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► **To cite this version:**

Geoffrey Williams. In Praise of Lexicography, and Lexicographers In Praise of Lexicography, and Lexicographers. 17th EURALEX International Congress, Tinatin Margalitzadze, Sep 2016, Tbilisi, Georgia. halshs-01502498

HAL Id: halshs-01502498

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01502498>

Submitted on 5 Apr 2017

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In Praise of Lexicography, and Lexicographers

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Abstract

The title of this paper draws deliberately on that of John Sinclair’s keynote in Lorient in 2004, *In praise of the dictionary*. Whereas John Sinclair concentrated on the product, the dictionary, I shall concentrate on the field, and the harmless drudges who undertake the activity, and more particularly in the area of lexicographical research. The starting point will be Georgian lexicography and its importance to the national language and culture. This leads naturally to what I consider two major challenges facing lexicographical research today and the science policy issues it faces: funding policy and notably our place in EC Framework Programmes and the effects of research evaluation. In a second part, I want to give praise to two particular “harmless drudges” – Antoine Furetière and Henri Basnage de Beauval – who illustrate the profile of lexicography in their time. This will allow me to discuss the importance of historical lexicography within the context of digital humanities.

Keywords: lexicography; research funding; research evaluation; Digital Humanities

1 A Fanfare for the Makers¹

This paper is about lexicography, the field, the craft, the discipline in all its forms. I owe the title to the late great John Sinclair as when I organised the 11th EURALEX Congress in 2004, he entitled his paper as ‘In praise of the dictionary’. He opened a new world for corpus-driven dictionaries and spoke about one way forward as he saw it. However, my aim here is not to discuss so much the product, although it is impossible to discuss the field without speaking about dictionaries, but the lexicographical research and some of the challenges it faces.

I break my talk into two parts: the first deals with raising the profile of our harmless drudgery in the face of restricted funding. In praising lexicographer here, I speak to the converted, and the issues I raise concern the necessity for us to preach the importance of the field at both national and EU levels. The European Network for e-Lexicography shows that we can use our enormous networking capacities, but also that if we don’t get in quick at policy level, the research window may well close. Another challenge is that even if computing has changed the face of lexicography, we more than ever need the drudgery of academic research, especially in areas as historical lexicography. ‘E’ is not all, and I develop the comparison with botanics to show that we must not neglect non- or less computational research in favour of technological promises. This is why, in a second part, I praise two harmless drudges who helped change the face of lexicography, Antoine Furetière and Henri Basnage de Beauval and show how digital humanities can open vistas, provided that it does not let the digital hold sway over the humanities.

¹ Louis Macneice, *A Fanfare to the Makers*. In *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*. 1972.

Lexicography is a broad field. It encompasses professional dictionary crafters and academics. I owe an enormous debt to both as I begin to explore different aspects of this exciting field and wish to name a few. To begin with, Dr Peter Roe and Professor Frank Knowles who introduced me to both corpus linguistics and lexicography. Then two people who really did change my life: Marie-Hélène Corréard and Thierry Fontenelle. They are the two who persuaded me to attend EURALEX 2002 in Copenhagen, and then, the height of insanity, to organise EURALEX 2004 in Lorient. I cannot forget other persons who to me epitomise the importance of lexicographical research and the great value of EURALEX as an association: Anna Braasch, Rosamund Moon, Uli Heid, Carla Marelllo, Michael Rundell, Anne Dykstra, Janet Decesaris... the list is too long to enumerate, but I do wish to underline my debt to two of the great recent losses to lexicography: Paul Bogaards and Adam Kilgariff.

2 Homage to Georgia

EURALEX is a great association. It works hard for European lexicography, and takes a close interest in lexicography around the world. It has a board consisting of elected, devoted, unpaid members who give their time in keeping the association active and in confronting issues of importance to the field. The President is the public face of the association and often has to speak for the field, and does this after consultation with the board. During my time a number of issues arose, but the origin of this paper lies in one particular event, the request to come to the aid of lexicography in Georgia. We meet today under the auspices of the Lexicographic Centre at Tbilisi State University, a university centre dedicated to the Georgian language. Its production is impressive with its 14 volume Comprehensive English-Georgian Dictionary and a series of online specialized dictionaries. And yet, the future of Georgian lexicography has not always been sure.

