

A

Table Alphabetically, containing and teaching the true writing, and understanding of hard usuall English wordes, borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French. &c.

With the interpretation thereof by plaine English words, gathered for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlemen, or any other unskilfull persons.

Whereby they may the more easilie and better vnderstand many hard English wordes, vvhich they shall heare or read in Scriptures, Sermons, or elsewhere, and also be made able to vse the same aptly themselves.

*Legere, et non intelligere, negligere est.*

As good not read, as not to vnderstand.

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to assist the Akkadians. In order to do this they made an innovation that can be considered the beginning of lexicography -they compiled and taught from bilingual lists of words arranged in two columns, with Sumerian words in one column and their Akkadian equivalents in the other.

The Sumerian/ Akkadian practice of compiling bilingual word lists spread, as did most aspects of Sumerian culture, to the Greeks, who also

## 1. P R E - H I S T O R Y

### *the beginnings of reference books in general & the dictionary in particular*

adopted several features of Egyptian culture including the use of papyrus scrolls.<sup>2</sup> From the scribal traditions of these other civilizations, the Greeks developed sophisticated educational systems and philosophies. These systems were inherited by the Romans, who took the Greek educational system, the *enkyklios paideia*, (obviously the origin of the contemporary term encyclopedia, its original meaning was 'circle of learning') - and transformed it from an educational curriculum into a written general knowledge compilation. The members of the new Christian intelligentsia such as St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Isidore of Seville rediscovered the works of the Roman compilers after the rise of the Church. None of their works, however, departed much from the model established by their Roman predecessors; ultimately, they have more in common with the modern encyclopedia than anything else, and are of interest primarily because they mark the beginning of the compilation of reference books in western/Christian culture.



As is the case with much of the progress made at the beginnings of what we know as civilization, the first steps in the development of the dictionary came out of conflict. Circa 2350 B.C., the highly developed Sumerian society of ancient Mesopotamia<sup>1</sup> was invaded and conquered by a less cultured people, the Akkadians. In order to retain control of and maintain the more advanced culture they had usurped, the Akkadians needed to understand it. This necessitated preserving most of the Institutions of Sumerian civilization, and perhaps most importantly, the Sumerian scribes with their understanding of reading, writing and record keeping. Likewise, to preserve both their skins and their culture, the scribes were compelled

necessary for anyone aspiring to or already in a position of power to learn Latin. Latin was considered the only 'high' (i.e. non-vernacular or 'common' language) and was used for both worship and official church business, which was at this point in time all official business.

## II. EARLY HISTORY *the church, glossae collectae, vernaculars vs. latin*

As part of their efforts to learn Latin, the aspiring priests and politicians of the early Middle Ages developed what became known as *glossae collectae*. These word lists had much in common with the Sumerian-Akkadian vocabularies previously mentioned and were a product of a more refined and genteel version of the same cultural necessities.

The *glossae collectae* were quite simply collections of notes explaining difficult Latin terms in either simpler Latin or the vernacular spoken by the compiler. The entries in these compilations were at first not arranged in any order other than the order in which they appeared in the text(s) they were lifted from. By the seventh century, however, it was not uncommon for *glossae collectae* to be alphabetized by the first letter of the (Latin) word; by the eighth century alphabetization to the second or third letter was a regular feature of many *glossae collectae*. Although many scholars and intellectuals of the time found it unacceptable, this trend continued over the next three or four centuries until complete alphabetization appeared and was considered quite common.

The first recorded use of the word dictionary - or, in this case, its Latin form, *dictionarius* occurred around this time; oddly enough, it was



The origins of the modern dictionary are closely tied to the rise of the Church as a political entity. As the Church spread, it brought about the necessity of learning a new language; in much the same way that anyone in today's world hoping to achieve any sort of political, economic or social success is more or less required to know English, it became

used as the title for a non-alphabetic Latin vocabulary book compiled by the English grammarian John Garland in 1225. The second known use of the word dates from 1340, with Frenchman Pierre Bersuire's *Dictionarium* a 3,000-word concordance to Saint Jerome's Bible.

