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# Lexicographers' Dreams in the Electronic Dictionary Age

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## Abstract

The arrival of the modern computer set in motion a series of lexicographers' dreams without equal in the history of dictionary making. Achieving the

wildest of those electronic dictionary vistas has the potential to result in reference works beyond all recognition. This potential, alas, remains to be realised. The aim of this article is to analyse the major achievements and future prospects when it comes to 'human-oriented electronic dictionaries' (for short EDs). In the first two sections the scene is set by revisiting this article's title. In the third section various ED typologies are presented, including a new three-step access dictionary typology. The latter is used as a frame in section four, where forty pros and cons of paper *versus* electronic products are reviewed. This study clearly shows that ED dreams are indeed not without a solid basis. The next two sections then deal with the ED dreams proper, first in the form of a brief diachronic perspective singling out main dreams and main actors (section five), then in a much more detailed fashion sorting and scrutinising one hundred and twenty dreams found throughout the literature (section six). Section seven concludes with some observations on the way ahead.

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