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## Cahiers de lexicologie

Dictionnaires et orthographe

SOUS LA DIRECTION DE CHRISTINE JACQUET-PFAU  
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### L'orthographe de la langue anglaise, les lexicographes et les dictionnaires

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- **Abstract:** Dictionaries can play a part in the standardization of the spelling of a language, because lexicographers must choose among the variants and their choices are often interpreted as the norm by the dictionary users. In France, the dictionaries have been instruments for the dissemination of the preferences of the political authorities and of the Academy. But in England dictionaries have been compiled by independent authors and they have always been content with the description of usage. As a consequence they have had little influence on the evolution of spelling, despite the prestige of such lexicographers as Samuel Johnson or of such dictionaries as the Oxford English Dictionary. In the United States, the people needed norms and rules, and Noah Webster was able to suggest new spellings that became the norm through his dictionaries and a few others, with the help of spelling manuals and of teachers for whom the question of spelling was important. English spelling is the result of the mixing of the French and the Saxon traditions, together with a sprinkling of Greek and Latin, and it now has two distinct standards, one British and the other American, with variations within each standard, particularly in England. Dictionaries have played very different roles in the construction of those two norms.
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