While *glossae collectae* were becoming increasingly standardized and widespread, several other cultural factors, which contributed to the evolution of the dictionary, were becoming more prominent. As the use of Latin became more common, Latin terms began to work their way into the vernaculars spoken in Christian nations. As a result, Latin came to be viewed less and less as a 'high' language and therefore started to lose its dominance. This shifting of emphasis in education and business from Latin to the 'common' languages was most apparent in the *Promptum Parvorum* (published circa 1440 by the Dominican friar Geoffrey the Grammarian), which took an already existing Latin-to-English vocabulary and simply reversed the listing of term to English-to-Latin. This time period also marked the beginning of the four centuries of economic and social evolution that ultimately gave birth to what we now refer to as the middle-class, with various mercantile and artisan classes (who had little if any knowledge of Latin) aspiring to the political power held by the Church and aristocracy and challenging the Church's economic monopoly. As the aspirations of the merchants and artisans became realities, the use of their vernaculars in religious services, education and civic matters became more widespread.

Perhaps the biggest influence on the evolution of the dictionary

was the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1436. The press has had a huge impact on cultures around the world; there is not enough room here for even a brief synopsis of its history and repercussions.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the dictionary, the press reinforced two previous trends, the first of which was the trend towards alphabetization, which began with the *glossae collectae*. Many printers were also writers or compilers of books; arguably, their experiences shuffling and setting pieces of type (stored in alphabetical order) impressed upon them the usefulness of the alphabet as an invariable means of organizing information<sup>6</sup>. The press also served to reinforce the increased use of vernacular languages in areas where Latin was once dominant. As mass produced printed materials became more common as well as more in demand, more printers began producing books in vernacular languages. After all, most people didn't speak Latin, and those who were often the most interested in purchasing the new mass-produced literature and reference books were the same merchants and artisans who aspired to the higher educations and social positions traditionally reserved for Church and aristocracy.

The logical outcome of the increasing validity of vernacular languages combined with more frequent contact between different cultures (via increased economic trading & ever-present military conflicts) was the production of inter-vernacular wordbooks, the first of which was William Salesbury's 1547 Welsh English glossary.

book was shamelessly and blatantly aimed at the emerging educationally insecure upper middle class. The first page of Cawdrey's book, reproduced on the cover of this volume, amply illustrates his ability to play off of the insecurities of his target audience. The *Table Alphabetical* was wildly successful and therefore it is no surprise that it quickly spawned imitators<sup>7</sup>; first in 1616 with the publication of John Bullokar's *English Expositor*, and again in 1623 when Henry Cockeram published his *English Dictionarie*.

The idea of a unilingual vocabulary book traveled from England to France fairly rapidly, where the compilation of a French dictionary became the main project of the Academie Francaise. The Academie's first director, Claude Favre de Vaugelas, initiated the project, which took 57 years to complete, in 1635. From its inception, the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Francaise* was concerned with establishing and defining "good" and "proper" usage of the language, with the aim of elevating French to the status of a "high" language

### III. 1604 – 1819

#### *the first dictionaries, "national" dictionaries, colonialism, american lexicography, the aryan hypothesis & the brothers grimm*



The beginning of the 17th century saw the appearance of the first dictionary, compiled by the English schoolmaster Robert Cawdrey and published in 1604. Cawdrey's *Table Alphabetical of Hard Usuall English Wordes* consisted of approximately 3,000 entries, most of which were Anglicized Latin terms. The

to serve as a successor to Latin. By the time the *Dictionnaire* was completed in 1692 both Spain and Russia had followed the lead of the French and begun compiling their own state-sanctioned dictionaries.

