

## TheFreeDictionary.com story

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When Steve Boymel and Nick Simonov, co-founders of Farlex, Inc., launched TheFreeDictionary.com in 2003, they made it their mission to create the world's most comprehensive online dictionary. TheFreeDictionary (TFD) debuted as a simple, free online dictionary catering to English-speaking users, but it has since evolved into one of the most authoritative and comprehensive reference sites on the Web and now serves a global network of users. A prime online tool for active information seekers, TFD has been accessed by more than 1.6 billion visitors.

Simonov and Boymel founded TFD as a basic dictionary of everyday terms, and their seamless partnership has allowed the site to grow by leaps and bounds. It now hosts scores of dictionaries in dozens of languages, several encyclopedias, a literature reference library, and a search engine.

While Simonov oversees the architecture and technology that powers it, Boymel focuses on the site's day-to-day operations as well as the company's business dealings and partnerships. The two lead a dedicated core team of six individuals who meticulously maintain the site's content and create daily articles for the homepage. They, in turn, are supported by an extensive network of about 50 contractors.

Farlex has been able to turn TFD into a preeminent reference destination by partnering with the elite among publishers of reference material, including the Houghton Mifflin Company, Saunders, Cambridge University Press, Columbia University Press, Reed Elsevier, Encyclopædia Britannica, HarperCollins, K Dictionaries, Larousse Editorial, Research Machines, The Computer Language Company, Gale (Cengage), and the McGraw-Hill Companies. The wealth of educational content from these and other publishers is organized into a number of easy-to-use sections: Dictionary/Thesaurus; Medical Dictionary; Legal Dictionary; Financial Dictionary; Acronyms and Abbreviations; Idioms; Encyclopedia; Wikipedia; and Hutchinson Encyclopedia. Convenient, color-coded tabs located at the top of each search page allow users to quickly navigate between these different sections and gain a broader understanding of researched topics.

Each day, the site's English-language homepage features a number of educational items such as "Word of the Day," "News of

the Day," "Article of the Day," "This Day in History," "Today's Birthday," and "Quote of the Day." These items are exclusively created by the site's editorial team and link to relevant dictionary and encyclopedia entries within the site. Much of this content is also available through the popular "Word of the Day" email, a free service provided to more than 25,000 subscribers.

The user-friendly interface available at TFD appeals to a wide range of Internet-savvy visitors seeking a personal window to the Web. The fully customizable format—which allows users to simply add, remove, drag, and drop content windows to create personalized homepages—can be accessed from every modern browser without any installation, download, or additional software. The assortment of customizable offerings includes a collection of vocabulary games designed to entertain and educate, an innovative mail feature that allows users to view messages in their email inboxes, and a picture option that lets them upload their favorite photos for display directly on their homepage. In addition, the syndicated news directory offers hundreds of RSS feeds from dozens of reputable publications, websites, and news sources. Because TFD generates revenue through advertising, all of the site's services and tools are available to users free of charge.

TFD's English dictionary has many unique features that allow users to better investigate and understand searched terms. In addition to the standard part-of-speech/definition/etymology information, the site provides users with audio files containing both American English and UK English word pronunciations, a thorough list of synonyms and antonyms, and usage examples from both classic literature and recently published articles. Users are also afforded the option of translating words into a host of different languages and can do so by simply selecting the desired language from a drop down menu.

At TFD, the foremost priority is the users—as many as 2 million visitors search for information on the site every day—and Farlex's editors pride themselves on the personal attention they give to each and every email they receive. Over the years, TFD's staff has reviewed tens of thousands of questions and comments, and many of the site's unique features have come as a direct response to user requests. One such example is the "My Word List" tool, which allows users to create a personalized list of



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Farlex, Inc. is an independent, privately-held provider of online reference products based in Huntingdon Valley, PA. Founded in 2004, Farlex provides innovative, easy-to-use reference and learning tools. Its flagship websites, TheFreeDictionary.com and TheFreeLibrary.com, contain over five million pages of books, periodicals, and reference information from the world's most respected sources.  
www.farlex.com

words and terms on the site and easily access their definitions and encyclopedia entries. The feature has become an invaluable learning tool for people from all walks of life, including students, professionals, and people learning a new language.

Over the years, TFD's users have repeatedly expressed interest in a feature that would allow them to provide the site with their own definitions, and, in 2007, Farlex addressed their requests by launching a second dictionary site—Definition-Of (www.Definition-Of.com). The site is built around user-contributed definitions and allows visitors to rank the quality of existing entries.

In May 2008, Farlex announced the largest single addition of reference material to TFD, including, for the first time, foreign language resources. The overwhelmingly positive user response to those four initial foreign language dictionaries encouraged the development team to further enhance the site's multilingual offerings, and, just months later, Farlex released TFD's newly expanded translations section, which allows users to translate dictionary terms from English into more than 40 different languages. At the same time, the site's developers launched the homepage in 10 new languages: Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian,

and Spanish. By expanding the scope of its resources to include titles outside of the English language, TFD addresses the multilingual needs of its ever-expanding user base.

While TFD does not track user information, IP address data indicate that about half of the site's users are based in the US. International Web surfers compose the remainder of its clientele. Many users are not native English speakers and use the site to improve their English skills or even teach themselves the language. The unique multilingual translator feature, which allows users to easily translate words from one language to another and just as easily switch to a third, has become an invaluable tool for such users.

TFD reached an exciting milestone in 2008, welcoming its billionth visitor in just five years. Since that time, the number of reference titles published by the site has expanded exponentially. The Farlex team remains committed to continuously enhancing TFD and is always developing new features that keep it on the cutting edge of online reference site technology. This ceaseless dedication to growing and evolving the site distinguishes TFD from other reference websites and makes it a singular destination for online information seekers.

Farlex is a business partner of K Dictionaries.

## The BLDS Italian dictionary core

Palma Gallana

### **Introduction: a dictionary streaming to perfection**

The BLDS is an extraordinary instrument. This is what I thought the first time I came across it and what I have become more and more convinced of during my work on it. It is not a common dictionary but a mono-bilingual one, "a dictionary streaming to perfection". It is user-friendly and made to measure for students and speakers of a foreign language at intermediate level, who can find in it all they need to understand the meaning of a word and use it correctly.

The dictionary is bilingual, built upon a monolingual base. Definitions and examples are in the source language, but are adapted in order to be easily understood by someone who is studying and needs to be coached to understand the meaning and use of words. Far from being banal or inaccurate, the definitions are formulated with simple terms, belonging to the dictionary core

itself. Examples are actual, practical, useful and not academic.

Providing this monolingual base is extraordinary for two reasons:

- a propaedeutic purpose, since the user is oriented to a soft monolingual approach before eventually getting to pure monolingual dictionaries.
- a linguistic purpose, since the user tastes the real savour of a foreign language, confronting definitions, examples, expressions, etc. in it.

BLDS is a rationally well-organised, balanced, complete monolingual core, predisposed to become a bilingual dictionary, where headwords are correlated by pronunciation and, together with the examples and phrases, each sense is translated into L2. This satisfies the need of finding punctual correspondences in L2, besides leading to a complete understanding of the word.