

**Immuno-
surveillance³⁾
linked
to QALY⁴⁾**

II

OK-RM

IN OTHER WORDS ...

01/2009

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is no
big whoop⁶⁾**

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hellzapoppin²⁾
topic**

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**A Living Document
An Abbreviated History of the
Oxford English Dictionary**

In 1857 the Philological Society of London formed an 'Unregistered Words Committee' to search for unlisted and undefined words lacking in current dictionaries and create a complete lexicon of the English Language from Anglo-Saxon times onward. 800 volunteer readers contributed 'quotation slips' to editors who recorded the etymologies, forms and senses of words.

In 1879 Oxford University Press agreed to print the Dictionary. James Murray took over editorship, hoping to finish the project in ten years. The dictionary was to be published as interval fascicles, with the final form in four 6,400 page volumes. Examining seven centuries of language usage and recording new words and meanings proved a formidable task; after five years Murray's team had only reached the word 'ant', and were forced to reconsider their schedule.

Over the next forty years the Dictionary was published in many fascicles at a steady rate until the last volume was completed in 1928, and after 1933 all work on the Diction-

ary was stopped. However the constantly evolving nature of the English language meant that within twenty years it was outdated. Testament to the Dictionary as a living document, the OED online now accommodates this rapid growth and change, updated every quarter with new and revised words and senses. Sixteen of these are put to the test in this publication.

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E.M.Murray J.A.H.Murray R.N.Murray

A photograph taken in the Scriptorium for
'The Periodical' No. 199
(A fortnight before Sir James Murray's death)

**IN OTHER
WORDS...**

...Seven new sentences
exercising sixteen
new & revised words
& senses updated
by the Oxford English
Dictionary, 2008/09

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1) Radiophysics *n.*¹

This homograph (words which have the same spelling but different origins and meanings) specifically refers to the branch of physics that deals with ionizing radiation. This process is strong enough to provoke the separation of electrons from atoms or molecules, i.e. Its ionizing ability.

2) Hellzapoppin' *adj.*

According to the OED, it is a contraction of 'hell's a-popping' which means more or less 'all hell is breaking loose'. This notion surely came to the minds of the writers and directors of the homonymous musical (1938) and of the film that followed (1941). The former starts with a scene in which Hitler speaks in a Yiddish accent and is full of slapsticks, the latter features legendary swing dance scenes. Both were full of action and that's basically what hellzapoppin' means today.

3) Immunosurveillance *n.*

Also called 'immunological surveillance'. Refers to the monitoring of the immune system, more specifically in the screening of cancer. It is thus literally a surveillance of the immune system able to detect possible 'immunoproliferative and immunodeficient disorders or any auto-immune abnormalities'. It is deficient in people who can be potentially affected with cancer whose neoplastic cells fail to be detected and destroyed.

4) QALY *n.*

An acronym that comes from medical discourse into standard usage to mean 'quality of life'. Standing for 'quality adjusted life year', QALY is a measurement of how far life expectancy is extended by medical intervention. Each year in perfect health after treatment is assigned 1.0 down to 0.0 for death, with negative numbers for states that are considered worse. The accuracy and value of such a measurement system has been disputed: can death really be considered a state of health?

I

II

5) Ecopolitics *n.*¹

Hopefully, if you google 'ecopolitics' you are most likely to encounter 'eco-politics *n.*²' and will find yourself in the spheres of environmentalism, sustainability, social movements or ecotopias. Yet, the green of dollar bills may well make a come back and overshadow the green of nature. Effectively, the OED has brought economics back into our dictionaries. But on the side of political agendas, one should hope that 'eco-politics' remain in its safe place.

6) Big Whoop *int. or n.*

A North American colloquial expression meaning 'big deal' or 'important issue'. Used ironically to dismiss something or to express one's indifference towards something deemed unimportant or trivial such as in the following example:

"I heard Suzie saying to her friend:
Your outfit's always a bit over the top".
"Oh big whoop".

7) Cookie Cutter *n. or adj.*

A cookie cutter is a metal cooking implement used to cut shapes from dough, most commonly circles, stars and hearts. As an adjective, the term 'cookie cutter' is used to describe things which are conformist, denoting the repetitive pattern created by this kitchen utensil, and rather depreciatively refers to a lack of individuality and formulaic unoriginality. Like 'chocolate box', the term 'cookie cutter' has a sweet but conformist ring to it.

8) Puttanesca *n.*

Allegedly and etymologically, the dish of prostitutes. Derived from puttana, the Italian for 'whore', and the suffix -esque meaning 'in the manner of' Puttanesca is a simple tomato sauce made 'whore-style'. It contains anchovies, olives, capers, black pepper, and spiced with chilli for extra jasm. Purportedly, its aphrodisiac qualities and pungent smell was like a siren's call to men, but was also easy to prepare between clients. It has quickly become a British staple, like Bolognese and Lasagne before it.

III

IV

9) Big *n.*

The contemporary verbal use of 'big' with 'up', announces one's utmost respect or gratitude for something or someone. From its West Indian roots the street term 'big up' has been spread globally through hip hop music.

10) Jasm *n.*

As an acronym, jasm has many contemporary meanings including Junior Assistant Scoutmaster. It is also a version of jism, vulgar slang for semen. From this etymological strain we get a zest for life, spunk, accomplishment and drive. Jasm also springs from its archaic American usage as a variant of jazz: Which, like the music so vividly described by Jack Kerouac's beat generation, has an urgency, vibrancy and energy all of its own.

11) Godzone *n.*

Originally invented 120 years ago by New Zealanders to describe their own country, Godzone is a response to the very terrestrial need to define one's homeland in divine terms. This word cumulates such need with a humorous respelling of the original expression "God's Own Country".

V

12) Hot Swap *n.*

A hot swap is the action of replacing a hard drive, CD-ROM drive, or power supply with a similar device while the computer system using it remains in operation, usually with the aim of improving performance. It also names the plug-in component that allows the hot swap to happen without damaging equipment. Performing a hot swap, or referring to the device is primarily industry jargon. There it has also mutated into verb form, where talk of 'hot swapping' appears on techno-websites.

13) Subprime *adj.*

Refers to borrowers who are 'below prime', i.e. who do not satisfy the market's usual interest rate criteria. Subprime borrowers have had bad press as the proliferation of subprime loans has been the predominant cause of the current 'credit crunch'. A more popular acceptance of subprime equates it with 'not top-notch' or simply with 'uncool'.

VI

14) Wantaway *adj.*

While its literary predecessor 'get-away' makes a successful swift exit, a 'wantaway' describes someone longing to leave. Connoting disloyal aspirations, like the footballer who wants a transfer to a new club, or the wife wishing to leave her husband.

15) Girlcott *v.*

With a wry word alteration Girlcoter's allude to their feminist power. The word first appeared in an 1884 newspaper sketch. Claims to political equality are slightly misguided however: The 'boy' in 'boycott' does not refer to gender, but comes from 19th century landowner Charles Boycott who was socially ostracized because he refused to lower rents.

16) Blankie *n.*

Babies talk funny, unless it is their parents who make words sound childish. In any case, as the OED asserts "the lexical innovations of children are often so short-lived or idiosyncratic that they do not gain widespread currency outside of a particular family". Yet, your blanket has become an exception.

VII

01/2009

IN OTHER WORDS ..

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