

The NeXT *Digital* Edition of *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* and *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*

ENORMOUS KNOWLEDGE IS AVAILABLE IN A GREAT DICTIONARY, and this is the first time in history that such powerful access to this resource has been placed at your fingertips. Any word anywhere in the dictionary can now be located in an instant. Cross-references can be followed by simply clicking a button.

We have tried to take best advantage of the dictionary in digital form not just by casting a copy of the book into electronic memory, but by using the machine to make the information far more accessible than it could ever be on paper. Some advantages are obvious: most definitions are presented in less than a second; and a spelling corrector is built in. Others are more subtle. For example, limitations of paper books force publishers to squeeze the well-structured lists of word senses into narrow, tightly packed columns—a procrustean habit. Because the information is so densely packed on paper, the text is often difficult to read and the meaning of definitions and other information is sometimes hard to absorb. To alleviate this difficulty, the text of the digital edition is displayed in a comfortable font, with each sense beginning on a new line, so that the meanings are easier to grasp at a glance. Space-saving devices like the swung dash seen in verbal illustrations such as

<an ~ love of freedom>

have been expanded to

<an *inbred* love of freedom>

All the pictures and tables are present, and they look better on a spacious display than they did on paper.

Also, while a paper book is linear, a *digital* book need not be: one can, for instance, find all the definitions that *refer to* ``Shakespeare," and quickly learn or be reminded that *Chikamatsu* (1653-1724) was the Shakespeare of Japanese drama; that it is the *Shakespearean* or *English sonnet* that has an *abab-cdcd-efef-gg* structure; or that a *teston* isn't worth what it once was. *All* sections of the dictionary—not just the main text, but biographical, geographical, foreign words and phrases, and abbreviations sections—are seamlessly searched, including the *Thesaurus*. Most of the front and back matter from the paper books, including explanatory essays, a Handbook of Style, and other useful material, is also available. This digital dictionary invites browsing in a way that we think people will find not just enlightening, but tremendously exciting.

Finally, because the dictionary is packaged with the computer, *every* user and *every* application will have this Digital Webster at their fingertips—and that will be as valuable to a scholar as indoor

plumbing is to a homeowner. Because of this, from now on, any computer that lacks a great dictionary will be considered barbaric.

We thank the staff at Merriam-Webster in Springfield, Massachusetts, especially John M. Morse and Frederick C. Mish of the Editorial Department and William A. Llewellyn, President and Publisher. In a time when many publishers fear genuine digital publishing, they embraced the project with enthusiasm. Thanks to them, this resource will be a priceless gift for scholars.

D Michael Hawley
NeXT, Inc.
September, 1988