

L. TRAP-JENSEN: *State-of-the-art...*

STATE-OF-THE-ART ON MONOLINGUAL LEXICOGRAPHY FOR DENMARK (DANISH)

Lars TRAP-JENSEN

Danish Society for Language and Literature¹

Trap-Jensen, L. (2019). State-of-the-art on monolingual lexicography for Denmark (Danish). Slovenščina 2.0, 7 (1): 1–12.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4312/slo2.0.2019.1.1-12>.

This minireview provides an overview of the lexicographic situation in Denmark, introducing the most important dictionary works. The major historical dictionaries are mentioned but the main focus is on contemporary lexicography and the companies and institutions currently active in the field. In particular, it is noted whether dictionaries are digitally available and if they are subject to regular updating.

Keywords: dictionaries, lexicography, Danish

1 THE GENERAL STATUS OF LEXICOGRAPHY IN DENMARK

Denmark has a long and active lexicographic tradition, dating back to at least the 17th century (for a detailed overview, see e.g. Hjorth (1990); Malmgren, Sköldberg (2013)) and including reference works of almost all types and genres: monolingual and bilingual, dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as a broad range of specialized dictionaries.

As a consequence of the digital revolution, printed dictionaries are becoming increasingly rare, and only few new dictionaries are now published in print. Where the print market used to be characterized by a variety of both large and small dictionary suppliers, the commercial market today is dominated by two major players: [ordbogen.com](https://www.ordbogen.com) and Gyldendal Publishers.²

1 Thanks to my colleagues Henrik Lorentzen and Mette Marie Møller Svendsen for commenting and checking the text.

2 Available at <https://www.ordbogen.com> and <https://ordbog.gyldendal.dk/#>

Public lexicography takes place in different institutions. For more than a hundred years, the Society for Danish Language and Literature in Copenhagen (DSL) has published dictionaries and lexical resources and also contributed to meta-lexicography and the academic development of the field. A Centre for Lexicography was created at the Aarhus School of Business in 1996 (today merged with Aarhus University), and the centre holds the only academic chair in lexicography in the country – for a time they even held two professorships. In addition to research in meta-lexicography, the centre has published a number of dictionaries, one monolingual and a range of specialized dictionaries within accounting, phraseology, music, and technical bilingual dictionaries. Practical lexicography also takes place at the University of Copenhagen where long-term dictionary projects on old Norse prose³ and the insular dialects are housed (see below). A parallel project for Jutlandic dialects is located at Aarhus University (see below). Finally, the Danish Language Council edits the official spelling dictionary as well as a dictionary of new words.⁴

The use of corpora is, on the whole, restricted to experts and students in the field of language and linguistics. A general corpus developed by DSL is available to the public, but Google Analytics statistics confirm that the number of daily users are below 1,000 – as compared to the 100,000 visitors to the general dictionaries from the same website (ordnet.dk).

Crowdsourcing as a way of creating lexical resources is mainly limited to Wikipedia and Wiktionary. These projects are quite successful with 232,311 and 38,266 headwords respectively (19 October 2017), and this could have a positive spillover effect on other projects in the future.

Knowledge of user behaviour and dictionary consulting strategies is not widespread. Some articles are available on the use and interpretation of log files, mainly from DSL and the Centre for Lexicography in Aarhus (see e.g. Lørentzen, Theilgaard (2012); Bergenholtz, Johnsen (2005); Almind (2008)), and DSL has prepared two internal reports following two user studies (internet surveys with questionnaire followed by observation and interviews on actual usage), see Johannsen (2011), Svendsen (2016).

3 Available at <https://onp.ku.dk/>

4 Available at <https://dsn.dk/>

2 INTERNET ACCESS

According to the latest report from Statistics Denmark (Elkjær et al., 2017), the Danish population ranks among the highest in Europe on internet access: 97% of the population use the internet for surfing, 94% of all families have an internet connection in their homes, and 94% have broadband at home. 89% of the Danes use the internet on a daily basis, as opposed to 71% on average among the EU citizens, and only 2% have never used the internet. It follows that technical barriers for access to online reference works are negligible in Denmark, and as the correlation between age and internet access is strong, coverage can be expected to approach 100% in the years to come.

