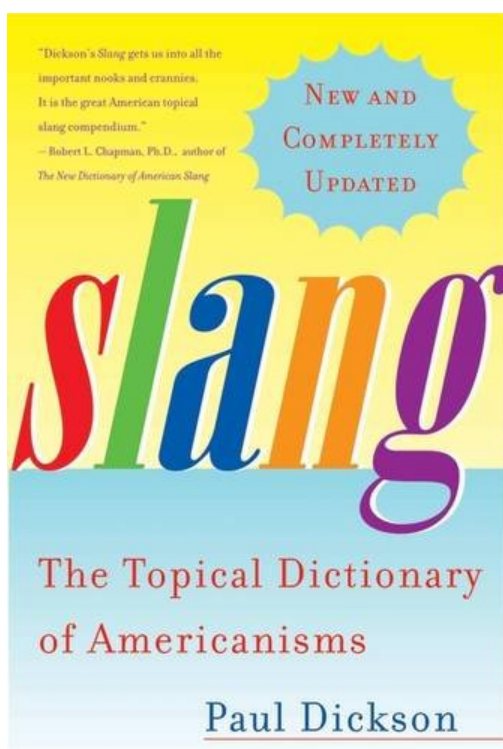


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From Booklist

Slang is so bountiful in American English that it lends itself to a variety of lexicographical approaches. A number of slang dictionaries have treated this most unconventional of vocabularies through the conventions of the standard canonical dictionaries, ranging them alphabetically, assigning usage labels, summarizing their origins, and defining them. At least two have taken different approaches, clustering terms in categories. One is Richard A. Spears' NTC's Thematic Dictionary of American Slang (McGraw-Hill, 1998). Slang: The Topical Dictionary of Americanisms is another.

While Spears' dictionary has more than 800 categories and is more historical than edgy, Dickson's dictionary of American slang differs in significant ways. Its 30 topical areas include the timeless, such as "Food and Drink," "Medical and Emergency Room Slang," "Teen and High School Slang," and, of course, "The Sultry Slang of Sex." It also includes the very contemporary, such as "Java-speak" (modern coffeehouse slang) and "Net-speak." However, the Net-speak chapter falls short through a lack of slang terms from the world of bloggers. Bloggassary [<http://www.bloggassary.com/>] offers more.

Dickson's bare-bones entries simply offer definitions on each term--no origins, no usage labels, no examples of the word in use. Occasional sidebars, however, provide fuller information on select terms, such as numbers with special meaning in drug culture, the emergence and acceptance of phat, and bird-watchers' lingo.

A prefatory essay introduces each topical area and characterizes its argot. These essays underscore the creativity of slang as well as its occasional absurdity, as in the grandiose names for what could unpretentiously be called small, medium-sized, and large cups of coffee. Informative, reliable, entertaining, and modern, this topical slang dictionary complements the more staid slang lexicons and more scholarly general dictionaries. James Rettig

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Review

“With focus, a passion for language, and a word-class ear, Dickson has produced brilliant chapter after brilliant chapter, any one of which would be a lifetime achievement for most lexicographers.” ?Tom Dalzell, Senior Editor The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English and author of Flappers 2 Rappers--American Youth Slang and The Slang of Sin

#### About the Author

Paul Dickson, coauthor of *The Bonus Army*, has written numerous language books and dictionaries, including *War Slang*, *The Congress Dictionary*, and *The New Dickson Baseball Dictionary*. He has written for *Smithsonian*, *Esquire*, *The Nation*, *Town & Country*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*. A founding member and former president of Washington Independent writers and a member of the National Press Club, Dickson is a contributing editor at *Washingtonian* magazine and a former consulting editor at Merriam-Webster, Inc.

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