**History of the Encyclopædia Britannica - Wikipedia Feb. 2022**

[**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia\_Britannica**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica)

***Encyclopædia Britannica***

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| Britannica's logo of a blue thistle*Britannica*'s [thistle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_thistle) logo |
| **Author** | As of 2008, 4,411 named contributors |
| **Illustrator** | Several; initial engravings by [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29) |
| **Country** | * [Great Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain) (1768–1800)
* [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland) (1801–1901)
* [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) (1901–present)
 |
| **Language** | [British English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_English) |
| **Subject** | General |
| **Published** | * 1st through 6th editions (1768–1826): private publishers such as [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29), [Archibald Constable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Constable), and [Colin Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar)
* 7th through 9th editions (1827–1901): [A & C Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%26_C_Black)
* 10th through 14th editions (1901–1973): American businesses, including [Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears_Roebuck) and the [Benton Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benton_Foundation)
* 15th edition: Benton Foundation and [Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.) (as a separate entity, alongside [Britannica.com Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannica.com_Inc.))
 |
| **Publisher** | [Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.) |
| **Publication date** | 1768–2010 (printed version) |
| **Media type** | 32 volumes, hardbound (15th edition, 2010); after 2012 unavailable in print |
| **Pages** | 32,640 (15th edition, 2010) |
| [**ISBN**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_%28identifier%29) | [978-1-59339-292-5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special%3ABookSources/978-1-59339-292-5) |
| [**Dewey Decimal**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dewey_Decimal_Classification) | 031 |
| [**LC Class**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LCC_%28identifier%29) | AE5 .E363 2007 |
| **Text** | [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) at [Wikisource](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikisource) |
| **Website** | [britannica.com](http://britannica.com) |

The ***Encyclopædia Britannica*** ([Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) for "British Encyclopaedia") is a [general knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_knowledge) English-language [encyclopaedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopaedia) which is now published exclusively as an [online encyclopaedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_encyclopedia). It was formerly published by [Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.), and other publishers (for previous editions). It was written by about 100 full-time editors and more than 4,000 contributors. The 2010 version of the 15th edition, which spans 32 volumes[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-nytstop-1) and 32,640 pages, was the last printed edition.

Printed for 244 years, the *Britannica* was the longest running in-print encyclopaedia in the English language. It was first published between 1768 and 1771 in the Scottish capital of [Edinburgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh), as three volumes. The encyclopaedia grew in size: the second edition was 10 volumes,[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-2) and by its fourth edition (1801–1810) it had expanded to 20 volumes.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-3) Its rising stature as a scholarly work helped recruit eminent contributors, and the 9th (1875–1889) and [11th editions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Eleventh_Edition) (1911) are landmark encyclopaedias for scholarship and literary style. Starting with the 11th edition and following its acquisition by an American firm, the *Britannica* shortened and simplified articles to broaden its appeal to the North American market. In 1933, the *Britannica* became the first encyclopaedia to adopt "continuous revision", in which the encyclopaedia is continually reprinted, with every article updated on a schedule.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] In March 2012, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. announced it would no longer publish printed editions, and would focus instead on the online version.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-4)

The 15th edition has a three-part structure: a 12-volume [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) of short articles (generally fewer than 750 words), a 17-volume [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia) of long articles (two to 310 pages), and a single [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia) volume to give a [hierarchical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierarchical) outline of knowledge. The *Micropædia* was meant for quick fact-checking and as a guide to the *Macropædia*; readers are advised to study the *Propædia* outline to understand a subject's context and to find more detailed articles. Over 70 years, the size of the *Britannica* has remained steady, with about 40 million words on half a million topics. Though published in the United States since 1901, the *Britannica* has for the most part maintained [British English spelling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_and_British_English_spelling_differences).



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## Present status

### Print version



15th edition of the *Britannica*. The initial volume with the green spine is the [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia); the red-spined and black-spined volumes are the [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) and the [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia), respectively. The last three volumes are the 2002 Book of the Year (black spine) and the two-volume index (cyan spine).

Since 1985, the *Britannica* had four parts: the [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia), the [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia), the [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia), and a two-volume index. The *Britannica*'s articles are found in the *Micro-* and *Macropædia*, which encompass 12 and 17 volumes, respectively, each volume having roughly one thousand pages. The 2007 *Macropædia* has 699 in-depth articles, ranging in length from 2 to 310 pages and having references and named contributors. In contrast, the 2007 *Micropædia* has roughly 65,000 articles, the vast majority (about 97%) of which contain fewer than 750 words, no references, and no named contributors.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1996-5) The *Micropædia* articles are intended for quick fact-checking and to help in finding more thorough information in the *Macropædia*. The *Macropædia* articles are meant both as authoritative, well-written articles on their subjects and as storehouses of information not covered elsewhere.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) The longest article (310 pages) is on the United States, and resulted from the merger of the articles on the individual states. A 2013 "Global Edition" of *Britannica* contained approximately forty thousand articles.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-store.britannica.com-7)

Information can be found in the *Britannica* by following the [cross-references](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-reference) in the *Micropædia* and *Macropædia*; however, these are sparse, averaging one cross-reference per page.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) Hence, readers are recommended to consult instead the alphabetical index or the *Propædia*, which organizes the *Britannica*'s contents by topic.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-index_preface-9)

The core of the *Propædia* is its "Outline of Knowledge", which aims to provide a logical framework for all human knowledge.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_preface-10) Accordingly, the Outline is consulted by the *Britannica*'s editors to decide which articles should be included in the *Micro-* and *Macropædia*.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_preface-10) The Outline is also intended to be a study guide, to put subjects in their proper perspective, and to suggest a series of *Britannica* articles for the student wishing to learn a topic in depth.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_preface-10) However, libraries have found that it is scarcely used, and reviewers have recommended that it be dropped from the encyclopaedia.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1992-11) The *Propædia* also has color transparencies of human anatomy and several appendices listing the staff members, advisors, and contributors to all three parts of the *Britannica*.

Taken together, the *Micropædia* and *Macropædia* comprise roughly 40 million words and 24,000 images.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-index_preface-9) The two-volume index has 2,350 pages, listing the 228,274 topics covered in the *Britannica*, together with 474,675 subentries under those topics.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) The *Britannica* generally prefers [British spelling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_English) over [American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_English);[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) for example, it uses *colour* (not *color*), *centre* (not *center*), and *encyclopaedia* (not *encyclopedia*). However, there are exceptions to this rule, such as *defense* rather than *defence*.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-12) Common alternative spellings are provided with cross-references such as "Color: *see* Colour."

