

# Preface

David E. Vancil

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/tlrp.14.01pre>

Pages ix–xi of

**Words in Dictionaries and History: Essays in honour of R.W. McConchie**

**Edited by Olga Timofeeva and Tanja Säily**

[Terminology and Lexicography Research and Practice,

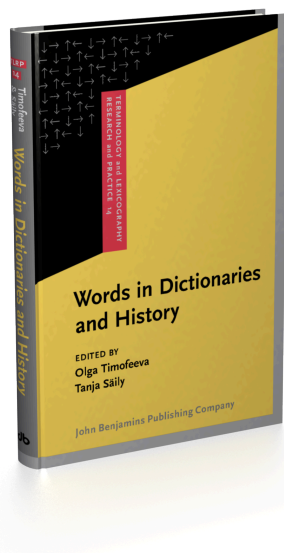
14]

2011. xvi, 292 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)).

For further information, please contact [rights@benjamins.nl](mailto:rights@benjamins.nl) or consult our website at [benjamins.com/rights](http://benjamins.com/rights)



# Preface

David E. Vancil

Cordell Collection of Dictionaries, Indiana State University

It has been my privilege to count Roderick McConchie – or Rod, as he prefers to be called – as a colleague and friend for nearly 10 years. Born in the same year as myself, Rod and I have had a number of similar experiences and share a number of interests. Therefore, I enthusiastically accepted the gracious invitation of Olga Timofeeva and Tanja Säily to write a few words about Rod.

A native of Australia, Rod taught high school English for a number of years. By 1972 he had earned his M.A. from Flinders University. The title of his thesis was *Numen, Symbolism, and Time in the Structure of Beowulf*. It should be apparent from the intriguing title of this lengthy thesis that Rod's research interests in literature, language, and culture were already flourishing at the onset of his teaching career. By 1981 Rod was publishing articles on language and literature in journals such as *Notes and Queries*, *The Explicator*, and *Dictionaries*. Undoubtedly driven by his growing research interests in language, he entered the University of Sydney as a doctoral student. The topic of Rod's dissertation was expanded and published in 1997 by the Clarendon Press as part of the Oxford Studies in Lexicography Lexicology series as *Physicke: The Record of Sixteenth-Century English Medical Terminology*. Meanwhile, by 1992 Rod had joined the English Department of the University of Helsinki as a member of its faculty.

Rod's career as university teacher and a researcher on the history of the English language, literature, and related topics has been very productive. From the varied subjects of his papers and publications, it is easy to see that although his interests are broad, they are also interrelated. While he has continued his research on medical terminology and the development of medical dictionaries and other research works, his interests have grown to encompass matters of grammar (the development of the prefix *dis-*, for example), fencing terms, and the bilingual Latin–English lexicography of the sixteenth century. Consequently, I am fairly certain that while Rod is an enthusiastic reader of Jane Austen and enjoys teaching her works from a literary perspective, he is also curious of the language employed in the novels and probably even grammatical curiosities.

Anyone who attends scholarly conferences in which papers on the history of English are delivered is likely to encounter Rod. Not only is he known for his stimulating papers, but his comments and questions are equally appreciated by the individuals in attendance. In addition to his ongoing linguistic research projects, Rod has been contributing biographical entries of lexicographers to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* for many years, continuing to add to our knowledge of individuals about whose lives and achievements little might otherwise be known. Currently, he is working on several monographs, including one with Ian Lancashire focusing on the development of sixteenth-century lexicography in England.

Helsinki has turned out to be an excellent location for Rod. As well as having a superb library available to him at the university, he enjoys being in close proximity to many others. I know that he goes frequently to Oxford to do research in the Bodleian Library. He is also involved in a long-term project at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, where he has identified as many as 1,000 English-language books which may be unknown in the West. I think any of us must be impressed by the dedication required by his bibliographical project in Russia.

I don't think it will be any surprise to the readers of this volume that Rod's fascination with the past extends to the present and future. To that end, he was a founding member of VARIENG, the Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English. In fact, he hosted two of its symposia, one of which I attended in 2008. I can attest to the excellence of the meetings and the memorable dinner at the medieval castle located in Hämeenlinna. It was a highlight of my visit, and I am sure others in attendance enjoyed this wonderful experience. While no longer directly involved in VARIENG, Rod helped to establish its mission and has contributed substantially to its success.

As I am curator of the Cordell Collection of Dictionaries, I should probably mention that Rod has a strong connection to it. Rod was the inaugural recipient of the Cordell Collection research fellowship in May 2001, when he spent a week doing research in its extensive holdings. Since then he has returned twice, the last time in late May and early June of 2009. In addition to making excellent use of the collection, he has been its advocate for nearly a decade, including giving papers and publishing articles based on his research in it. I have to say that my staff and I look forward to Rod's research visits. With more than 8,500 titles at hand, we rely on researchers to bring interesting features of our holdings to our attention, and Rod has been very generous in this respect. I have learned a great deal from him about our books. I believe that the Cordell Collection owes much of its international reputation to the efforts of Rod, among other researchers, and I want to thank him for his efforts on its behalf.

While Rod has a brother in Australia with whom he is close and visits frequently, Rod is an enthusiastic resident of Finland. How could he not be? He is married to prominent Finnish lexicographer Aili Kämäräinen, with whom he has two children, Taina and Ari. He lives in the picturesque community of Nummi, where he and his wife keep house and Rod nurtures a garden every spring and summer. He and Aili also enjoy taking walks around the beautiful lake that fronts his property. Nummi, while somewhat remote from Helsinki, has a rich history. During a visit there, I remember Aili and Rod taking me on a brisk nature walk and later a leisurely stroll through the town and its cemetery, while regaling me with the story of the young men buried there who died in World War II.

This collection of papers reflects well on Rod McConchie. Among them are papers by students as well as colleagues. But this differentiation between students and colleagues is misleading. Rod encourages and mentors his students to a level that results in their becoming scholars and colleagues. And haven't we all learned a thing or two from this generous teacher and friend?

I think Rod will be pleased with this collection, and I believe that anyone who delves into the contents of this *festschrift* will come away with a sense of the scope of Rod's interests as well as the depth of his learning. As well, I hope that they also get a sense of his playfulness and the joy he gets from discovering the new in the old and the old in the new.