In 2010, I was contacted by Carla Marelllo on behalf of Tinatin Margalitadze, the organiser of this event and now member of the EURALEX Board, requesting help with “The Appeal of Georgian Lexicographers to the Georgian Government and the Academic Community” (Margalitadze 2010). The appeal points out a number of problems, and I quote:

- “Essentially, the result of lexicographic work is not classed among scientific categories in general and in process of present-day contests and rating assessments in particular. This happens despite the fact that a dictionary entry often implies even higher scholarly qualification than any specific research article does;
- Lexicographic work and its product are not yet entitled to the right of being competitive participants of modern grant competitions;
- Remuneration for the utterly laborious toil of lexicographers is absolutely inadequate, compelling them to earn livelihood by means of carrying out other activities;
- Lexicographers are not awarded academic (scientific) degrees for the lexicographic products they create; and
- Lexicography is totally excluded from the list of State priorities.”

The points raised in this appeal will certainly touch a few chords elsewhere and witness to the fact that despite the cultural importance of dictionaries, lexicography as a field is not always fully appreciated. The fact the “harmless drudges”, to cite Johnson, need pay and that research requires funding, and that funding is generally rewarded by valuable outputs is not always understood by the average politician. The association rose to the occasion and our reply to the appeal pointed out that:

“language is central to human identity and culture, the variations between one geographical region and another, which share a common linguistic origin, are one of the key factors that mark one nationality from another. In the development and maintenance of a feeling of national identity language is central, and the dictionary is the key tool to access and record that identity.” (Williams 2016)

I hope that we would all agree with this. All the great nations have at some stage created a national

dictionary, or several, either through the work of an academy or through the work of a great scholar as Johnson for English, or Furetière for French. A language is not always unique to one country, leading sometimes to dictionaries of varieties, as with English and American English where the fact of creating a dictionary that highlights differences was a key factor in building a national identity. I think obviously of Webster. Our language, and our way of using it is central in expressing who we are in current terms, but also in showing how we came to be what we are through past dictionaries which bear witness to the evolution of our languages.

We sought also to underline the factors at work in affirming identity and to stress the importance of lexicography as a multidisciplinary practice:

It is sufficient to see how the countries of central Europe, Estonia, Slovenia, Croatia, to name but a few, have given value to lexicography as a discipline so as to promote their own national identity. Lexicographers treat essential language information that shows not only our cultural roots, but also our cultural future. It would be a great pity that Georgia should neglect its European roots in neglecting the necessity to promote the study of its language and in particular that great cultural vehicle: the dictionary. Lexicography is a supremely uniting discipline bringing together disciplines as diverse as language history, philology and computational and corpus linguistics. No computer system can be developed without a dictionary of some form, and yet the applications cannot be developed without giving lexicography its place as an independent discipline within academia. (ibid.)

The computational aspect is important, and will be developed later on with the idea of lexicographical botanics, as far too many policy makers forget that underlying all text-oriented computational systems, there are dictionaries.

Georgian is part of a language group of the Caucasus with a unique script and a long literary tradition. It is at the far East of Europe as the Celtic fringe is part of the far west of Europe. The edges are as important as the centre, wherever that may be deemed to lie. The Kartvelian group is very different from other European languages, but so are Basque and Finno Ugric. This makes them all the more precious as part of our European language heritage. Georgia is also a crossroads with other cultures, that of Turkey, that of Asia. This is why it is so good to see a EURALEX Congress here as it is coming to that linguistic variety, rather than that linguistic variety coming, or not, further West. Europe has many lesser-spoken languages, a European Charter to defend them and lexicography to chart them. It is important that countries not only sign the charter, but then ratify it and abide by it. Some countries, which are quick to defend their national languages, are slow to do this, to the detriment of language wealth and cultural variety. Not ratifying is bad for Europe as diversity is our wealth. And yet, faced by budgetary restrictions, numerous governments, institutions, universities are cutting funding to language research and lexicography as a soft option in a time of financial crisis under the illusion that the past is unimportant and that language will take care of itself. This is short-term policy and long-term disaster for language variety in Europe, and this is why lexicography must raise its profile.