Britain's answer to the Academie Francaise had the rather long-winded title of The Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge. In addition to the compiling of a national dictionary (a project which the Royal Society had no success with), one of the major concerns of the Society was that the English

language didn't match up to Latin for 'philosophic purposes'; for this reason they formed a committee to discuss possible ways to improve the language.<sup>8</sup>

While the Royal Society and members of the British intelligentsia were certainly concerned about the French producing the first national (i.e., state-sanctioned and sponsored) dictionary, the progress made in English lexicography was made largely by independent scholars such as John Kersey and Nathan Bailey. Kersey and Bailey were responsible for the introduction of etymologies, stress patterns, syllabication and pronunciation guides and the use of illustrations. Bailey initiated a move away from compiling and defining Anglicized Latin towards the production of dictionaries which included both words and phrases previously considered too common or vulgar for inclusion in a reference book and scientific and technical terms. Unlike the members of the Royal Society, Kersey and Bailey expressed no concern over national honor or any desire to see English become a 'high' language to serve as a replacement for Latin. Their motives, they claimed, were strictly populist and commercial.

When the first official English dictionary was finally begun in the late 1740s, its sponsor was not a governmental/academic organization, but a group of London booksellers. The compiler was the writer and critic Samuel Johnson. Ironically enough, Johnson used as the basis for his work Nathan Bailey's 1736 *Dictionarium Britannicum*, annotating it, altering definitions and adding citations from various literary and theological works.

In 1747, shortly before beginning work on his dictionary

Johnson published his *Plan for a Dictionary of the English Language*. In this work he presented his aim as being to 'fix' the language, stating that 'all change is of itself evil...(and) ought not to be hazarded but for evident advantage.'" By the time the Dictionary actually appeared in 1755, Johnson had apparently had a change of heart, stating in the Preface that attempting to 'fix' a language is 'akin to embalming it.'<sup>9</sup>

In the last half of the 18th century colonialism became a way of life for the major European nations; Spain, France and Britain in particular seemed to be in a mad race to snatch up every available parcel of land. As the colonies became more established as separate entities from their parent nations they developed their own particular social & cultural idiosyncrasies including dialects. Often these dialects came to be viewed by the colonists with a sort of nationalistic pride. This is perhaps most obvious in the differentiations made between American and British lexicography after the War for Independence.

It is easy to imagine that in 1783 (the year the U.S. won its independence), the popularity of the King's English (or anything of the King's for that matter) was at an all time low amongst American scholars and educators. It was around this time that Americans such as the Connecticut schoolteacher Noah Webster began to produce their own text and reference books.

Webster's first book - a spelling book - appeared in 1783; it was followed by a grammar book, a reader and (in 1806) a small dictionary. All were distinctly American, drawing on the works of America authors for examples, usage and spelling. It wasn't until 1828, however, that Webster published the book that would

make him a household name, the *American Dictionary of the English Language*. In continuing to draw on the works of American authors and by instituting differences in spelling between British and American English (i.e., color instead of colour, etc.), the ADEL marked the definitive break between British and American lexicography. Webster also began what remains a tradition peculiar to American lexicography- the inclusion of chronologies, tables of weights and measures and other encyclopedic information as appendices to the main body of the dictionary.

While Webster was busy compiling his magnum opus, important developments in the field of lexicography were taking place elsewhere in the western world. In the early 1800s British linguists in India, most notably Sir William Jones, discovered that the major languages of Western Europe- the Germanic and Romance languages- all shared traits with the traditional Hindu language Sanskrit.<sup>11</sup> As research along these lines continued it rendered much of the progress previously made in etymological research obsolete; for example. By the time Webster's dictionary was published, all of the etymologies contained in it had been proven false.

Much of the research done into the Indo-European language connection was conducted in Germany<sup>12</sup> and one of the leading researchers in the field was Jakob Grimm. Along with his brother Wilhelm, Jakob was responsible not only for advancing the study of the relationship between Sanskrit and the major European languages, but also for preserving much of the oral traditions of rural German peoples in the form of their now famous collections of fairy tales.

In order to finance both their philological studies and their work in preserving German folklore, the Brothers Grimm began, in 1838, to compile the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*.<sup>13</sup> Their aim, at that point in time at least, was considered peculiar. Instead of following the examples set. by Johnson and the Academie Francaise and attempting to establish a fixed and proper usage of the language, the Brothers Grimm set out to document both formal German and the numerous regional dialects of the language.<sup>13</sup>

One of the largest influences on the Brothers' lexicographical work (and by extension on much later work in the field) was the work of the German Classicist Franz Passow. In 1812 Passow published the *Zweck Anlage und Ergänzung griechischer* (the *Aim, Construction and Completion of Greek Dictionaries*) and completed his *Lexicon* in 1819 according to the rather straightforward principles set out in his 1812 essay. His requirements were that entries and definitions be supported by citations from available texts and that the citations be arranged chronologically from the earliest to the most recent as a means of objectively demonstrating the changes in the meaning of a word.