Since 1936, the articles of the *Britannica* have been revised on a regular schedule, with at least 10% of them considered for revision each year.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-encyclopaedia_1954-13) According to one Britannica website, 46% of its articles were revised over the past three years;[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-14) however, according to another Britannica website, only 35% of the articles were revised.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-15)

The alphabetization of articles in the *Micropædia* and *Macropædia* follows strict rules.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-micropedia_preface-16) [Diacritical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diacritic) marks and non-English letters are ignored, while numerical entries such as "[1812, War of](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_1812)" are alphabetized as if the number had been written out ("Eighteen-twelve, War of"). Articles with identical names are ordered first by persons, then by places, then by things. Rulers with identical names are organized first alphabetically by country and then by chronology; thus, [Charles III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_the_Simple) of France precedes [Charles I of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_I_of_England), listed in *Britannica* as the ruler of Great Britain and Ireland. (That is, they are alphabetized as if their titles were "Charles, France, 3" and "Charles, Great Britain and Ireland, 1".) Similarly, places that share names are organized alphabetically by country, then by ever-smaller political divisions.

In March 2012, the company announced that the 2010 edition would be the last printed version. This was announced as a move by the company to adapt to the times and focus on its future using digital distribution.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-17) The peak year for the printed encyclopaedia was 1990 when 120,000 sets were sold, but it dropped to 40,000 in 1996.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-18) 12,000 sets of the 2010 edition were printed, of which 8,000 had been sold as of 2012.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-19) By late April 2012, the remaining copies of the 2010 edition had sold out at Britannica's online store. As of 2016, a replica of Britannica's 1768 first edition is sold on the online store.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-20)

### Related printed material

*Britannica Junior* was first published in 1934 as 12 volumes. It was expanded to 15 volumes in 1947, and renamed *Britannica Junior Encyclopædia* in 1963.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-21) It was taken off the market after the 1984 printing.



*Children's Britannica*

A British *Children's Britannica* edited by [John Armitage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Armitage_%28editor%29) was issued in London in 1960.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-22) Its contents were determined largely by the [eleven-plus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleven-plus) standardized tests given in Britain.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB1988-23) Britannica introduced the *Children's Britannica* to the US market in 1988, aimed at ages seven to 14.

In 1961, a 16 volume *Young Children's Encyclopaedia* was issued for children just learning to read.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB1988-23)

*My First Britannica* is aimed at children ages six to 12, and the *Britannica Discovery Library* is for children aged three to six (issued 1974 to 1991).[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-24)

There have been, and are, several abridged *Britannica* encyclopaedias. The single-volume *Britannica Concise Encyclopædia* has 28,000 short articles condensing the larger 32-volume *Britannica*;[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-25) there are authorized translations in languages such as Chinese[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-TTO_Pham_Hong_Quan-26) and [Vietnamese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_language).[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-TTO_English-27)[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-TTO_Nguyen_Viet_Long-28) *Compton's by Britannica*, first published in 2007, incorporating the former [*Compton's Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compton%27s_Encyclopedia), is aimed at 10- to 17-year-olds and consists of 26 volumes and 11,000 pages.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-29)

Since 1938, [Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.) has published annually a *Book of the Year* covering the past year's events. A given edition of the *Book of the Year* is named in terms of the year of its publication, though the edition actually covers the events of the previous year. The company also publishes several specialized reference works, such as *Shakespeare: The Essential Guide to the Life and Works of the Bard* (Wiley, 2006).

### Optical disc, online, and mobile versions

The [*Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannica_Ultimate_Reference_Suite) *2012 DVD* contains over 100,000 articles.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-30) This includes regular *Britannica* articles, as well as others drawn from the *Britannica Student Encyclopædia*, and the *Britannica Elementary Encyclopædia.* The package includes a range of supplementary content including maps, videos, sound clips, animations and web links. It also offers study tools and dictionary and thesaurus entries from [Merriam-Webster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merriam-Webster).

*Britannica* Online is a website with more than 120,000 articles and is updated regularly.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-31) It has daily features, updates and links to news reports from *The New York Times* and the [BBC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_News). As of 2009, roughly 60% of Encyclopædia Britannica's revenue came from online operations, of which around 15% came from subscriptions to the consumer version of the websites.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-econsultancy_20090210-32) As of 2006, subscriptions were available on a yearly, monthly or weekly basis.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-33) Special subscription plans are offered to schools, colleges and libraries; such institutional subscribers constitute an important part of Britannica's business. Beginning in early 2007, the *Britannica* made articles freely available if they are hyperlinked from an external site. Non-subscribers are served pop-ups and advertising.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-34)

On 20 February 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. announced that it was working with mobile phone search company [AskMeNow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AskMeNow) to launch a mobile encyclopaedia.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-35) Users will be able to send a question via text message, and AskMeNow will search *Britannica*'s 28,000-article concise encyclopaedia to return an answer to the query. Daily topical features sent directly to users' mobile phones are also planned.

On 3 June 2008, an initiative to facilitate collaboration between online expert and amateur scholarly contributors for Britannica's online content (in the spirit of a [wiki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki)), with editorial oversight from Britannica staff, was announced.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-36)[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-37) Approved contributions would be credited,[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-38) though contributing automatically grants Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. perpetual, irrevocable license to those contributions.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-39)

On 22 January 2009, Britannica's president, [Jorge Cauz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Cauz), announced that the company would be accepting edits and additions to the online *Britannica* website from the public. The published edition of the encyclopaedia will not be affected by the changes.[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-telegraph-40) Individuals wishing to edit the *Britannica* website will have to register under their real name and address prior to editing or submitting their content.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-tg-41) All edits submitted will be reviewed and checked and will have to be approved by the encyclopaedia's professional staff.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-tg-41) Contributions from non-academic users will sit in a separate section from the expert-generated *Britannica* content,[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-42) as will content submitted by non-*Britannica* scholars.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-times-43) Articles written by users, if vetted and approved, will also only be available in a special section of the website, separate from the professional articles.[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-telegraph-40)[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-times-43) Official *Britannica* material would carry a "Britannica Checked" stamp, to distinguish it from the user-generated content.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-44)

On 14 September 2010, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. announced a partnership with mobile phone development company [Concentric Sky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentric_Sky) to launch a series of [iPhone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPhone) products aimed at the [K-12](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%E2%80%9312_%28education%29) market.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-45) On 20 July 2011, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. announced that Concentric Sky had ported the Britannica Kids product line to Intel's [Intel Atom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intel_Atom)-based [Netbooks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netbooks)[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-46)[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-47) and on 26 October 2011 that it had launched its encyclopedia as an [iPad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPad) [app](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Application_software).[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-48) In 2010, Britannica released Britannica ImageQuest, a database of images.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-49)

In March 2012, it was announced that the company would cease printing the encyclopaedia set, and that it would focus more on its online version.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-50)[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-51)

On 7 June 2018, Britannica released a [Google Chrome extension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Chrome_extension), Britannica Insights, which shows snippets of information from Britannica Online in a sidebar for [Google Search](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Search) results.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-:0-52) The Britannica sidebar does not replace Google's sidebar and is instead placed above Google's sidebar.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-:0-52) Britannica Insights was also available as a [Firefox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefox) extension but this was taken down due to a [code review](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_review) issue.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-53)