I quote again:

Lexicographers not only study language for what it is, the central tool for communication, but also provide the means by which a language, and its underlying cultural values, may be taught and given full value within a society.

Teaching and culture are the less sexy side of a discussion. It is sad to note though how after the terrorists attacks in Paris and Brussels, politicians, notably the Minister, were asking why more studies had not been done on communities, cultures and language phenomena. In France, they have only to look at how funding to research in general, and the SSH in particular, has been slashed to see why. Unfortunately, we can rest assured that they will not look, and just give more cash to automatic surveillance not realising that that too needs dictionaries to work.

In the case of the Appeal, EURALEX voiced its opinion. The combined weight of reactions from within and without Georgia helped in gaining recognition of the Centre that is organising this congress. It is a centre capable of bringing a major European congress to the Eastern edge of Europe thereby creating a bridge between cultures and languages.

The success of the appeal demonstrates the importance of lexicographic research, the dangers it faces, and the necessity of speaking out. Two factors were at work against Georgian lexicography: lack of recognition and lack of funding. Neither is unique to Georgia and I shall want to look at both in a wider context. The first is closely related to research evaluation, the second to the place all lexicography and language research holds in national and international funding schemes. If the latter does not recognise the importance of a field, rare is the country that will supply the former.

3 Harmless Drudgery: Raising the Profile

The image of the hardworking, inoffensive lexicographer created by Johnson still holds in the public eye, if they even think of us. We are collectors of words as some collect plants or butterflies. We like to comment our specimens and include them in useful reference books. The radio and printed press is happy to have a small common where we tell little stories about the real meaning of words and their origins, that or the occasional comment on new and controversial words.

In many ways, we are the botanists of the humanities locked way in our book-lined rooms and not contributing to the exciting world of real science.

The parallel is an important one. In the nineteenth century, natural science was opening new frontiers and provided the basis of Darwin's work on evolution. Amongst the natural sciences, botany was a noble enterprise and no expedition was complete without a botanist. At the same time, as Western Europeans explored and colonised the world, they were destroying civilisations and the languages that made them live. Fortunately, we also had missionaries creating glossaries that capture some of what was being lost. Word botanists.

In more recent times, technology-based science has pushed botany into the sidelines. Politicians like big shiny machines and praise the words 'molecular' and 'computer science'. It is sufficient to look at the orientations of the EC Horizons 2020 funding programme to see that 'big science' dominates to the detriment of botanic drudgery. It also dominates the very small part of the overall budget allocated to the Social Sciences and Humanities, of which the part potentially available to just the humanities is negligible. This does not mean that technology is bad, far from it. It simply means that drudgery is not sexy.

Drudgery, according to the Oxford Dictionary of English (Pearsall et Hanks 2005) concerns "hard menial or dull work". Dull is given as "lacking interest or excitement", menial as "not requiring much skill or lacking prestige". Note, that we class our flowers in alphabetical order whereas the boring botanist at least tries to group them by resemblance.

So, what do these definitions say about lexicography? Let's start dull. The reality is that all research is dull, an apple does not fall on your head everyday. The public likes discoveries, and the media likes to supply. As we all know, all science, including lexicography, is accumulative. Someone might suddenly see the light, but only after years of uninteresting, unexciting and unprestigious menial labour accumulating knowledge, knowledge and not just facts. Behind all science, behind all big names that steal the limelight, there are hours and hours of menial laboratory research carried out by poorly paid technicians and doctoral students who will get precious little recognition. Is lexicography so different?

Lexicography is not fast; as Nicoletta Maraschio, past president of the Accademia della Crusca has nicely put it “the work of the lexicographer is one which requires great patience and slowness” (Maraschio 2015). In other words, it is dull, but that does not make it less useful, possibly just more exact and considered leading to lexicographical elegance (Rundell 2010).

