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By Mary Nersessian  
October 3, 2008  
6:08 PM

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## Oxford shutters dictionary division

In response to falling print sales, Oxford University Press Canada has shut down its Canadian dictionary division, and let go longtime division head Katherine Barber.

In conversation with *Q&Q Omni* yesterday, OUP Canada president David Stover confirmed that all of the employees in the Canadian dictionary division – Barber, one other full-time staffer, and two part-timers – have been laid off in an effort to refine the company's focus. "What we've been seeing in North America is a continuing decline in the sales of printed dictionaries – a double-digit trend over the last few years that shows some signs of intensifying. Although we are the market leader in [dictionaries in] Canada, that has still had an effect on sales," said Stover.

Stover said that OUP Canada will continue to publish its flagship title, *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, and its spinoffs, with plans to keep revising them. But without a dictionary division, routine lexical research will be outsourced to freelancers and consultants. OUP Canada will also be working more closely with the lexicography department in the U.K. offices to draw on shared resources.

Stover wouldn't comment directly on whether Barber – known to many as "The Word Lady" because of her guest spots on CBC Radio – might have a role in future OCD editions. "Katherine's contributions to Oxford and to Canadian culture have been tremendous," he said, "and we obviously hope we will have an ongoing relationship with her and that she will continue to be associated with the dictionary program."

Barber, the nation's most prominent lexicographer, has been editor-in-chief of the dictionary division since 1991. The first edition of *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* was released in 1998, and went on to spend more than a year on the *Globe and Mail's* bestseller list. It purportedly includes more than 2,200 words unique to the Canadian lexicon, like "toque," "two-four," and "double-double." In the years since, OUP Canada has published a number of updated editions and many spinoff titles.

Following the move, OUP Canada will invest more heavily in curriculum-based local publishing programs for its school and higher education markets, which have seen significant growth in recent years and now make up more than half of the company's sales.


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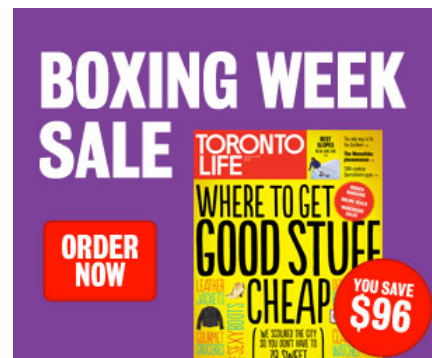
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