

# Kernerman DICTIONARY News

## Back to the Future

When *Passport* dictionary appeared it was announced in this newsletter as "a dictionary for a new age". The *new age* referred to, on one hand, the dawning era of information, communication and globalization — with its need to learn English as today's lingua franca while guarding one's roots and identity as encompassed in the native tongue; on the other hand, this *new age* referred to the emerging young target audience and its unique requirements — a different type of dictionary, ie, an active learning tool that is fun and friendly for its users.

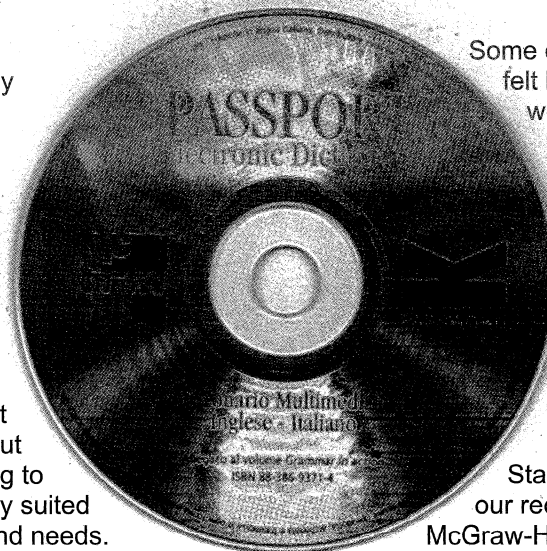
Too often English teachers readily boast that their students use an advanced dictionary, turning a blind eye to the harm it can do to not-so-advanced learners.

Among our reasons for launching the *Passport* project was that many Israeli teachers proudly prescribed a medium-level dictionary to primary school pupils. Some of them still do, whereas some don't use any dictionary at this level. But many others are gradually tending to use a dictionary that is specifically suited to the students' particular level and needs.

So far, the most attention in pedagogical lexicography is consistently devoted to advanced English learner's dictionaries, which really cater for a minority of users (who are more *users* than *learners* of English). That may be part of deeply-rooted misconceptions in this field — apparently due to historical and commercial factors rather than didactic or realistic ones — causing a virtual conspiracy of publishers, lexicographers, and teachers. However, few non-native learners of English are "advanced"; most of them are plain average, and ever more are on a yet lower level. This last "pre-intermediate" level has become vitally important in formulating life-long foundations and habits for learning English and acquiring reference skills.

*Passport* was surely not new in addressing beginner-to-intermediate learners, but it attempted to

treat their level as a most critical learning stage. It therefore approaches its users in a different way, literally trying to speak their language in order to broaden their horizons, and give them a solid base to prosper in a newfound language. It was probably the first international dictionary created especially for bilingualization, meaning it was forever incomplete on its own, until being localized for the learner's own language and culture. As a result, each version has its own individual characteristics.



Some of our publishing partners — who felt keen about this dictionary, but were initially hesitant about its potential to make ground under the given circumstances — are increasingly determined to follow their own minds and undertake local versions, and new partners are joining in. The result is a growing mutual flow of ideas, leading to endless little revisions and updating of the original text, and keeping it alive in modification.

Staying open to change led us also to our recent venture. The Italian division of McGraw-Hill was interested in accompanying a new grammar book with a CD dictionary, and viewed *Passport* as a fine candidate. Since our data was originally prepared only for printed editions, considerable restructuring had to be carried out to make it suitable for electronic applications. Some aspects of this process and of the ensuing product are discussed in this issue.

When the Italian *Passport* CD was ready we went on to upgrade the contents and features, eg, enabling to record the user's voice and compare it with the default pronunciation. It took just a few months to go from the first to the second electronic version — that already serves as a base for the new Czech and Lithuanian editions which will soon join their respective printed editions. There's always more that can be improved.

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