Lexicography is accumulative. Western lexicography, as that is what we often mean when we speak of lexicography and alphabetical organisation, meaning of course the Latin alphabet, has been around since the Renaissance. It has evolved because the users, society, have evolved. It has evolved because technology has evolved. This is why historical lexicography is so important and deserves much more recognition than it receives. Wading through dusty old volumes may be lacking interest or excitement for many, but it brings forth valuable information as to how languages, societies and dictionaries have evolved.

Monastic glossaries had a limited audience who needed to understand words that either had religious significance or were no longer part of the daily language as vernacular languages replaced Latin. Lagadeuc was certainly seeking a wider audience of Latin users when he published his *Catholicon*, the first dictionary of both Breton and French in 1464. In the 1530s, the great French lexicographer, Estienne, was addressing a newly literate society that wanted to affirm Latin as the language of scholarly endeavour, but which quickly found that a phrasebook approach was needed by a growing class of bourgeois who needed to affirm their pre-eminence by using, as opposed to really understanding, Latin. As Simpson (Cawdrey 1604) points out in his introduction to the Bodleian reprint of Cawdrey’s dictionary, the need to use understandable language came from his own experience as a parish priest and also his son “who is now a Schoolmaister in London” (op.cit. : 39). Cawdrey even specified his audience so that this small work would be “for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other unskilfull persons” (39). The great dictionary of the Accademia della Crusca helped create an Italian as a means of identity “an umbrella language combining the many varieties used for centuries (and still being used) with different social and cultural communicative functions” (Maraschio 2015). In France of the 17th century, the *Académie Française* had a rather narrow view of its dictionary and its users, whereas Antoine Furetière set out to build a universal dictionary of the French language (Furetière 1690) as we shall see later. All these examples show how the field has evolved with each generation, benefitting from the drudgery of a few. Looking back enables us to see how the discipline has grown, but also to get greater insights into past societies and other cultures.

Technology has also changed the field, and by creating issues to be solved, the field will have changed technology. Hanks (Hanks 2010) has shown how the great strides in not just printing, but typography revolutionised dictionaries so that Lagadeuc remains a tough read, whilst the works of Estienne are quite legible to the modern eye. Obviously, legibility is only part of the process, improvements in the printing press made mass copies all the more easy, which explains the wide diffusion of dictionaries from the late seventeenth century onwards, and the very big print runs of the late nineteenth century that made dictionaries relatively cheap and accessible to a very wide readership. Now of course, we are moving to more and more electronic dictionaries, which makes speed of production even faster. However, whatever your technology, the real work of lexicography still needs a great deal of drudgery. Corpus linguistics has given us access to vast amounts of data, but you still need to look at it.

Is there anything wrong with being boring? Not really, in so far as lexicographers are quite harmless “not able or likely to cause harm” (ODE) and people carry on buying and using dictionaries. However, in not raising our profile, we could harm ourselves.

3.1 Showing Impact to the EC

In Europe, we have a wide variety of languages. We have one European Union, but a multitude of languages, and that costs. The USA only really has one language to worry about, but the EU has many and that is a problem. Or is it?

Language variety is often presented as a problem, and translating into the language of the community is seen as a cost. It seems a great shame that we continue to use the fall of the tower of Babel as a threat, when it is in reality a wealth. Europe has a wealth of languages, greater and less spoken ones and it would be a lot better if more European citizens could master several. Where does the EC fit in here?

Well, the EC is a major research funder, and the EC listens to lobbies, and national governments do have an influence. The much-vaunted Horizons 2020 funding stream gave only a tiny amount to the Social Sciences. Once you have removed the fact that they also added a lot of IT actions and mobility in this, there was precious little left for the SSH. The problem is also that SSH is used as a fig leaf as many of the calls are policy oriented, so that there is even less left for the humanities, and hence language research. To top that, the President of the Commission hived off a large chunk of the funding for his own pet projects leaving the whole framework programme seriously underfunded. Recent reports show that not a penny from the so-called ESFI funding stream is likely to ever get into universities (Stringfellow 1015)

If this was not bad enough, the SSH are supposedly embedded in other calls on the basis that SSH research need not be judged on its own merits but should contribute to other research. In theory, no proposal would be accepted without SSH input. That was the theory. The reality is that the biggest obstacle to success in much work is inevitably a breakdown in communication due to lack of provision for language. Surely lexicography could help here.

