

In December 1969 Warren N. Cordell, an alumnus of Indiana State University and a senior executive with A. C. Nielsen Company in Chicago, donated 453 early English dictionaries in both his and his wife Suzanne's name to Indiana State University. This donation began Warren Cordell's long involvement in building the Cordell Collection of Dictionaries.

A National Endowment for the Humanities grant received in 1970 allowed the purchase over the next two years of 434 more editions. It also provided seed money for the establishment of a book conservation program and the fostering of scholarly activities related to lexicography.

In 1974 Cordell donated a second gift of 1,160 editions, comprised primarily of special dictionaries and books relating to language published both before and after 1901. Meanwhile the Merriam-Webster Company donated 500 volumes to the Cordell Collection.

Mr. Cordell made a third gift in 1976 of 1,003 editions, which built on the riches of the first gift. Cordell's fourth major gift of 616 different editions in 729 volumes of pre-1901 English and foreign dictionaries was made in November 1979. Warren Cordell died unexpectedly in 1980.

In slightly more than 10 years, Warren Cordell donated 3,232 editions and variants totaling 3,913 volumes. With the 434 editions purchased with NEH funds and the donation from Merriam-Webster, the number of editions, or titles, increased to 4,166, or approximately 5,400 volumes.

After Warren Cordell's death, Suzanne Cordell donated the remainder of her husband's lexicographical holdings, resulting in the addition of several hundred more titles. These books could not be shelved until 1986 after a renova-

tion of the facility created additional shelving space. Previously donated twentieth-century holdings were also made accessible at this time.

Meanwhile, annual funds were budgeted for purchases to the collection. As a consequence, since 1980 nearly, 1,800 titles have been added to the pre-1901 holdings.

While the overwhelming majority of items in the collection are published books, a noteworthy collection of manuscripts purchased in 1993 contains 60 letters to and from Joseph Worcester, a contemporary of Noah Webster, which deal with his personal life and work as a scholar. Other manuscript holdings pertain both to published and to unpublished dictionaries.

The collecting emphasis remains on pre-1901 imprints, but post-1900 holdings, especially those which augment already held earlier works, are considered important acquisitions. For example, several hundred Merriam-Webster dictionaries published primarily in the middle decades of the twentieth-century were purchased in 1994 and added to the holdings. The post-1900 portion of the collection contains over 2,750 titles and between 4,500 and 5,000 volumes.

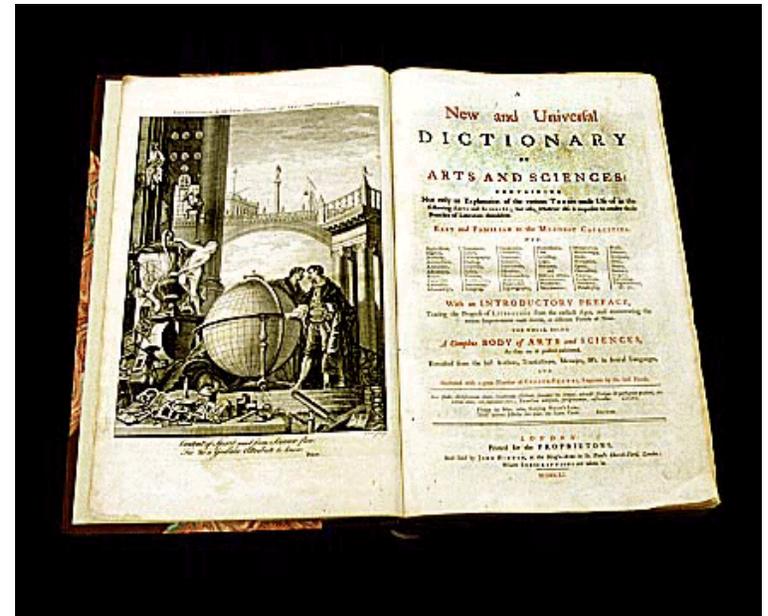
As of April 2009, there are approximately 5,960 titles in the pre-1901 portion of the collection. In its entirety, the collection numbers approximately 8,500 titles and more than 12,500 volumes of dictionaries and other word books, e.g., glossaries, vocabularies, and learners' grammars. Because of the vision of Warren Cordell, the Cordell Collection has become recognized internationally as the most significant collection of its type.

The depth of holdings of works by several lexicographers is especially noteworthy. Not only are there over 280 different editions and issues of Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) but also hundreds of dictionaries compiled by legendary American lexicographers such as Noah Webster and Joseph Worcester. Among several unique association items is Peter Roget's annotated personal copy of the first edition of his famous thesaurus.

Not only did Mr. Cordell deem word books important to acquire in depth, but he widened his collecting interests to include early encyclopedias, recognizing that many concepts demanded treatment which would elude inclusion in traditional dictionaries. As a consequence, the use of many of the more than 130 encyclopedias has been instrumental in solving mysteries that might have otherwise remain unsolved.

Access to the Cordell Collection is extensive. Robert K. O'Neill's *English Dictionaries from 1604 through 1900: The Warren N. and Suzanne B. Cordell Collection of Dictionaries*, published in 1988 by Greenwood Press, is a catalog of pre-1901 English-only dictionaries. A comprehensive catalog of the complete holdings of the pre-1901 holdings was compiled by David Vancil and published in 1993 as *Catalog of Dictionaries, Word Books, and Philological Texts, 1440-1900: Inventory of the Cordell Collection, Indiana State University*. In addition to these reference works, searchable databases, online listings, and a web-accessible public catalog are available. These may be accessed through the following URL:

[HTTP://library.indstate.edu/about/units/rbsc/cordell/cordell-idx.html](http://library.indstate.edu/about/units/rbsc/cordell/cordell-idx.html).



Warren N. & Suzanne B. Cordell Collection of Dictionaries

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