionary before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Words of the World: A Global History of the Oxford English Dictionary:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating look at English's global roots By Addison

Phillips *Words of the World* is a new examination of the Oxford English Dictionary and its policies towards words of foreign origin (as well as words whose origin lies in World Englishes), and particularly an examination of the perception that the OED until recently had limited or excluded words of this sort. In part, it is a personal story, beginning as it does with author Sarah Ogilvie's memoir of joining the Oxford University Press to work on the inclusion of exactly these sorts of words--a remembrance which would be fascinating and interesting as a work in its own right. Here we get observations on the unlikely backgrounds and broad cultural roots of today's lexicographers. But the focus of the book quickly becomes clear and the majority of the work focuses on the personalities, judgements, and editorial choices of the OED's various editors--particularly its early editor, Dr. Murray, who appears befrosted, bearded, and moustachioed like some latter day Merlin or Gandalf, lodged in his Scriptorium, and casting his net across the globe via the Royal Mail. From here, we follow his successors, culminating in Robert Burchfield, whose publicly claimed to have opened the dictionary from the (apparently) mythical grip on the OED by parochial, close-minded, Imperial English grandees who worked to keep the dictionary untrammelled by colonials and savages. By close examination, including case studies and surveys of the original volumes, period criticism and comparative works, and the various supplements, we find that, far from being a puristic and Anglo-Saxon redoubt, the OED has long--and sometimes controversially--championed words from the broad spectrum of English language. As one remarks:--The English Language is the language of Englishmen! Of which Englishmen? Of all Englishmen or of some Englishmen? . . . Does it include the English of Great Britain and the English of America, the English of Australia, and of South Africa, and of those most assertive Englishmen, the Englishmen of India, who live in bungalows, hunt in jungles, wear terai hats or puggaries and pyjamas, write chits instead of letters and eat kedgeree and chutni? Yes! In its most comprehensive sense, and as an object of historical study, it includes all these; they are all forms of English.--Should you read this? If you love words (as I do), you'll be greatly entertained--and also enlightened. It's easy to forget that English is an amalgam of many parts. That it is a living, evolving language. And so it's amusing to see fervent arguments about whether a word like "canoe" is English or to see a long debate about the proper Anglicization of the word "timbre". And, for that matter, we get a look at the fascinating people who made those arguments, from 'one of the great rock-blasting entrepreneurs of Victorian scholarship, the kind of man who if his energies had taken another turn might have covered a continent with railways' to various outcasts, outsiders, and outlanders who brought global English within the canon of nothing less than the weighty OED. In the interest of full-disclosure, this cannot be a completely impartial review: as it happens, Sarah Ogilvie works down the hall, so part of my fun in reading is in imagining her in her early career. While you won't have that advantage, I can say that I quickly forgot about her, though, and was immersed in her story and her unraveling of it. You should too. PS Do buy this in Kindle format. One of the delights I had with this book was looking up the various words inside it on your Kindle's (shorter, non-OED) Oxford dictionaries to see what's there.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A delightful book about the Oxford English Dictionary By Stephen P. Gill Ms. Ogilvie has written a charming and engaging book about the men who conceived and edited the Oxford English Dictionary, perhaps the greatest scholarly work of the English language. The principal character is James Murray, editor of the OED from 1879 to 1915. He was an extraordinarily able Victorian scholar, erudite in twenty-five languages, who would have been welcome in Sherlock Holmes' drawing room. Murray pursued a vision of the dictionary as the repository of the English language as it is spoken anywhere in the world, from the British Isles to America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, India, Africa, and the Middle East. He welcomed new words from foreign lands, such as kayak, algebra, and tomato, believing they enriched and enlarged the language immeasurably. He successfully fought off critics who felt the objective of the dictionary should be to canonize the "pure" language, and exclude barbaric foreign words that were not "proper" English. Ms. Ogilvie is an unlikely champion of Mr. Murray against the calumnies of later editors, particularly Robert Burchfield, editor from 1957 to 1986. Mr. Burchfield has taken the position in public papers and speeches that the early OED was insular, concentrating on the language of the British Isles, and that he was responsible for opening the OED to World English. This characterization of differences between early and modern OED policies has been uncritically accepted by reviewers and journalists on no other basis than the self-serving pronouncements of Mr. Burchfield. Ms. Ogilvie expends considerable effort in a somewhat dry scholarly chapter setting the record straight. She demonstrates that Murray set and maintained a very high standard of inclusiveness, and that Burchfield, judged on what he did rather than what he said, in fact fell far short of this standard. It is perhaps unfortunate so much must be said on this matter, but the damage has been done to Murray's reputation, and Ms. Ogilvie is effective and convincing in restoring the honor of this great Victorian scholar. I am pleased to recommend this delightful book to anyone who loves English, and who admires the acceptance of English world-wide as a nearly universal language. It is perhaps the openness and welcoming nature of the English-speaking community to new ideas and foreign culture that enable English to adapt to modern business and technology better than any other language. I am indebted to Ms. Ogilvie for introducing me to this unique chapter of history, and giving me an appreciation of the genius of James Murray and the OED in setting an inclusive standard for the English language.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A gem of a book By Mr. John E. Hill This gem of a book is not only a clear, up-to-date history of the Oxford English Dictionary, including fascinating anecdotes about early editors, devoted contributors, and the more than 600 languages

in the etymologies, but is also a fascinating detective story!The author's meticulous research which led to the discovery of the damage caused by an earlier editor, and the OED's restoration to its rightful place as the greatest, most inclusive, and most reliable dictionary of any language in the world.This is a gripping, finely crafted, true-life tale, and an absolute joy for everybody interested in language and how it evolves.

Most people think of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as a distinctly British product. Begun in England 150 years ago, it took more than 60 years to complete and, when it was finally finished in 1928, the British prime minister heralded it as a 'national treasure.' It maintained this image throughout the twentieth century, and in 2006 the English public voted it an 'Icon of England', alongside Marmite, Buckingham Palace, and the bowler hat. But this book shows that the dictionary is not as 'British' as we all thought. The linguist and lexicographer, Sarah Ogilvie, combines her insider knowledge and experience with impeccable research to show that the OED is in fact an international product in both its content and its making. She examines the policies and practices of the various editors, applies qualitative and quantitative analysis, and finds new OED archival materials in the form of letters, reports, and proofs. She demonstrates that the OED, in its use of readers from all over the world and its coverage of World English, is in fact a global text.

"This is a beauty of a book" - The Financial Times"Iliked this book so much, it makes me crave another. Has anyone done a Life at the OED sort of book lately? If not, I nominate Ogilvie, who is such a pleasure to read. She makes you feel like you've had a beer at the Old Bookbinder's Arms, and that's a beer I'd very much like to have." - Mark Peters, Visual Thesaurus