Lexicography has benefited from funding through the COST Networking programme with the European Network for e-Lexicography. We were lucky as COST has had its funding slashed and there are very few SSH representatives left in to committee of senior officers. The only answering is in lobbying, making the case for language.

My starting point was Georgia. Our colleagues in Georgia successfully campaigned for recognition. The same is needed everywhere. National governments need to understand that languages are important to their own national identity and that lexicography is a major tool in making that language policy work. If national government put pressure on the EC, then language issues will appear in the H2027 agenda. The EC power men will be reluctant, but they will have to listen. And before I am corrected, I do mean H2027 as that is what is being negotiated now. There is another important factor here, and that is that what happens at EC level is often mimicked blindly at national level, then regional level, and so the funding, or lack of, goes with it. France brought in France 2020 as its policy. Brittany brought in smart specialisation, which was not smart at all and simply continuing to blindly do what they had done before, and what they had done before failed to take language into account and inevitably ended up with communication problems. Have things been different elsewhere?

This needs to be said. Rather than just remaining harmless, we need to be a lobby for language.

3.2 Showing Impact in Research Evaluation Exercises

Whenever and wherever you have funded research, you have research evaluation. Research evaluation, like death and taxes, is always there, a necessary evil. This process takes many forms, sometimes it is national, and strongly linked to major funding streams, and sometimes not. Many countries have no national research evaluation programme, in which case it may be regional or

institutional. Methodologies vary, with some going for peer assessment and other for metrics. There is often a mix of the two. Some have clear policy issues in mind, some are much more vague. All impact research, and in our case lexicographical research.

Where does lexicography stand? The problem in general with evaluation is that there is a tendency to split research into two areas; the hard sciences where metrics reign and the SSH where anarchy reigns. The SSH are seen as a ragbag, and that is where the danger lies. At one level, there is in fact very little in common between publication patterns between the SS and the H, at another there is no real agreement as what disciplines go where, and anyway, is there a common strategy even within a discipline. Policy makers have rarely bothered to look. Added to this there are the problem disciplines. These tend to be multidisciplinary, something research is organised for in theory and shot down for in practice, and research that has more practical, and often vocational outcomes. Amongst the latter you will find archaeology, architecture, law, and lexicography

Lexicography is a discipline and a craft, and as a craft it is akin to engineering. What this means is that lexicography is a very wide field and whilst historical lexicographers may resemble historians, much of the work, especially anything vaguely computational, is highly applicative and directed towards immediate consumption. This means that we have a tendency to disseminate through conferences, and proceedings. In the pecking order of dissemination types, proceedings score low. The more aware countries are those that are referenced in the Web of Science or Scopus bibliographic databases. Not so many are so aware. Few realise the importance of the work carried out by Gilles-Maurice de Schryver and Paul Bogaards in raising the impact factor of the *International Journal of Lexicography* and in tackling the issue of the recognition of the proceedings.

Research indicators are changing all the time, it is worthwhile making sure they are adapted to us, or the risk of losing financing is real. Maybe we need to ask who we are and what we are doing and why. In the field of evaluation, Wouters summed things up nicely when he outlined the number of missions that research faces (the bulleted list is my adaptation):

- to produce knowledge for its own sake;
- to help define and solve economic and social problems;
- to create the knowledge base for further technological and social innovation;
- and to give meaning to actual cultural and social developments. (Wouters 2014)

The outputs of lexicography can tick all these boxes, we need to communicate about them.

Research evaluation is changing and is no longer just concerned numbers of publications, the big issue is societal impact. This does not mean paying lip service to citizen science and other empty EC buzz words, it means looking at how our field reaches out to society at large, and really means valorising all the interesting things we do that have been ignored by the purely metric vision of activity. The UK Research Excellence Framework has already implemented this, the Dutch Standard Evaluation Protocol (Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) et al. 2014) takes this forward. What is now a national evaluation system can be tomorrow's EU system, so it is time to participate in building those indicators.