3 MAJOR DICTIONARIES IN DENMARK

For ease of overview, we may divide the most important Danish dictionary works into the following general groups:

- a) Dictionaries that were edited and published in the time before computers and the internet and are only available as printed books.
- b) Dictionaries that were edited and published in the time before computers and the internet, but were retrodigitized and are available both in print and as digital products in book-near format.
- c) Dictionaries and other reference works that are available in digital form. Most of these were compiled for print publication but have been adapted for access as online dictionaries, apps or other digital formats, and they are often updated regularly.
- d) Dictionaries and reference works that were conceived as digital products for electronic publication and are updated continuously.

The first group consists of historical dictionaries that have not been retrodigitized. The most important ones that are only available as print dictionaries are:

- Some dialects dictionaries. Danish dialects are divided into three main groups: 1) Bornholm, 2) the Islands and 3) Jutland. Vilhelm Thomsen's *Bornholmsk Ordbog* from 1923 is the standard work for the first group. The insular dialects are described in an ongoing project, *Ømålsordbogen* (Dictionary of the Insular Dialects) at the University of Copenhagen.

Publication started in 1992, and until now 11 volumes have appeared (covering A-L), so far in print only. The Jutlandic dialects are described in a similar project, *Jysk Ordbog* (Dictionary of Jutlandic Dialects), carried out by the University of Aarhus, but unlike its sister projects it is only available online, so far covering the letters A-I.⁵

- Dahl & Hammer's *Dansk Ordbog for Folket* (Danish Dictionary for the People), a two-volume monolingual dictionary of Danish published 1907/1914 as a successor for Molbech's *Dansk Ordbog* (see below).
- A number of learner's dictionaries exist for languages of immigrants to Denmark, notably the series of basic bilingual dictionaries published by Specialpædagogisk Forlag for languages such as Chinese, Thai, Serbo-Croatian, Tamil, Albanian, Kurdish, Persian, Somali and Turkish.
- Two fairly recent dictionaries of Danish pronunciation were published around 1990, by Munksgaard and Gyldendal Publishers respectively, neither of which has been digitized so far.

In group b) we note the existence of a number of retrodigitized dictionaries, of somewhat uneven quality. A number of important dictionaries have been retrodigitized using double keying with excellent results, mainly under the auspices of DSL. Among these should be mentioned:

- *Ordbog over det danske Sprog* (Dictionary of the Danish Language) which appeared in 28 volumes between 1918 and 1956, with five supplementary volumes published 1992-2005. With more than 225,000 headwords, this dictionary is traditionally considered the national dictionary for Danish. It was retrodigitized in China following the model of Grimm's dictionary for German. An online version was published in 2005 and the model was later used for digitizing other historical dictionaries at DSL.
- *Moths Ordbog* (Moth's Dictionary) is the first monolingual dictionary of Danish, compiled c. 1686–1719 by Mathias Moth, a leading government officer to King Christian V. His work comprises 105,000 headwords divided between a dictionary and an encyclopedia, but it was never published in Moth's time and only existed as a manuscript at the

5 Available at <http://www.jyskordbog.dk/>

Royal Library in Copenhagen until it was retrodigitized and published in 2013.

- Holberg-Ordbog (The Holberg Dictionary) describes the entire vocabulary in the writings of the Danish-Norwegian author Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754). The original print dictionary appeared in 5 volumes 1981–1988.
- Meyers Fremmedordbog (Meyer’s Dictionary of Foreign Words) comprises more than 80,000 headwords of foreign origin. This was a standard dictionary that appeared in many revised editions between 1837 and 1924.
- Kalkars Ordbog (Kalkar’s Dictionary) is a dictionary of the early stages of the Danish language, covering the period 1300–1700, and was first published in four volumes 1881–1907 with a supplementary volume in 1918. It was retrodigitized in 2017.
- Jensen & Goldschmidt’s Latinsk-Dansk Ordbog (Latin-Danish Dictionary) is the standard dictionary of its kind, first published 1886 and with its 19,000 headwords still widely used by students of Latin. It was retrodigitized in 2017.

Among other retrodigitized dictionaries, the following deserve mention:

- E. Jessen’s Dansk Etymologisk Ordbog (Danish Etymological Dictionary) from 1893, available as scanned PDF images with the headword list indexed and linking to the relevant page. Newer etymological dictionaries exist but are not freely available online.