## Personnel and management

### Contributors

The print version of the *Britannica* has 4,411 contributors, many eminent in their fields, such as Nobel laureate economist [Milton Friedman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_Friedman), astronomer [Carl Sagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Sagan), and surgeon [Michael DeBakey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_DeBakey).[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-macropaedia_contributors-54) Roughly a quarter of the contributors are deceased, some as long ago as 1947 ([Alfred North Whitehead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_North_Whitehead)), while another quarter are retired or [emeritus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emeritus). Most (approximately 98%[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]) contribute to only a single article; however, 64 contributed to three articles, 23 contributed to four articles, 10 contributed to five articles, and 8 contributed to more than five articles. An exceptionally prolific contributor is [Christine Sutton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christine_Sutton) of the [University of Oxford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford), who contributed 24 articles on [particle physics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Particle_physics).[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

While *Britannica*'s authors have included writers such as [Albert Einstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein),[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-:1-55) [Marie Curie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Curie),[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-56) and [Leon Trotsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky),[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-:1-55) as well as notable independent encyclopaedists such as [Isaac Asimov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov),[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-57) some have been criticized for lack of expertise. In 1911 the historian [George L. Burr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Lincoln_Burr) wrote:

With a temerity almost appalling, [the *Britannica* contributor, Mr. Philips] ranges over nearly the whole field of European history, political, social, ecclesiastical... The grievance is that [this work] lacks authority. This, too—this reliance on editorial energy instead of on ripe special learning—may, alas, be also counted an "Americanizing": for certainly nothing has so cheapened the scholarship of our American encyclopaedias.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-burr_1911-58)

### Staff



Portrait of [Thomas Spencer Baynes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Spencer_Baynes), editor of the 9th edition. Painted in 1888, it now hangs in the Senate Room of the [University of St Andrews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_St_Andrews) in Scotland.

As of 2007 in the fifteenth edition of *Britannica*, [Dale Hoiberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dale_Hoiberg), a [sinologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinology), was listed as *Britannica's* Senior Vice President and editor-in-chief.[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_staff-59) Among his predecessors as editors-in-chief were [Hugh Chisholm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Chisholm) (1902–1924), [James Louis Garvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Louis_Garvin) (1926–1932), [Franklin Henry Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Henry_Hooper) (1932–1938),[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-60) [Walter Yust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Yust) (1938–1960), [Harry Ashmore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Ashmore) (1960–1963), [Warren E. Preece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warren_E._Preece) (1964–1968, 1969–1975), Sir [William Haley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Haley) (1968–1969), [Philip W. Goetz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_W._Goetz) (1979–1991),[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) and [Robert McHenry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_McHenry) (1992–1997).[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_History-61) As of 2007 Anita Wolff was listed as the Deputy Editor and [Theodore Pappas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Pappas) as Executive Editor.[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_staff-59) Prior Executive Editors include John V. Dodge (1950–1964) and Philip W. Goetz.

Paul T. Armstrong remains the longest working employee of Encyclopædia Britannica. He began his career there in 1934, eventually earning the positions of treasurer, vice president, and chief financial officer in his 58 years with the company, before retiring in 1992.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-62)

The 2007 editorial staff of the *Britannica* included five Senior Editors and nine Associate Editors, supervised by [Dale Hoiberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dale_Hoiberg) and four others. The editorial staff helped to write the articles of the [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) and some sections of the [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia).[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_biochemistry-63)

### Editorial advisors

The *Britannica* has an editorial board of advisors, which includes 12 distinguished scholars:[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_editorial_advisors-64)[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-65) non-fiction author [Nicholas Carr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_G._Carr), religion scholar [Wendy Doniger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendy_Doniger), political economist [Benjamin M. Friedman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_M._Friedman), [Council on Foreign Relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_on_Foreign_Relations) President Emeritus [Leslie H. Gelb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie_H._Gelb), computer scientist [David Gelernter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gelernter), Physics Nobel laureate [Murray Gell-Mann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Gell-Mann), [Carnegie Corporation of New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnegie_Corporation_of_New_York) President [Vartan Gregorian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vartan_Gregorian), philosopher [Thomas Nagel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Nagel), cognitive scientist [Donald Norman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Norman), musicologist [Don Michael Randel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Michael_Randel), [Stewart Sutherland, Baron Sutherland of Houndwood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewart_Sutherland%2C_Baron_Sutherland_of_Houndwood), President of the [Royal Society of Edinburgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Society_of_Edinburgh), and cultural anthropologist [Michael Wesch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Wesch).

The [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia) and its *Outline of Knowledge* were produced by dozens of editorial advisors under the direction of [Mortimer J. Adler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_J._Adler).[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_other_editorial_advisors-66) Roughly half of these advisors have since died, including some of the Outline's chief architects – [Rene Dubos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rene_Dubos) (d. 1982), [Loren Eiseley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loren_Eiseley) (d. 1977), [Harold D. Lasswell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_D._Lasswell) (d. 1978), [Mark Van Doren](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Van_Doren) (d. 1972), [Peter Ritchie Calder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Ritchie_Calder) (d. 1982) and [Mortimer J. Adler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_J._Adler) (d. 2001). The *Propædia* also lists just under 4,000 advisors who were consulted for the unsigned [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) articles.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-micropaedia_consultants-67)

### Corporate structure

In January 1996, the *Britannica* was purchased from the [Benton Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benton_Foundation) by billionaire Swiss financier [Jacqui Safra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqui_Safra),[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-68) who serves as its current chair of the board. In 1997, Don Yannias, a long-time associate and investment advisor of Safra, became CEO of Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-69) In 1999, a new company, [Britannica.com Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannica.com_Inc.), was [created](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_spin-off) to develop digital versions of the *Britannica*; Yannias assumed the role of CEO in the new company, while his former position at the parent company remained vacant for two years. Yannias' tenure at Britannica.com Inc. was marked by missteps, considerable lay-offs, and financial losses.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-70) In 2001, Yannias was replaced by [Ilan Yeshua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilan_Yeshua), who reunited the leadership of the two companies.[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-71) Yannias later returned to investment management, but remains on the *Britannica*'s Board of Directors.

In 2003, former management consultant [Jorge Aguilar-Cauz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Aguilar-Cauz) was appointed President of Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Cauz is the senior executive and reports directly to the *Britannica's* Board of Directors. Cauz has been pursuing alliances with other companies and extending the *Britannica* brand to new educational and reference products, continuing the strategy pioneered by former CEO [Elkan Harrison Powell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elkan_Harrison_Powell) in the mid-1930s.[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_Chair_President-72)

Under Safra's ownership, the company has experienced financial difficulties and has responded by reducing the price of its products and implementing drastic cost cuts. According to a 2003 report in the [*New York Post*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Post), the *Britannica* management has eliminated employee [401(k)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/401%28k%29) accounts and encouraged the use of free images. These changes have had negative impacts, as freelance contributors have waited up to six months for checks and the *Britannica* staff have gone years without pay rises.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-73)

In the fall of 2017, Karthik Krishnan was appointed global chief executive officer of the Encyclopædia Britannica Group. Krishnan brought a varied perspective to the role based on several high-level positions in digital media, including RELX (Reed Elsevier, FT SE 100) and Rodale, in which he was responsible for "driving business and cultural transformation and accelerating growth".[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-74)

Taking the reins of the company as it was preparing to mark its 250th anniversary and define the next phase of its digital strategy for consumers and K-12 schools, Krishnan launched a series of new initiatives in his first year.