In 1842, the British established the Philological Society in London to study the structures, affinities and history of the English language. One of the Philological Society's first acts was to appoint an 'unregistered words committee' with three members - Herbert Coleridge, Frederick Furnivall and Richard Chenevix Trench - to document words commonly used but not in any dictionary. In the course of their research the members of the committee came to the conclusion that most dictionaries were sorely lacking in vocabulary as well as most other areas. The first result of the committee's work was Trench's 1857 presentation of his paper "On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries" to the Philological Society. In his paper, Trench listed seven

#### **I V . M O D E R N L E X I C O G R A P H Y**

##### **unregistered words, the oxford english dictionary, what's the point?**

specific points in which presently existing dictionaries were lacking: obsolete words, the handling of derivational families, accurate and properly dated citations, all the important senses of words, the proper distinguishing of synonyms from words with similar meanings, sufficient coverage of all available literary sources and the elimination of redundant material.

One year later the Philological Society presented its plan for a new dictionary. The plan was heavily influenced by the work of the Brothers Grimm and Franz Passow in Germany - the new dictionary was to contain every word in the English language from 1000 A.D. on; it was also to contain all variant spellings, history and all uses and meanings, illustrated

by quotes from all English literature and historical records from the period of time covered by the dictionary.

What eventually became the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* took seventy years to complete and during that time had six editors. The first of these was Herbert Coleridge, who spent the last three years of his life (he died in 1861 at the age of thirty-one) collecting historical and literary sources for citations and beginning to revise etymologies in light of the new information on the Indo-European language connection.

Coleridge was replaced by Frederick Furnivall, who quickly became distressed with the difficulties in locating accurate and readable copies of early English texts. To correct this situation, founded the Early English Texts Society in 1864 and the Chaucer Society in 1865. Both

organizations were concerned with locating accurate copies of original texts and providing printed editions for both scholars and the general public.

By the time Furnivall retired in 1879, twenty-one years after the beginning of work on the *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (as it was originally titled), not one line of the dictionary had been written; however one and three quarter tons of resource material in the form of quotations, full-length texts and previously published reference books had been collected.

After Furnivall's retirement the Society hired the schoolmaster James Murray as the new editor. At the same time, they entered into an

agreement with Clarendon Press, Oxford University under which the Press would publish and finance the dictionary. According to the agreement, the dictionary was to be sixty-four hundred pages long, four volumes, and completed in 1889. Five years later, Murray had completed only three hundred and fifty-two pages, from A to ANT. At this point, the Press moved Murray (and the entire operation) to Oxford University where Murray would remain, working on the dictionary, until his death in 1915.

Before this, however, a second full time editor had been appointed. Henry Bradley had been brought in 1887 and given his own separate staff, which was also headquartered at Oxford. The same year, the end of the entries for the letter B was reached and William Craigie was appointed as an assistant to Murray - a position he held for four years before being promoted to a full editorship in charge of the letter Q. 1914 saw another assistant, Charles 'C.T.' Onions, promoted to editor, bringing the total to four full-time editors, each responsible for separate sections of the alphabet. When the *Oxford English Dictionary* was finally published in 1928, it was made up of close to sixteen thousand pages contained in ten volumes with over four hundred thousand entries. Almost two million quotations had been used for examples.

The QELU quickly became and has remained the authoritative sourcebook on the English language both in the U.K. and North America; it is the template on which most modern dictionaries are based. However, even, its compilers will readily admit that it is far from complete. Like any endeavor to compile and

classify it can never be truly completed. The first *Supplement to the OED* was published in 1972, the fourth in the mid-80s.

Considering that the *Supplements* themselves will probably have to be supplemented eventually, it should be obvious that such a project quite literally has no end.

