

## The History and Near Term Future of the NASPA Lexica

In the 1970's, tournament SCRABBLE players used Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary for adjudication.

Someone had to make sure to bring along one of those bulky books for a tournament to take place. And the F&W's listings were open to interpretation by adjudicators. For instance, "usually capitalized" meant that it did not have to be, thus acceptable in tournament play, unless the director was wont to not see it that way. And, if you played MAKUTA, you had better have known that it was the plural of LIKUTA and instructed the adjudicator to look under L as MAKUTA was not listed under M.

By the time I started playing in 1980, the Official SCRABBLE Players Dictionary (OSPD) was in use (1978). This was a great dictionary that included all 2-8 letter words and their inflections acceptable in SCRABBLE tournament play. For longer words, the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary 8th Edition (MWCD8) was used. This ended all arguments. If it was there, it was good. If it was not there, it was not good.

MWCD8 was in use up to November 1, 1984 when MWCD 9th Edition was introduced for tournament play. On November 2, 1984, at the Grand Canyon tournament, co-organized by Dr. Michael Baron and the late, great Stan Rubinsky and directed by Stan, they did not have the new 9th edition there. They had the 8th. I was playing Mike Baron in a game and had the rack AILNNU?. The word ZING was on the board and I extended the word forming ANNUaLIZING. Mike challenged. It was ruled unacceptable. Fortunately, I ended up winning that game and the event. I saw that ANNUALIZE was in my M-W Unabridged and as it turned out, it was acceptable in MWCD 9th which was to be in use that very day!!

OSPD2 came out around 1990. At some point after its publishing, a non-tournament player was surprised and offended to see JEW not only listed as a word, but listed as a verb. "To bargain with. Usually considered offensive." This prompted a letter to the then president of Hasbro. Since Hasbro views Scrabble as a family game, and wished to avoid a public relations nightmare, the mandate came to publish OSPD3 that removed \*all\* offensive words. M-W took little chance. Words such as PAPIST – "a Catholic. Usually considered offensive." ABO – "an aborigine. Usually considered offensive," and a host of other words that one might deem offensive were removed.

But, SCRABBLE tournament players did NOT want these words removed. There was much ado. Mike Baron created a list of all of those expunged words to give to directors for adjudication and to players for study (and amusement!). He entitled the list, appropriately enough, "The POO List." POO – "to defecate – usually considered offensive."

M-W was allowed to publish a word list for tournament players only – "The Tournament Word List" (TWL). This was in 1998. This effort included all words found in OSPD3, all of the POO words and words up to 9 letters long and their inflections included in MWCD9 (and now MWCD10) – including ANNUALIZING. Then, OSPD4 and TWL2 were published in 2006. TWL2 is in use today.

SCRABBLE players are quite passionate about their words. Each update brings forth some controversy. Not only with words that are added, but with words that have been deleted. Some notable deletions

over the years have been da, aine, ainee, alnicoes (now ALNICOS only), kev (added and deleted) and emf (added and deleted).

Currently, the Dictionary Committee, chaired by longtime member Jim Pate, is in the throes of recommending words to Merriam Webster for the next update to our word list (TWL3) and OSPD5 planned for mid-2014. Jim, John Chew and I all visited M-W headquarters in Springfield, MA in August, 2012 to meet with the M-W staff and determine the source dictionaries for the next update. Those dictionaries are The Canadian Oxford Dictionary and The Oxford College Dictionary.

The committee members are going through these dictionaries word by word and noting not only proposed new additions, but making salient queries about inclusions and non-inclusions for consistency's sake. (e.g. CALIBER, CALIBRE, CALIBRED as an adjective of CALIBRE are acceptable, but \*not\* CALIBERED\* as an adjective of CALIBER!). Which words ending in O should be able to be pluralized by adding an S only, by adding –ES only, or both? Which adjectives ending in Y should compare (MILTY, MILTIER, MILTIEST) or not (FLOURY and BREADY only)? What can be one that does something (a MILTER is one that milts, but even if you drool, you cannot a drooler)? What –ING words are gerunds (GOLFINGS, BOWLINGS) and which ones are not (FEEDING, HEALING, SEEDING)?

The Dictionary Committee members are named on our website on this page:  
[http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/w/Dictionary\\_Committee](http://www.scrabbleplayers.org/w/Dictionary_Committee)

I am proud to list them here:

Timothy Bottorff, Ross Brown, James Cherry, Kurt Davies, Robert Gillis, Peter Huszagh, Chris Lipe, Bob Lipton, George MacAuley, Anna Miransky, Paul Mulik, and Matthew Tunnicliffe.

Directors, please introduce and honor them at your events. Players, please thank them for their exhaustive work.

Jim Pate is on a mission to include the word “unsweet.” Not only as in unsweet tea (vs. sweet tea), a Southern US term and one that is written on the tea dispenser at my SCRABBLE Club in Dallas at the Whataburger where we meet, but unsweet wine or an unsweet person. M-W has numerous citations of this word in use, but has not seen fit to add it yet. We shall see if Jim can persuade them!

What words do you think should be added in the next update? Send an email to [naspa-dictionary@yahoo.com](mailto:naspa-dictionary@yahoo.com) and let them know!

Chris Cree