First was Britannica Insights,[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-75) a free, downloadable software extension to the Google Chrome browser that served up edited, fact-checked Britannica information with queries on search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing. Its purpose, the company said, was to "provide trusted, verified information" in conjunction with search results that were thought to be increasingly unreliable in the era of misinformation and "fake news."

The product was quickly followed by Britannica School Insights, which provided similar content for subscribers to Britannica's online classroom solutions, and a partnership with YouTube[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-76) in which verified Britannica content appeared on the site as an antidote to user-generated video content that could be false or misleading.

Krishnan, himself an educator at [New York University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_University)'s [Stern School of Business](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_University_Stern_School_of_Business), believes in the "transformative power of education"[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-77) and set steering the company toward solidifying its place among leaders in educational technology and supplemental curriculum. Krishnan aimed at providing more useful and relevant solutions to customer needs, extending and renewing Britannica's historical emphasis on "Utility",[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-78) which had been the watchword of its first edition in 1768.

Krishnan also is active in civic affairs, with organizations such as the Urban Enterprise Initiative and Urban Upbound, whose board he serves on.

## Competition

As the *Britannica* is a general encyclopaedia, it does not seek to compete with specialized encyclopaedias such as the [*Encyclopaedia of Mathematics*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopaedia_of_Mathematics) or the [*Dictionary of the Middle Ages*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_the_Middle_Ages), which can devote much more space to their chosen topics. In its first years, the *Britannica*'s main competitor was the general encyclopaedia of [Ephraim Chambers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim_Chambers) and, soon thereafter, [*Rees's Cyclopædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rees%27s_Cyclop%C3%A6dia) and [Coleridge's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge) [*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Metropolitana). In the 20th century, successful competitors included [*Collier's Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collier%27s_Encyclopedia), the [*Encyclopedia Americana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia_Americana), and the [*World Book Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Book_Encyclopedia). Nevertheless, from the 9th edition onwards, the *Britannica* was widely considered to have the greatest authority of any general English-language encyclopaedia,[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-thomas_1992-79) especially because of its broad coverage and eminent authors.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) The print version of the *Britannica* was significantly more expensive than its competitors.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8)

Since the early 1990s, the *Britannica* has faced new challenges from digital information sources. The Internet, facilitated by the development of [search engines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_search_engine), has grown into a common source of information for many people, and provides easy access to reliable original sources and expert opinions, thanks in part to initiatives such as [Google Books](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Book_Search), [MIT](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts_Institute_of_Technology)'s [release of its educational materials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIT_OpenCourseWare) and the open [PubMed Central](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PubMed_Central) library of the [National Library of Medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Library_of_Medicine).[[80]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-80)[[81]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-81) In general, the Internet tends to provide more current coverage than print media, due to the ease with which material on the Internet can be updated.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-82) In rapidly changing fields such as science, technology, politics, culture and modern history, the *Britannica* has struggled to stay up to date, a problem first analysed systematically by its former editor [Walter Yust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Yust).[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_1954-83) Eventually, the *Britannica* turned to focus more on its online edition.[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-84)

### Print encyclopaedias

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* has been compared with other print encyclopaedias, both qualitatively and quantitatively.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1996-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) A well-known comparison is that of [Kenneth Kister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Kister), who gave a qualitative and quantitative comparison of the *Britannica* with two comparable encyclopaedias, [*Collier's Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collier%27s_Encyclopedia) and the [*Encyclopedia Americana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia_Americana).[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) For the quantitative analysis, ten articles were selected at random—[circumcision](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circumcision), [Charles Drew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_R._Drew), [Galileo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo), [Philip Glass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Glass), [heart disease](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heart_disease), [IQ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IQ), [panda bear](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panda_bear), [sexual harassment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_harassment), [Shroud of Turin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shroud_of_Turin) and [Uzbekistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbekistan)—and letter grades of A–D or F were awarded in four categories: coverage, accuracy, clarity, and recency. In all four categories and for all three encyclopaedias, the four average grades fell between [B− and B+](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grade_conversion), chiefly because none of the encyclopaedias had an article on sexual harassment in 1994. In the accuracy category, the *Britannica* received one "D" and seven "A"s, *Encyclopedia Americana* received eight "A"s, and *Collier's* received one "D" and seven "A"s; thus, *Britannica* received an average score of 92% for accuracy to *Americana*'s 95% and *Collier's* 92%. In the timeliness category, *Britannica* averaged an 86% to *Americana'*s 90% and *Collier's* 85%.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

In 2013, the President of Encyclopædia Britannica announced that after 244 years, the encyclopedia would cease print production and all future editions would be entirely digital.[[85]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-85)

### Digital encyclopaedias on optical media

The most notable competitor of the *Britannica* among CD/DVD-ROM digital encyclopaedias was [*Encarta*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encarta),[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-seymour_2006-86) now discontinued, a modern, multimedia encyclopaedia that incorporated three print encyclopaedias: [*Funk & Wagnalls*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funk_%26_Wagnalls), [*Collier's*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collier%27s_Encyclopedia) and the *New Merit Scholar's Encyclopedia*. *Encarta* was the top-selling multimedia encyclopaedia, based on total US retail sales from January 2000 to February 2006.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-87) Both occupied the same price range, with the [*2007 Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Ultimate_Reference_Suite) CD or DVD costing US$40–50[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-2007EncartaPrice-88)[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_Store-89) and the Microsoft Encarta Premium 2007 DVD costing US$45.[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Encarta_Store-90) The *Britannica* contains 100,000 articles and [*Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webster%27s_Dictionary) (US only), and offers Primary and Secondary School editions.[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_Store-89) *Encarta* contained 66,000 articles, a user-friendly Visual Browser, interactive maps, math, language and homework tools, a US and UK dictionary, and a youth edition.[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Encarta_Store-90) Like *Encarta*, the *Britannica* has been criticized for being biased towards United States audiences; the United Kingdom-related articles are updated less often, maps of the United States are more detailed than those of other countries, and it lacks a UK dictionary.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-seymour_2006-86) Like the *Britannica*, *Encarta* was available online by subscription, although some content could be accessed free.[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-91)

### Internet encyclopaedias

The dominant internet encyclopaedia and main alternative to *Britannica* is [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia).[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Tancer-92)[[93]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-93)[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Woodson-94) The key differences between the two lie in accessibility; the model of participation they bring to an [encyclopedic project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A9distes); their respective style sheets and editorial policies; relative ages; the number of subjects treated; the number of languages in which articles are written and made available; and their underlying economic models: unlike *Britannica*, Wikipedia is a not-for-profit and is not connected with traditional profit- and contract-based publishing distribution networks.