## NOTES

1. The Sumerians built complex cities, developed agricultural and Irrigation systems, worked metal, instituted the seven-day week, 'discovered' the signs of the Zodiac and developed a complex writing system known as cuneiform.

2. By the beginning of the Christian era, the use of papyrus had been eclipsed by the use of thinly stretched animal skins stacked up and tied together on one side. This most obvious antecedent of the modern book, like the first bilingual vocabulary books, was the product of conflict, although in this case the fighting was on an economic front and the motives were more academic.

In the fourth century B.C., the two most famous of the developing libraries in Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt and western Asia were the libraries in the Greek cities of Alexandria and Pergamon (see *My Alphabet* vol. 12 for more information on the history of libraries), both of which relied on Egypt for papyrus. King Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, in an effort to weaken the influence of the Pergamites, refused to export papyrus to them. The Pergamites began experimenting with the use of animal skins, at first attempting to stitch them together and store them on spindles (as if they were papyrus scrolls), before adopting the method that would serve as the basis for modern day bookbinding.

3. The outstanding example would be Pliny the Elder, author of the thirty-seven volume *Historia Naturalis*, which was considered the authority on almost every topic real or imagined. Pliny's work remained unchallenged until 1492 when the Italian scholar

Niccolo Leonicensis published *De erroribus Plinii* (*On Pliny's Mistakes*).

4. The trend towards alphabetization, in its beginnings, was greeted with a considerable amount of resistance. Because it resulted in thematically related materials being scattered across the alphabet, it was considered a disjointed and meaningless way of ordering information. This concern never entirely disappeared and an attempt to reconcile thematic and alphabetical ordering, along with other factors, led to the creation of the thesaurus (see Appendix A).

5. For more on the history of printing, see *My Alphabet* vol. 16.

6. As was mentioned in footnote 4, alphabetically ordered works of reference were not entirely uncommon; however they weren't widely accepted until about one hundred years after the invention of the printing press.

7. The process of compiling a dictionary was at this time largely a matter of 'borrowing' from previously published reference works. The more astute reader is probably aware that plagiarism continues to be widespread (for example, a significant portion of this volume is plagiarized), although it is rarely acknowledged in any academic community except to condemn it or address it as a topic for some sort of post-modernist pseudo-analysis. The idea of plagiarism as a productive process has received more open acknowledgement and practical analysis from various avant-garde art movements. For more on this topic, the reader is referred to Stewart Home's brief and extremely biased though entertaining and easy to read guide to twentieth century avant-garde art, *The Assault on Culture*.

8. Although exactly what they had in mind for improving the English language is un-

known, the committee did introduce the rather interesting idea of developing a 'universal language' for scientific and philosophical purposes. See the appendix to this volume for an example of one such project and the influence the idea had on the creation of the thesaurus.

9. Despite Johnson's reversal of his position, he has, to a certain extent, been successful. Greene (1970) points out that 'since the time of the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*, the rate of change, in written English at least, has been notably retarded.'

10. Up until this point, the new formal languages of Europe had been monocentric, i.e., there had been one standard per language community. Webster's work illustrated the possibility of a language being polycentric, i.e., having two or more formal standards.

11. In a glowing example of the tendency of Western nations to act under the assumption that they have been somehow Chosen (whether by a supreme being or the international marketplace), it had previously been assumed that the Germanic and Romance languages were directly descended from the variety of Hebrew spoken by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

12. It should be noted that the discovery of the relationship between German and the Aryan (Indian) language now believed to be the source of all other languages was central to the development of the doctrine of National Socialism - i.e., if the German language was descended from the original and therefore 'pure' language of the Aryans, the German people were equally 'pure', or at least had the potential to be so. If certain undesirable elements were removed. This was certainly farfetched, but bear in mind that not only was Adolf

Hitler enough a lunatic to believe this, he was intelligent enough to expand on the idea of Germanic/Aryan purity, charismatic enough to convince the majority of the German populace of this, and brutal enough to intimidate those who didn't agree with his policies into shutting up. The ultimate irony in this unfortunate testimony to power of language and the ideas it expresses is that the term Aryan does not denote any common genetic make-up or similarity (as it was made to do in the National Socialist concept of a 'racial people') but a common linguistic origin.