A number of historical dictionaries are available as part of the Google Book project (searchable PDF files of the original page), the most important of which include:

- Videnskabernes Selskabs Ordbog (Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters), compiled over a long period and published in eight volumes between 1793 and 1905.
- V. Kristiansen’s Bidrag til en Ordbog over Gadesproget og saakaldt daglig Tale (Contribution to a Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue and So-called Everyday Language) from 1866, second edition 1908, the first slang dictionary for Danish.

- Molbech's Dansk Ordbog in two volumes, published in 1833 (first edition) and again 1854–1859 (second edition), the standard monolingual dictionary used in the 19th century.
- The aforementioned Bornholmsk Ordbog by Vilhelm Thomsen from 1923.

The third major group is made up of dictionaries that started their lives as print dictionaries. Some of them were edited electronically, others converted to digital form and marked up for use as e-dictionaries. Most, but not all, are updated, although to varying degrees. The most important ones are the following:

- Den Danske Ordbog (The Danish Dictionary), first published in six volumes by DSL in 2003-2005, then converted from SGML to XML and prepared for electronic publication. Since 2009 it has been available as an online dictionary and, since 2013, as an app for iOS and Android users. The dictionary is updated 2–3 times a year and at present contains (October 2018) c. 100,000 headwords.
- Nudansk Ordbog (Dictionary of contemporary Danish) was the standard collegiate monolingual Danish dictionary before The Danish Dictionary, published by Politiken Publishers in a number of editions since the first edition in 1953. Historically an abridged edition of Ordbog over det danske Sprog, the dictionary was completely revised in the 1990s. The 21st edition from 2010 was the last print edition, and since then the dictionary has been available in an online version from the dictionary site ordbogen.com, to my knowledge with only a minimum of updating. Available (from the website ordbogen.com) online and as an app.
- Den Danske Netordbog (The Danish Internet Dictionary) is also available from ordbogen.com. The online dictionary builds on the single-volume print dictionary DanskOrdbogen, edited by H. Bergenholtz and his team at the Centre for Lexicography at Aarhus University and first published by Systime Publishers in 1999. It contains a large number of headwords, c. 117,000, but the semantic description is more condensed than in the other monolingual dictionaries in this group. Available (from the website ordbogen.com) online and as an app.

- Den Danske Begrebsordbog is a modern thesaurus for Danish, based on the inventory of Den Danske Ordbog. It was published by DSL as a single-volume print dictionary in 2014 and still awaits online publication. However, parts of it has been used in a separate thesaurus function in The Danish Dictionary
- There are two major competing commercial companies that offer online dictionaries to their customers: *ordbogen.com* and Gyldendal Publishers. Both offer a range of dictionaries from a single website. Apart from the monolingual dictionaries already mentioned, these include in particular bilingual and specialized dictionaries. Gyldendal has a tradition reaching back several centuries as providers of both medium-sized and large bilingual dictionaries with more than 80 dictionaries in their portfolio, the most prominent being Vinterberg & Bodelsen's Dansk-Engelsk (Danish-English) and Kjørulff Nielsen's Engelsk-Dansk (English-Danish) dictionaries, both with headword lists well over 100,000, Blinkenberg & Høybye's Dansk-Fransk (Danish-French) (c. 172,000 headwords) and Fransk-Dansk (French-Danish) (c. 85,000 headwords) dictionaries, Bergstrøm-Nielsen et al. Dansk-Tysk (Danish-German) (c. 100,000 headwords), J.E. Mogensén et al. Tysk-Dansk (German-Danish) (c. 80,000 headwords). *Ordbogen.com* hosts small to medium-sized bilingual dictionaries for English, German, Arabic, Swedish, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. Both companies also offer specialized dictionaries, e.g. for spelling, technical English and German, synonyms, idioms, accounting, primary school children, foreign words, and more. Both companies have a website that gives subscribers access to a number of dictionaries and a similar solution via their apps.
- A medium-sized Swedish-Danish dictionary (56,000 headwords) was published by DSL in 2010 and published online in 2018⁶.
- Another dictionary in this group is *Retskrivningsordbogen*, the official spelling dictionary published by the Danish Language Council and with annual updates. Available online (free from their own website and for subscribers from *ordbogen.com* and Gyldendal) and as an app.