The 699 printed [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia) articles are generally written by identified contributors, and the roughly 65,000 printed [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) articles are the work of the editorial staff and identified outside consultants. Thus, a *Britannica* article either has known authorship or a set of possible authors (the editorial staff). With the exception of the editorial staff, most of the *Britannica*'s contributors are experts in their field—some are Nobel laureates.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-macropaedia_contributors-54) By contrast, the articles of Wikipedia are written by people of unknown degrees of expertise: most do not claim any particular expertise, and of those who do, many are anonymous and have no verifiable credentials.[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Giles_Nature_study_2005-95) It is for this lack of institutional vetting, or certification, that former *Britannica* editor-in-chief Robert McHenry notes his belief that Wikipedia cannot hope to rival the *Britannica* in accuracy.[[96]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-FBE-96)

In 2005, the journal *Nature* chose articles from both websites in a wide range of science topics and sent them to what it called "relevant" field experts for peer review. The experts then compared the competing articles—one from each site on a given topic—side by side, but were not told which article came from which site. *Nature* got back 42 usable reviews.

In the end, the journal found just eight serious errors, such as general misunderstandings of vital concepts: four from each site. It also discovered many factual errors, omissions or misleading statements: 162 in Wikipedia and 123 in *Britannica*, an average of 3.86 mistakes per article for Wikipedia and 2.92 for *Britannica*.[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Giles_Nature_study_2005-95)[[97]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-97) Although *Britannica* was revealed as the more accurate encyclopedia, with fewer errors, [Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.) in its detailed 20-page rebuttal called *Nature'*s study flawed and misleading[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-fatally_flawed-98) and called for a "prompt" retraction. It noted that two of the articles in the study were taken from a *Britannica* yearbook and not the encyclopaedia, and another two were from *Compton's Encyclopedia* (called the *Britannica Student Encyclopedia* on the company's website). The rebuttal went on to mention that some of the articles presented to reviewers were combinations of several articles, and that other articles were merely excerpts but were penalized for factual omissions. The company also noted that several of what *Nature* called errors were minor spelling variations, and that others were matters of interpretation. *Nature* defended its story and declined to retract, stating that, as it was comparing Wikipedia with the web version of *Britannica*, it used whatever relevant material was available on *Britannica*'s website.[[99]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-99)

Interviewed in February 2009, the managing director of *Britannica UK* said:

Wikipedia is a fun site to use and has a lot of interesting entries on there, but their approach wouldn't work for *Encyclopædia Britannica*. My job is to create more awareness of our very different approaches to publishing in the public mind. They're a chisel, we're a drill, and you need to have the correct tool for the job.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-econsultancy_20090210-32)

In a January 2016 press release, *Britannica* called Wikipedia "an impressive achievement."[[100]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-100)

## Critical and popular assessments

### Reputation



A [copperplate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intaglio_printing) by [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29) from the [1st edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica).

Since the 3rd edition, the *Britannica* has enjoyed a popular and critical reputation for general excellence.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1996-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) The 3rd and the 9th editions were pirated for sale in the United States,[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101) beginning with [*Dobson's Encyclopaedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobson%27s_Encyclopaedia).[[102]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-102) On the release of the 14th edition, [*Time*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_%28magazine%29) magazine dubbed the *Britannica* the "Patriarch of the Library".[[103]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-103) In a related advertisement, naturalist [William Beebe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Beebe) was quoted as saying that the *Britannica* was "beyond comparison because there is no competitor."[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-104) References to the *Britannica* can be found throughout [English literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_literature), most notably in one of Sir [Arthur Conan Doyle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Conan_Doyle)'s favourite [Sherlock Holmes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherlock_Holmes) stories, "[The Red-Headed League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Red-Headed_League)". The tale was highlighted by the [Lord Mayor of London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Mayor_of_London), Gilbert Inglefield, at the [bicentennial of the *Britannica*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicentennial_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica).[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_bicentennial-105)

The *Britannica* has a reputation for summarising knowledge.[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-thomas_1992-79) To further their education, some people have devoted themselves to reading the entire *Britannica*, taking anywhere from three to 22 years to do so.[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101) When [Fat'h Ali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fat%27h_Ali_Shah_Qajar) became the [Shah of Persia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qajar_dynasty) in 1797, he was given a set of the *Britannica's* 3rd edition, which he read completely; after this feat, he extended his royal title to include "Most Formidable Lord and Master of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*".[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_bicentennial-105) Writer [George Bernard Shaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw) claimed to have read the complete 9th edition—except for the science articles[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)—and [Richard Evelyn Byrd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Evelyn_Byrd) took the *Britannica* as reading material for his five-month stay at the [South Pole](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Pole) in 1934, while [Philip Beaver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Beaver) read it during a sailing expedition. More recently, [A.J. Jacobs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.J._Jacobs), an editor at [*Esquire*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esquire_%28magazine%29) magazine, read the entire 2002 version of the 15th edition, describing his experiences in the well-received 2004 book, [*The Know-It-All: One Man's Humble Quest to Become the Smartest Person in the World*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Know-It-All%3A_One_Man%27s_Humble_Quest_to_Become_the_Smartest_Person_in_the_World). Only two people are known to have read two independent editions: the author [C. S. Forester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._S._Forester)[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101) and [Amos Urban Shirk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_Urban_Shirk), an American businessman who read the 11th and 14th editions, devoting roughly three hours per night for four and a half years to read the 11th.[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-106) [Elon Musk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elon_Musk) read the *Britannica* twice.[[107]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-107) Several editors-in-chief of the *Britannica* are likely to have read their editions completely, such as [William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29) (1st edition), [William Robertson Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Robertson_Smith) (9th edition), and [Walter Yust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Yust) (14th edition).[[*original research?*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ANo_original_research)]

### Awards

The CD/DVD-ROM version of the *Britannica*, [*Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Ultimate_Reference_Suite), received the 2004 Distinguished Achievement Award from the [Association of Educational Publishers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_of_Educational_Publishers).[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-108) On 15 July 2009, *Encyclopædia Britannica* was awarded a spot as one of "Top Ten Superbrands in the UK" by a panel of more than 2,000 independent reviewers, as reported by the BBC.[[109]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-109)

### Coverage of topics

Topics are chosen in part by reference to the [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia) "Outline of Knowledge".[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_preface-10) The bulk of the *Britannica* is devoted to geography (26% of the [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia)), biography (14%), biology and medicine (11%), literature (7%), physics and astronomy (6%), religion (5%), art (4%), Western philosophy (4%), and law (3%).[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) A complementary study of the [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) found that geography accounted for 25% of articles, science 18%, social sciences 17%, biography 17%, and all other humanities 25%.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) Writing in 1992, one reviewer judged that the "range, depth, and [catholicity](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/catholicity) of coverage [of the *Britannica*] are unsurpassed by any other general Encyclopaedia."[[110]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-110)

The *Britannica* does not cover topics in equivalent detail; for example, the whole of [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) and most other religions is covered in a single [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia) article, whereas 14 articles are devoted to Christianity, comprising nearly half of all religion articles.[[111]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-macropaedia_2007-111) However, the *Britannica* has been lauded as the *least* biased of general Encyclopaedias marketed to Western readers[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) and praised for its biographies of important women of all eras.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8)

It can be stated without fear of contradiction that the 15th edition of the *Britannica* accords non-Western cultural, social, and scientific developments more notice than any general English-language encyclopedia currently on the market.