Now, a leap back in time to a century when dictionaries were very much in vogue. To do this, I wish to highlight the achievements of two "harmless drudges", Antoine Furetière and Henri Basnage de Beauval, and show how Digital Humanities can contribute to lexicographical research by complementing, rather than replacing, existing research paradigms. My premise is that historical research needs financing and will adequate rewards in terms of societal impact and more, which brings me to my second challenge, that of digital humanities.

4 Furetière and Basnage: Why the Past is Important

The seventeenth century was an important time for French lexicography. In the 16th century, Robert Estienne had opened the way with his two ground-breaking dictionaries, but with the creation of the Académie Française in 1635 and its institutional dictionary project, lexicography suddenly became an important activity. Of course, funding was already an issue and sponsorship was eagerly sought. In fact, although the result of great scholarly endeavour, it was the foresight and commercial acumen of a publisher, Reinier Leers (1654-1714) that got the dictionary of Furetière on to the market.

The new century had started well with the publication of the *Thresor de la langue françoise tant ancienne que moderne* by Douceur in 1604, a dictionary grouping several sources, but most notably with the French-Latin dictionary of Jean Nicot, and ending with the dictionaries of Furetière, Basnage de Beauval and the *Académie*.

In fact, the Academy was very slow to actually getting down to work (Rey 2006) which is why one member, Antoine Furetière, decided to go it alone, and thereby wreaked upon himself the full wrath of the august body. During the period leading up to 1690 and the publication of his *Dictionnaire Universel*, several other dictionaries appeared, notably that of Richelet in 1680. Furetière published an outline of his dictionary in 1684 with the full work appearing posthumously in 1690. A second edition, much enlarged, came out in 1701, following the work of a French Huguenot Henri Basnage de Beauval. Both are referred to as «the Furetière», but that of Basnage is a much bigger and more interesting work, with the man himself remaining discretely in the background. We are lucky in that both editions of this dictionary, as well as numerous other French dictionaries, are freely available as PDF on the website of the Bibliothèque National de France, Gallica. Printing them and using a pencil, or better a highlighter, is one option, but digital tools allow us to do better, a freely accessible TEI conformant version is even better. Here, I shall essentially look at what can be seen and not with the technical aspects, which have been dealt with elsewhere (Williams Forthcoming; Williams et Galleron 2016).

4.1 Praising Furetière and Basnage

As said earlier, each generation owes to what went before, so Estienne was used by Nicot, Nicot was used by Richelet, and others in between, and Furetière used Richelet. Use means developing a headword list, rewriting definitions, and above all reusing the increasingly standardised features of page layout. Acknowledging was not so frequent, and this is one of the issues behind the fight between Furetière and the Academy. Furetière, a member of the Academy, claimed he has permission, privilege, to publish; the Academy claimed to have a monopoly. The Academy claimed he reused their text. He may have done, but he had probably written it too prior to his expulsion. The French intellectual élite has always had difficulty with anyone who does not toe the line, and that still has not changed. However, the interesting point is not the dictionary war, but who Furetière was and what he set out to achieve, and even more, who his successor was and what he did achieve.

The move from Furetière to Basnage is a fascinating one as it is the move from a successful Catholic churchman of bourgeois stock, with all the prejudices of his time, to the editorship of a protestant émigré of noble stock, with neither of them having set out to be lexicographers, but then again, who does?

Furetière was a man of his time. He had studied law, and gone into the church. He owned a couple of livings, and sold them up to buy an Abbacy, becoming Abbé de Chalivoi. He of course continued to live in Paris, but was buried there. He became a member of the Académie Française at a time when its

members were either members of the aristocracy or less well endowed intellectuals. As a member, Furetière automatically became involved in the dictionary project. The Academy was happily dithering over its dictionary, busy getting nowhere, a tradition that still holds to this day. Furetière was frustrated by two things: the slowness and the restriction of the dictionary to so-called polite language. The great importance of Furetière's contribution to lexicography was his decision to build a *Dictionnaire Universel*, a universal dictionary that would cover the majority of words that could be used in French, including, and above all, the language of the arts (crafts) and sciences, these having been excluded by the Academy. This dictionary gives an insight into seventeenth century life, including its culture and technology as no dictionary before had done. The depth of its information gives us an encyclopaedia before the concept had been developed. Furetière tended to be prescriptive, but he was not locked in to any notion of language purity but simply wanted to show that French was a mature language in which all matters could be discussed. There are thus numerous loan words. Although a staunch Catholic, and at ease with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which forced protestants to flee abroad, he negotiated successfully, with the assistance of the great French émigré thinker Pierre Bayle, himself the author of a dictionary, with a Dutch publisher, Leers. Thus, the first great dictionary of French was published in the Low Countries.

