

Dear Mr. Morgan,

As a learner of Gaelic and former resident of Edinburgh, I am pleased that a National Plan for Gaelic has been drafted, and supportive of its many suggestions to propagate use of the language. However, I am worried by the almost complete neglect of lexicography in the document. There is only one reference, given at the end of the plan for corpus development almost as an afterthought.

In fact, lexicography is inextricably linked with corpus development and an indispensable tool of any language propagation. Modern corpora comprise large quantities of raw data, often so much that it can only be handled by computers and not be easily interpreted. Lexicography provides a means to organize this information, making it accessible to the widest possible audience. Historical dictionaries are major academic research projects, which both compile such corpora and extract information to illustrate the history as well as the present use of the language. An authoritative historical dictionary can then be used to generate consistent and compatible sets of smaller dictionaries, e.g. for teaching or everyday use; at the same time, it can be used by specialist scholars as a point of entry to the corpora themselves. It will therefore benefit both the academic community and the general public.

Such dictionaries exist for many European languages, and minority languages are represented as well as national languages. There are excellent resources in place already for both Welsh (*Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*) and Scots (*Scottish National Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*). The lexicographical project *Faclair na Gàidhlig*, which is not even mentioned in the Plan, has the potential to do the same for Scottish Gaelic, if given adequate funding.

The corpus development section of the Plan gives priority to the training of professional translators and interpreters as well as the standardization of spellings, place names, etc. All these would also need a central agency with high academic competence, which an authoritative historical dictionary would provide by definition. This again would lead to major benefits to the community at large.

Finally, the success of the recent BBC series on the *Oxford English Dictionary* has shown widespread interest of the general public in the language they speak every day. With an increase in the numbers of Gaelic speakers, such interest can be expected to increase in the Gaelic community, who would then go to *Faclair na Gàidhlig* for answers in the same way that English speakers go to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

I hope I have given a short outline of the importance of historical lexicography and some of its many benefits to the whole community of speakers, as well as its significance outside this community.

I am happy for this response to be made public.

Yours sincerely,

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