— [*Kenneth Kister*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Kister), in Kister's Best Encyclopedias (1994)

### Criticism of editorial decisions

On rare occasions, the *Britannica* has been criticized for its editorial choices. Given its roughly constant size, the encyclopaedia has needed to reduce or eliminate some topics to accommodate others, resulting in controversial decisions. The initial 15th edition (1974–1985) was faulted for having reduced or eliminated coverage of children's literature, [military decorations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_decoration), and the French poet [Joachim du Bellay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim_du_Bellay); editorial mistakes were also alleged, such as inconsistent sorting of Japanese biographies.[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Newsweek_1974-112) Its elimination of the index was condemned, as was the apparently arbitrary division of articles into the [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) and [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia).[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[113]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-15th_criticism-113) Summing up, one critic called the initial 15th edition a "qualified failure...[that] cares more for juggling its format than for preserving."[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Newsweek_1974-112) More recently, reviewers from the [American Library Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Library_Association) were surprised to find that most educational articles had been eliminated from the 1992 *Macropædia*, along with the article on [psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology).[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1992-11)

Some very few *Britannica*-appointed contributors are mistaken. A notorious instance from the *Britannica's* early years is the rejection of [Newtonian gravity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newtonian_gravity) by [George Gleig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig), the chief editor of the 3rd edition (1788–1797), who wrote that gravity was caused by the [classical element of fire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_%28classical_element%29).[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101) The *Britannica* has also staunchly defended a scientific approach to cultural topics, as it did with [William Robertson Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Robertson_Smith)'s articles on religion in the 9th edition, particularly his article stating that the Bible was not historically accurate (1875).[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)

### Other criticisms

See also: [Encyclopædia Britannica Eleventh Edition § Notable commentary on the Eleventh Edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Eleventh_Edition#Notable_commentary_on_the_Eleventh_Edition)

The *Britannica* has received criticism, especially as editions become outdated. It is expensive to produce a completely new edition of the *Britannica*,[[a]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-114) and its editors delay for as long as fiscally sensible (usually about 25 years).[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-encyclopaedia_1954-13) For example, despite continuous revision, the 14th edition became outdated after 35 years (1929–1964). When American physicist [Harvey Einbinder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Einbinder) detailed its failings in his 1964 book, *The Myth of the Britannica*,[[114]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-115) the encyclopaedia was provoked to produce the 15th edition, which required 10 years of work.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) It is still difficult to keep the *Britannica* current; one recent critic writes, "it is not difficult to find articles that are out-of-date or in need of revision", noting that the longer *Macropædia* articles are more likely to be outdated than the shorter *Micropædia* articles.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) Information in the *Micropædia* is sometimes inconsistent with the corresponding *Macropædia* article(s), mainly because of the failure to update one or the other.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1996-5)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8) The bibliographies of the *Macropædia* articles have been criticized for being more out-of-date than the articles themselves.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-library_association_1996-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-sader_1995-8)

In 2005, 12-year-old [schoolboy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student) Lucian George found several inaccuracies in the *Britannica*‘s entries on [Poland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland) and [wildlife](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wildlife) in [Eastern Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe).[[115]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-116)

In 2010, an inaccurate entry about the [Irish Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Civil_War) was discussed in the Irish press following a decision of the [Department of Education and Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_of_Education_and_Skills_%28Ireland%29) to pay for online access.[[116]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-117)[[117]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-118)

Writing about the 3rd edition (1788–1797), *Britannica*'s chief editor [George Gleig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig) observed that "perfection seems to be incompatible with the nature of works constructed on such a plan, and embracing such a variety of subjects."[[118]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-119) In March 2006, the *Britannica* wrote, "we in no way mean to imply that *Britannica* is error-free; we have never made such a claim"[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-fatally_flawed-98) (although in 1962 Britannica's sales department famously said of the 14th edition "It is truth. It is unquestionable fact.")[[119]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-120) The sentiment is expressed by its original editor, [William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29):

With regard to errors in general, whether falling under the denomination of mental, typographical or accidental, we are conscious of being able to point out a greater number than any critic whatever. Men who are acquainted with the innumerable difficulties attending the execution of a work of such an extensive nature will make proper allowances. To these we appeal, and shall rest satisfied with the judgment they pronounce.[[120]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-121)

However, [Jorge Cauz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Cauz) (president of Encyclopædia Britannica Inc.) asserted in 2012 that "*Britannica* [...] will always be factually correct."[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-nytstop-1)

## History



Title page of the first edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*

Main article: [History of the Encyclopædia Britannica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica)

Past owners have included, in chronological order, the Edinburgh, Scotland printers [Colin Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar) and [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29), Scottish bookseller [Archibald Constable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Constable), Scottish publisher [A & C Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%26_C_Black), [Horace Everett Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper), [Sears](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears) Roebuck and [William Benton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Benton_%28senator%29).

The present owner of Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. is [Jacqui Safra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqui_Safra), a Brazilian billionaire and actor. Recent advances in information technology and the rise of electronic encyclopaedias such as [Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Ultimate_Reference_Suite), [*Encarta*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encarta) and Wikipedia have reduced the demand for print encyclopaedias.[[121]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-web-122) To remain competitive, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. has stressed the reputation of the *Britannica*, reduced its price and production costs, and developed electronic versions on [CD-ROM](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CD-ROM), DVD, and the [World Wide Web](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Wide_Web). Since the early 1930s, the company has promoted spin-off reference works.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-encyclopaedia_1954-13)

### Editions

The *Britannica* has been issued in 15 editions, with multi-volume supplements to the 3rd and 4th editions (see the [Table](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Edition_summary) below). The 5th and 6th editions were reprints of the 4th, the 10th edition was only a supplement to the 9th, just as the 12th and 13th editions were supplements to the 11th. The 15th underwent massive reorganization in 1985, but the updated, current version is still known as the 15th. The 14th and 15th editions were edited every year throughout their runs, so that later printings of each were entirely different from early ones.

Throughout history, the *Britannica* has had two aims: to be an excellent reference book, and to provide educational material.[[122]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_encyclopedia-123) In 1974, the 15th edition adopted a third goal: to systematize all human knowledge.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_preface-10) The history of the *Britannica* can be divided into five eras, punctuated by changes in management, or reorganization of the dictionary.

#### 1768–1826



The early 19th-century editions of *Encyclopædia Britannica* included influential, original research such as [Thomas Young's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Young_%28scientist%29) article on Egypt, which included the translation of the [hieroglyphs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_hieroglyphs) on the [Rosetta Stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosetta_Stone) (pictured).