The Dictionary was a success, including at the French court. The success did push the Academy into action and its own dictionary was finally published in 1694 at the same time as a dictionary of arts and sciences by Thomas Corneille, who had been commissioned by the Academy to this aim so as to rival Furetière on specialised usage. Corneille's dictionary does owe a lot to that of Furetière. It was the arrival of these two dictionaries that brought Basnage de Beauval into lexicography, despite himself.

Leers knew the potential of lexicography. He was at the head of a publishing house with a significant position in the world of letters, notably with the periodical *Nouvelles de la République des lettres* founded by Pierre Bayle and Pierre Des Maiseaux in 1684 (Rey 2006). Ill health forced Bayle to abandon the periodical in 1687, but the need for such a publication was quickly satisfied by the *Histoire des ouvrages des savants*, edited for Leers by Henri Basnage de Beauval.

Basnage de Beauval was a lawyer, but like others who had had to flee France, he had to live by other means, and became a 'journalist'. Little has been written about Basnage apart from the introduction to a collection of his letters (Bots et Van Lieshout, 1984) and a page on Musée Virtuel des Dictionnaires website (Wionet, 1999). He is too often seen as simply the reviser of the great Furetière, when his analysis shows that he could equally be well treated as the great Basnage for his contribution to lexicography. His interest in the field already becomes apparent in a letter dated 22 December 1695 when he notes that: "Le dictionnaire de l'Académie française est desja imprimé icy. Et celui de M. Corneille le sera bientôt" (the dictionary of the Académie Française has already been printed here. And that of M. Corneille will be soon) (Bots et Van Lieshout 1984: 107). The dictionary had indeed been reprinted in Amsterdam, the market for dictionaries was too good to miss. To counter the sales of this new work, Leers needed to update that of Furetière, and turned to Basnage to do it. In a letter dated 20 June 1696, Basnage writes "Mrs Leers me present fort de m'engager à la revision de leur dictionnaire de Furetiere. Je leur ay seulement promis d'en passer quelques feuilles pour essayer mes forces" (Misters Leers are strongly pressuring me to accept to revise their dictionary of Furetière. I have only promised them to look at some pages so as to test my strength) (ibid. 114). He did find the strength and the Furetière went from being a 2160 page work to a three volume work of over 3200 pages.

The contribution of the Furetière - Basnage to lexicography, and the world of letters, was immense.

What can be underlined is its completeness. Furetière aimed to cover a maximum of words used not only in daily French of their time, but also specialised usage from crafts and sciences. This contribution can be summed up as being:

- **systematic**. A headword groups the various uses of a word with terms related to their domain as well as the different forms of the word, notably when a past participle becomes a modifier.
- **concise**. Entries can be very long, but the definitions, often by synonym, are clear and concise.
- **illustrative**. Later French dictionaries became dominated with the notion of prestige, citing the great authors. Here we find both examples and citations.
- **pedagogical**. The examples are frequent and illustrate word use as we would expect to find in a modern learner's dictionary and include numerous collocations.
- **encyclopaedic**. Citations are not simply prestige value but represent the state of the art of research at the time, leading to the intriguing possibility that Basnage was using a corpus. More of this will be said shortly.
- **scholarly**. Furetière and Basnage were in contact with the intellectual élite of the time. The texts of Furetière and Basnage are the result of great erudition illustrating word usage and when possible the etymology of the word.
- **culturally significant**. The Furetière is also the key to insights into the spread of French as the diplomatic and scholarly language of Europe for, as Bayle writes in the introduction to the 1690 version: "On l'entend ou on la parle dans toutes les Cours de l'Europe; & il n'est point rare d'y trouver des gens qui parlent François, & qui écrivent en François aussi purement que les François memes.[...] tant il est vray que le Latin n'est pas si commun en Europe aujourd'huy que la langue Françoise" (One hears it, or one speaks it in all the Courts of Europe; and it is not unusual to find people who speak French, and who write French as purely as the French themselves [...] it is so true that Latin is not so common in Europe today as the French language) (Furetière 1690: 11). Furetière - Basnage helped the spread of French as a language. Lexicography is and was a major cultural tool, and a major preserver and promoter of language and languages.
- **corpus-based**. This great contribution of Basnage is altogether more speculative and worthy of investigation. Basnage was not just like cherry-picking authors to give prestige to a given word, he was drawing information from a growing corpus of data that he was publishing through his journal, the *Histoire des ouvrages des savants*.