6 <https://sdo.dsl.dk/>

The only e-dictionaries that were conceived digitally are, to my knowledge, the Danish part of the Wiktionary project and a series of online dictionaries for immigrants, the Lexin project. Lexin started as a Swedish initiative that was exported to the other Nordic countries, but in Denmark it never expanded as much as in Sweden and Norway where they are valuable resources for more than 20 languages. For Danish, Lexin is notably useful through a series of multilingual interactive thematic image databases for learning exercises, whereas the dictionary proper seems to have been discontinued.

4 DICTIONARIES AS NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Big multi-volume dictionaries have always had a status as national symbols for its users. In Denmark, *Ordbog over det danske Sprog* had this role for many years as the most comprehensive and generally very trustworthy dictionary, although *Nudansk Ordbog*, as the concise and more affordable alternative, was the more popular dictionary until *Den Danske Ordbog* arrived, in terms of number of editions and copies sold. As an online dictionary, *Den Danske Ordbog* is consulted about 10 times as often as *Ordbog over det danske Sprog*, and, as the only freely available monolingual dictionary, it has become the standard dictionary with more than 100,000 users every day (as expressed by Google Analytics' "Users").

5 SPELLING DICTIONARIES

The Danish Language Council has been authorized to determine the official orthography for Danish and their decisions are published in *Retskrivningsordbogen* (The Spelling Dictionary). All governmental institutions and the educational system must follow the orthography. Other spelling dictionaries have been published (notably by Gyldendal Publishers and Politiken Publishers), but only the one by the Language Council has status as authoritative. A monolingual dictionary like DDO is in concordance with the official spelling and may be used as a spelling dictionary. This is to a lesser degree the case for *Den Danske Netordbog*, as a characteristic feature of this dictionary is its wish to recommend one and only one form, also in cases where the official orthography allows freedom of choice between different forms.

6 AVAILABILITY OF DICTIONARIES IN DENMARK

The two major private companies, ordbogen.com and Gyldendal Publishers, both offer their dictionary products to subscribers for a fee. Annual fees vary between 228 and 2388 DKK (c. 30 to 320 Euros) for ordbogen.com, which offers three different packages, and between 49 and 250 DKK (c. 6.5 to 34 Euros) for single products from Gyldendal Publishers. The dictionaries provided by DSL as e-dictionaries (DDO, ODS and various retro-digitized historical dictionaries) are published free of charge (and advertisements).

7 DICTIONARIES IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

To my knowledge, teaching dictionary skills is part of the curriculum for students at upper secondary level in the school system. Teachers in primary education who take a particular interest in dictionaries may choose to include look-up skills in their teaching, but my impression is that this is an exception rather than the rule.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The overview has shown, I hope, that the Danish language is well described lexicographically, spanning more than three centuries and covering the entire palette of dictionary genres. This is not to say that there are no challenges for dictionary-makers in the digital age: as elsewhere, private companies in Denmark are under pressure and many have been forced to quit the trade, while others are still looking for cost-effective business models. Meanwhile, the market has been concentrated between fewer providers, and dictionary-making is being increasingly dependent on public funding, especially when it comes to comprehensive dictionaries. In a globalized world dominated by the English language, it seems necessary to make language resources and language descriptions a political priority if we want to keep the language fully operational at all levels of society.