In the first era (1st–6th editions, 1768–1826), the *Britannica* was managed and published by its founders, [Colin Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar) and [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29), by [Archibald Constable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Constable), and by others. The *Britannica* was first published between December 1768[[123]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-124) and 1771 in [Edinburgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh) as the *Encyclopædia Britannica, or, A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, compiled upon a New Plan*. In part, it was conceived in reaction to the French [*Encyclopédie*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A9die) of [Denis Diderot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Diderot) and [Jean le Rond d'Alembert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_le_Rond_d%27Alembert) (published 1751–72), which had been inspired by [Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclop%C3%A6dia%2C_or_an_Universal_Dictionary_of_Arts_and_Sciences) (first edition 1728). It went on sale 10 December.[[124]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-125)

The *Britannica* of this period was primarily a Scottish enterprise, and it is one of the most enduring legacies of the [Scottish Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Enlightenment).[[125]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-126) In this era, the *Britannica* moved from being a three-volume set (1st edition) compiled by one young editor—[William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29)[[126]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-127)—to a 20-volume set written by numerous authorities.[[127]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-KafkerLoveland2009-128) Several other encyclopaedias competed throughout this period, among them editions of [Abraham Rees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Rees)'s *Cyclopædia* and [Coleridge's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge) [*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Metropolitana) and [David Brewster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Brewster)'s [*Edinburgh Encyclopædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh_Encyclop%C3%A6dia).

#### 1827–1901

During the second era (7th–9th editions, 1827–1901), the *Britannica* was managed by the Edinburgh publishing firm [A & C Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%26_C_Black). Although some contributors were again recruited through friendships of the chief editors, notably [Macvey Napier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macvey_Napier), others were attracted by the *Britannica's* reputation. The contributors often came from other countries and included the world's most respected authorities in their fields. A general index of all articles was included for the first time in the 7th edition, a practice maintained until 1974.

Production of the 9th edition was overseen by [Thomas Spencer Baynes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Spencer_Baynes), the first English-born editor-in-chief. Dubbed the "Scholar's Edition", the 9th edition is the most scholarly of all *Britannicas*.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101) After 1880, Baynes was assisted by [William Robertson Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Robertson_Smith).[[128]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-129) No biographies of living persons were included.[[129]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-130) [James Clerk Maxwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Clerk_Maxwell) and [Thomas Huxley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Huxley) were special advisors on science.[[130]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-131) However, by the close of the 19th century, the 9th edition was outdated, and the *Britannica* faced financial difficulties.

#### 1901–1973



US advertisement for the 11th edition from the May 1913 issue of [*National Geographic Magazine*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Geographic_Magazine)

In the third era (10th–14th editions, 1901–1973), the *Britannica* was managed by American businessmen who introduced [direct marketing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_marketing) and [door-to-door](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Door-to-door) sales. The American owners gradually simplified articles, making them less scholarly for a mass market. The 10th edition was an eleven-volume supplement (including one each of maps and an index) to the 9th, numbered as volumes 25–35, but the 11th edition was a completely new work, and is still praised for excellence; its owner, [Horace Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper), lavished enormous effort on its perfection.[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)

When Hooper fell into financial difficulties, the *Britannica* was managed by [Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears_Roebuck) for 18 years (1920–1923, 1928–1943). In 1932, the vice-president of Sears, [Elkan Harrison Powell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elkan_Harrison_Powell), assumed presidency of the *Britannica*; in 1936, he began the policy of continuous revision. This was a departure from earlier practice, in which the articles were not changed until a new edition was produced, at roughly 25-year intervals, some articles unchanged from earlier editions.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-encyclopaedia_1954-13) Powell developed new educational products that built upon the *Britannica*'s reputation.



A wooden shipping crate for the 14th edition of the *Britannica*

In 1943, Sears donated the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to the [University of Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago). [William Benton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Benton_%28senator%29), then a vice president of the university, provided the working capital for its operation. The stock was divided between Benton and the university, with the university holding an option on the stock.[[131]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-132) Benton became chairman of the board and managed the *Britannica* until his death in 1973.[[132]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-133) Benton set up the [Benton Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benton_Foundation), which managed the *Britannica* until 1996, and whose sole beneficiary was the University of Chicago.[[133]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-134) In 1968, near the end of this era, the *Britannica* celebrated [its bicentennial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicentennial_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica).

#### 1974–1994

In the fourth era (1974–94), the *Britannica* introduced its 15th edition, which was reorganized into three parts: the [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia), the [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia), and the [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia). Under [Mortimer J. Adler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_J._Adler) (member of the Board of Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica since its inception in 1949, and its chair from 1974; director of editorial planning for the 15th edition of *Britannica* from 1965),[[134]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-135) the *Britannica* sought not only to be a good reference work and educational tool, but to systematize all human knowledge. The absence of a separate index and the grouping of articles into parallel encyclopaedias (the *Micro-* and *Macropædia*) provoked a "firestorm of criticism" of the initial 15th edition.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)[[113]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-15th_criticism-113) In response, the 15th edition was completely reorganized and indexed for a re-release in 1985. This second version of the 15th edition continued to be published and revised until the 2010 print version. The official title of the 15th edition is the *New Encyclopædia Britannica*, although it has also been promoted as *Britannica 3*.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)

On 9 March 1976 the US [Federal Trade Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Trade_Commission) entered an opinion and order enjoining Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. from using: a) deceptive advertising practices in recruiting sales agents and obtaining sales leads, and b) deceptive sales practices in the door-to-door presentations of its sales agents.[[135]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-136)

#### 1994–present



Advertisement for the 9th edition (1898)

In the fifth era (1994–present), digital versions have been developed and released on [optical media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_disc) and online. In 1996, the *Britannica* was bought by [Jacqui Safra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqui_Safra) at well below its estimated value, owing to the company's financial difficulties. [Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.) split in 1999. One part retained the company name and developed the print version, and the other, [Britannica.com Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannica.com_Inc.), developed digital versions. Since 2001, the two companies have shared a CEO, [Ilan Yeshua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilan_Yeshua), who has continued Powell's strategy of introducing new products with the *Britannica* name. In March 2012, Britannica's president, [Jorge Cauz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Cauz), announced that it would not produce any new print editions of the encyclopaedia, with the 2010 15th edition being the last. The company will focus only on the online edition and other educational tools.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-nytstop-1)[[136]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-cnn-stop-137)

*Britannica*'s final print edition was in 2010, a 32-volume set.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-nytstop-1) *Britannica Global Edition* was also printed in 2010, containing 30 volumes and 18,251 pages, with 8,500 photographs, maps, flags, and illustrations in smaller "compact" volumes, as well as over 40,000 articles written by scholars from across the world, including Nobel Prize winners. Unlike the 15th edition, it did not contain *Macro-* and *Micropædia* sections, but ran A through Z as all editions up through the 14th had. The following is *Britannica*'s description of the work:[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-store.britannica.com-7)

The editors of *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the world standard in reference since 1768, present the *Britannica Global Edition*. Developed specifically to provide comprehensive and global coverage of the world around us, this unique product contains thousands of timely, relevant, and essential articles drawn from the *Encyclopædia Britannica* itself, as well as from the *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, the *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, and Compton's by Britannica. Written by international experts and scholars, the articles in this collection reflect the standards that have been the hallmark of the leading English-language encyclopedia for over 240 years.