As Bots and Van Lieshout point out (op.cit.), Basnage was the recipient of most of the major works published at his time and at the centre of a network of correspondents. Even if most of his letters have been lost, many were actually printed as extracts in the journal. As Basnage added copious references in his version of the dictionary, it should be possible to trace much back to the journal and his other sources. Increasing access to digitalised documents will make the constitution of the corpus possible, and give even deeper insights. This will be the contribution of Digital Humanities.

4.2 Digital Humanities

Digital Humanities are a relatively recent phenomenon bringing together many aspects of research that went under separate names before, but which were clearly inter-related, such as corpus analysis and text mark-up following the TEI guidelines.

Retro-digitalisation is a major activity with the COST action European Network of e-Lexicography (<http://www.elexicography.eu>). ENeL is actively making historical texts available in a digital format, thereby making the knowledge and insights of the past. It may be fun trying to distinguish the *f* from *s* in early texts, but if you are after content, then it is better to have access to modern spelling. The

procedures of the Text Encoding Initiative allow us to multiply the possible versions and mean that texts can be freed from library archives and commercial databases. Digital Humanities have a lot to offer to historical lexicography, provided, as said before, that we place the humanities above the digital. The Basnage project (Williams, Forthcoming) seeks to create a digital version of the 1701 version of Furetière's dictionary. Given the size of the task, we are starting by mapping and marking up the terms marked as such in the dictionary. Our aim is to give free access to a resource that can then be used and added to by researchers in lexicography and in other fields, notably history, but also architecture and many others. This is a project in praise of lexicography and in praise of a great lexicographical endeavour that marked the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and beyond. This is historical lexicography linked to the power of digital humanities with the aim of developing tools for the humanities that will ease humanities research rather than simply trying to change the paradigm.

5 Conclusion

Dictionaries are complex documents, so lexicography is contributing a lot to making knowledge available. In a Knowledge society, lexicography helps structure that knowledge; in citizen science, it mediates between words and their meanings so making knowledge more widely available. New technologies make many lexicographical tasks easier and are also changing the ways we access lexicographical data. But behind the data, there is always lexicographical practice that calls on the skills and knowledge of lexicographers. Raising the profile means making clear to funders and evaluators that there is more to lexicography than meets the eye and that it deserves both recognition and funding.

Lexicography was important in the past, and is now. If Furetière and Basnage drew a picture of late seventeenth century life and language, then it provides us with an insight into that society.

Through Basnage Furetière, we can:

- access the terminology of crafts, trades and science,
- know how crafts and trades worked,
- learn more about attitudes to life and times,
- gain access to a knowledge network

and much more as historical lexicography opens windows on the past and brings potentially vital information in areas as diverse as medicine and the environment. Modern lexicography is far less idiosyncratic, but infinitely rich in other ways. Lexicography maintains the wealth of European language variety, and makes that wealth available to a wider audience. Lexicography is not in danger, but funding is. Raising the profile can only be good for all aspects of our praiseworthy field.

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of the COST Action IS1305 ENeL in allowing him to talk with other lonely souls tackling the arduous task of creating a digital version of a historical dictionary. He also thanks COST Action 15137 ENRESSH, which has allowed him to explore the issues facing SSH research. This work also benefits from recognition from the French CAHIER Consortium, part of HumaNum. Finally, he thanks himself for having funded and continuing to fund research on the Furetière-Basnage dictionary.