REFERENCES

- Almind, R. (2008). Søgemønstre i logfiler (Search Patterns in Logfiles). *LexicoNordica* 15, 33–55.
- Bergenholtz, H., & Johnsen, M. (2005). Logfiles as a Tool for Improving Internet Dictionaries. *HERMES* 34, 117–141.
- Dahl, B.T., & Hammer, H. (1907/1914). *Dansk Ordbog for Folket I-II* (Danish Dictionary for the People), Copenhagen, Gyldendal Publishers.
- Den Danske Ordbog* (The Danish Dictionary). DSL. Retrieved from <http://ordnet.dk/ddo>
- Elkjær K., Lahn Mittet E., & Tassy A. (Eds.) (2017). *It-anvendelse i befolkningen – EU-sammenligninger 2016*. Danmarks Statistik, May 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/GetPubFile.aspx?id=20744&sid=itanvbefeu2016>
- Gyldendals ordbøger. Retrieved from <https://ordbog.gyldendal.dk>
- Hjorth, P. L. (1990). Danish Lexicography. In F. J. Hausmann, O. Reichmann, H. E. Wiegand & L. Zgusta (Eds.), *HSK: Wörterbücher, Dictionaries, Dictionnaires, Vol. II*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 1913–22.
- Holberg-Ordbog*. DSL. Retrieved from <https://holbergordbog.dk>
- Jessen, E. (1893). *Dansk Etymologisk Ordbog* (Danish Etymological Dictionary). Retrieved from <http://runeberg.org/danetyim>
- Jensen, J.N. et al. *Nye Ord i Dansk*. Danish Language Council. Retrieved from <https://dsn.dk>
- Johannsen, S. (2011). *Brugerundersøgelse af Den Danske Ordbog for DSL* (User experience survey of The Danish Dictionary, for DSL), internal report, DSL.
- Kalkars Ordbog*. Digital version by DSL. Retrieved from <https://kalkarsordbog.dk>
- Jysk Ordbog* (Dictionary of Jutlandic Dialects). Retrieved from <http://www.jysk-ordbog.dk>
- Kristensen, K., Boisen, E. & Folkmann, P. (2010). *Svensk-Dansk Ordbog*. DSL and JP/Politikens Forlagshus A/S. Digital version by DSL. Retrieved from <https://sdo.dsl.dk>
- Kristiansen, V. (1908). *Bidrag til en Ordbog over Gadesproget og saakaldt daglig Tale* (Contribution to a Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue and so-called everyday Language), 2nd edition, Copenhagen. Retrieved from

<https://ia601404.us.archive.org/29/items/ordbogovergadesookrisgoog/ordbogovergadesookrisgoog.pdf>

Lexin. Retrieved from <https://www.emu.dk/grundskole/dansk-som-andetsprog/sproglig-udvikling/lexin-billedtema>

Lorentzen, H., & Theilgaard, L. (2012). Online dictionaries – how do users find them and what do they do once they have? In R. Vatvedt Fjeld & J. M. Torjusen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 15th EURALEX International Congress*, Oslo, Norway, pp. 654–660.

Malmgren, S.G. & Sköldbeg E. (2013). The Lexicography of Swedish and other Scandinavian Languages. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 26(2), 117–134.

Meyers Fremmedordbog (Meyer’s Dictionary of Foreign Words). Digital version by DSL. Available at <https://meyersfremmedordbog.dk>

Molbech, C. (1859). *Dansk Ordbog*, 2nd edition. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dk/books?id=2xQRAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=da#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Moths Ordbog. Digital version by DSL. Available at <http://mothsordbog.dk>

Nimb, S., et al. (2014). *Den Danske Begrebsordbog* (The Danish Thesaurus), DSL and Syddansk Universitetsforlag.

Ordbogen.com. Retrieved from <https://www.ordbogen.com>

Ordbog over det danske Sprog (Dictionary of the Danish Language). DSL. Retrieved from <https://ordnet.dk/ods>

Ordbog over det Norrøne Prosasprog (A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose). University of Copenhagen. Retrieved from <https://onp.ku.dk/english/>

Svendsen, M. M. (2016). *Brugerundersøgelserapport for Den Danske Ordbog* (User experience report for The Danish Dictionary, 2016), internal report, DSL.

Thomsen, V. (1923). *Bornholmsk Ordbog* (Dictionary of the Bornholm Dialect). Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/exanglosuan/bornholmsk-ordbog-12347572>

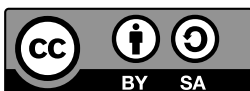
Videnskabernes Selskabs Ordbog (Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters). (1793-1905): Copenhagen. Retrieved from <https://books.google.dk/books?id=iLUJAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=da#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Ømålsordbogen (Dictionary of the Insular Dialects) (1992-): Dept. for Dialect Research, University of Copenhagen, Syddansk Universitetsforlag.

STANJE ENOJEZIČNE LEKSIKOGRAFIJE: DANSKA

Prispevek podaja pregled položaja leksikografije na Danskem in izpostavlja najpomembnejše slovarje. Pri tem je podan historiat glavnih slovarskih del, težišče prispevka pa je na sodobni leksikografiji ter ustanovah, ki so trenutno aktivne na tem področju. Posebna pozornost je posvečena digitalni prisotnosti slovarjev in njihovemu posodabljanju.

Ključne besede: slovarji, leksikografija, danščina



To delo je ponujeno pod licenco Creative Commons: Priznanje avtorstva-Deljenje pod enakimi pogoji 4.0 Mednarodna. / This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 International.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>