13. The Brothers Grimm's choice of writing projects was influenced by not only their lifelong financial difficulties but more personal concerns as well. During their early school years, they undertook a project to classify their favorite works of German literature according to their own system of historic and aesthetic standards. Later in life they became interested in old Germanic law and social customs, many of which had found popular expression in the folktales the Brothers would collect later in life. This interest led them to the rather liberal (at that time) political ideal of a unified Germany.

In 1830, both Jakob and Wilhelm became employed at the University at Göttingen in the principality of Hannover. Seven years later when King Ernst August II succeeded to the throne of the principality, revoked the constitution, dissolved parliament and required all civil servants (including educators) to swear an oath to personally serve the King, both brothers refused. As a result, they lost their teaching positions and no other principality would offer them work. It was under these difficult circumstances that the Brothers began compiling the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*.

A P P E N D I X :

THEMATIC LEXICOGRAPHY · PETER MARK ROGET & BISHOP JOHN WILKINS

Transcend. { General { Rel. mixed { Rel. of Action Discourse God World Element Stone Metal fish { Leaf { Flower { Seed-vestib Shrub Tree	{ Animals { Birds { Beasts { Peculiar { General { Magnitude { Space { Measure { Power Nat. { Habit { Manners { Quality { Quality sensible { Disease	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100	{ Spiritual { Corporal { Motion { Operation { Ocean. { Posses. { Provif. { Civil { Judicial { Military { Naval { Ecclef.
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**The Differences are to be affixed unto that end which is on the left side of the Character, according to this order ;**

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**The Species should be affixed at the other end of the Character according to the like order.**

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Although other such works have been created in recent time and were once considered the norm, the *Thesaurus* of Peter Mark Roget continues to be the only widely known and accepted example of a thematic lexicography. The *Thesaurus* was originally intended to be a sort of ‘conceptual dictionary’ for use by scientists, philosophers, philologists, historians, etc.; Roget described it as ‘a collection of words...arranged according to the ideas which they express.’ Roget’s

ideas were strongly influenced by his contact with Bishop John Wilkins, one of the founder members of the Royal Society of London, which Roget served as the secretary of for 22 years. Wilkins was the author of the *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Universal Language*, a work which Roget borrowed the taxonomic structure of for the arrangement of his own word-book. It is also one of the only influences acknowledged by Roget in his Preface to the original edition of the *Thesaurus*, where Roget expressed regret that Wilkins’ idea was ‘too abtruse..for practical application.’

Wilkins felt that 'the variety of Letters is an appendix to the Curse of Babel', and set out to rectify the situation by creating a rational language for the use of all nations. His scheme was quite complex, and, as the title indicates, had two basic concerns. The 'Real Character' of the title refers to the creation of a new alphabet and grammar, which would refer more directly to actual things in the world. The symbols in the illustration above represent the forty major divisions of Wilkins' philosophical language. Mac Arthur, in *Worlds of Reference* offers the following simplified and updated list of the primary categories employed by Wilkins: 1) God; 2) the elements, meteors, stones, metals; 3) planets, flowers, shrubs, trees; 4) animals, fishes, birds, beasts; 5) parts of bodies; 6) quality, space, magnitude, measure; 7) quality (of natural power, habit, manners, the senses, diseases); 8) action (spiritual, corporeal, in motion, in operations); 9) relations (in the family, regarding possessions and provisions); 10) public relationships (civil, judiciary, naval, military, ecclesiastical). These categories were further broken down taxonomically, for example, one would arrive at the term for wolf in the following manner: beast - viviparous - clawed - dog-like - European-terrestrial - big - wolf. Each subdivision would be indicated by modifications made to the symbol for beast in the illustration on the previous page.

## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

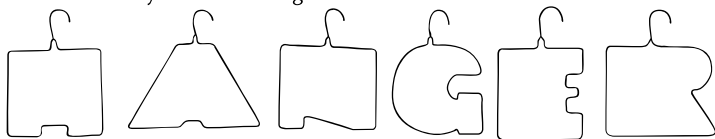
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