In 2020, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. released the *Britannica All New Children's Encyclopedia: What We Know and What We Don't*, an encyclopedia aimed primarily at younger readers, covering major topics. The encyclopedia was widely praised for bringing back the print format. It was *Britannica*'s first encyclopedia for children since 1984.[[137]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-138)[[138]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-139)[[139]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-140)

### Dedications

The *Britannica* was [dedicated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dedication_%28publishing%29) to the reigning [British monarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_monarchy) from 1788 to 1901 and then, upon its sale to an American partnership, to the British monarch and the President of the United States.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6) Thus, the 11th edition is "dedicated by Permission to His Majesty [George the Fifth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom), [King of Great Britain and Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland) and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, [Emperor of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_of_India), and to [William Howard Taft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Howard_Taft), President of the United States of America."[[140]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_1911-141) The order of the dedications has changed with the relative power of the United States and Britain, and with relative sales; the 1954 version of the 14th edition is "Dedicated by Permission to the Heads of the Two English-Speaking Peoples, [Dwight David Eisenhower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_D._Eisenhower), President of the United States of America, and Her Majesty, [Queen Elizabeth the Second](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II)."[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_1954-83) Consistent with this tradition, the 2007 version of the current 15th edition was "dedicated by permission to the current President of the United States of America, [George W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._Bush), and Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II",[[141]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia_3-142) while the 2010 version of the current 15th edition is "dedicated by permission to [Barack Obama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama), President of the United States of America, and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II."[[142]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-propedia2010-143)

## Edition summary

Main article: [History of the Encyclopædia Britannica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Edition / supplement**  | **Publication years**  | **Size**  | **Sales**  | **Chief editor(s)**  | **Notes**  |
| [**1st**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_First_Edition) | 1768–1771  | 3 volumes, 2,391 pages,[[b]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-145) 160 plates  | 3,000[[c]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-147)  | [William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29)  | Largely the work of one editor, Smellie; An estimated 3,000 sets were eventually sold, priced at £12 apiece; 30 articles longer than three pages. The pages were bound in three equally sized volumes covering Aa–Bzo, Caaba–Lythrum, and Macao–Zyglophyllum.  |
| [**2nd**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Second_Edition) | 1777–1784  | 10 volumes, 8,595 pages, 340 plates  | 1,500[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)  | [James Tytler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler)  | Largely the work of one editor, Tytler; 150 long articles; pagination errors; all maps under "Geography" article; 1,500 sets sold[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)  |
| [**3rd**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Third_Edition) | 1788–1797  | 18 volumes, 14,579 pages, 542 plates  | 10,000 or 13,000[[d]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-149)  | [Colin Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar) and [George Gleig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig)  | [£](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pound_sterling)42,000 profit on 10,000 copies sold; first dedication to monarch; pirated by Moore in Dublin and [Thomas Dobson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Dobson_%28printer%29) in Philadelphia  |
| [**supplement to 3rd**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Third_Edition) | 1801, revised in 1803  | 2 volumes, 1,624 pages, 50 plates  |  | George Gleig  | Copyright owned by [Thomas Bonar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Bonar)  |
| **4th**  | 1801–1810  | 20 volumes, 16,033 pages, 581 plates  | 4,000[[146]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-150)  | [James Millar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Millar_%28scientist%29)  | Authors first allowed to retain copyright. Material in the supplement to 3rd not incorporated due to copyright issues.  |
| **5th**  | 1815–1817  | 20 volumes, 16,017 pages, 582 plates  |  | James Millar  | Reprint of the 4th edition. Financial losses by Millar and Andrew Bell's heirs; EB rights sold to [Archibald Constable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Constable)  |
| **supplement to 5th**  | 1816–1824  | 6 volumes, 4,933 pages, 125 plates[1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote1)  | 10,500[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)  | [Macvey Napier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macvey_Napier)  | Famous contributors recruited, such as Sir [Humphry Davy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humphry_Davy), [Sir Walter Scott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Walter_Scott), [Malthus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malthus)  |
| **6th**  | 1820–1823  | 20 volumes  |  | [Charles Maclaren](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Maclaren)  | Reprint of the 4th and 5th editions with modern font. [Constable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Constable) went bankrupt on 19 January 1826; EB rights eventually secured by [Adam Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Black)  |
| **7th**  | 1830–1842  | 21 volumes, 17,101 pages, 506 plates, plus a 187-page index volume  | 5,000[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)  | [Macvey Napier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macvey_Napier), assisted by [James Browne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Browne_%28writer%29), LLD  | Widening network of famous contributors, such as Sir [David Brewster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Brewster), [Thomas de Quincey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_de_Quincey), [Antonio Panizzi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Panizzi); 5,000 sets sold[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-101)  |
| **8th**  | 1853–1860  | 21 volumes, 17,957 pages, 402 plates; plus a 239-page index volume, published 1861[2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote2)  | 8,000  | [Thomas Stewart Traill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Stewart_Traill)  | Many long articles were copied from the 7th edition; 344 contributors including [William Thomson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thomson%2C_1st_Baron_Kelvin); authorized American sets printed by Little, Brown in Boston; 8,000 sets sold altogether  |
| **9th**  | 1875–1889  | 24 volumes, plus a 499-page index volume labeled Volume 25  | 55,000 authorized[[e]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-152) plus 500,000 pirated sets  | [Thomas Spencer Baynes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Spencer_Baynes) (1875–80); then [W. Robertson Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Robertson_Smith)  | Some carry-over from 8th edition, but mostly a new work; high point of scholarship; 10,000 sets sold by Britannica and 45,000 authorized sets made in the US by Little, Brown in Boston and Schribners' Sons in NY, but pirated widely (500,000 sets) in the US.[3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote3)  |
| **10th,supplement to 9th**  | 1902–1903  | 11 volumes, plus the 24 volumes of the 9th. Volume 34 containing 124 detailed country maps with index of 250,000 names [4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote4)  | 70,000  | Sir [Donald Mackenzie Wallace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Mackenzie_Wallace) and [Hugh Chisholm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Chisholm) in London; [Arthur T. Hadley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_T._Hadley) and [Franklin Henry Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Henry_Hooper) in New York City  | American partnership bought EB rights on 9 May 1901; high-pressure sales methods  |
| [**11th**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Eleventh_Edition) | 1910–1911 | 28 volumes, plus volume 29 index  | 1,000,000  | Hugh Chisholm in London, Franklin Henry Hooper in New York City  | Another high point of scholarship and writing; more articles than the 9th, but shorter and simpler; financial difficulties for owner, [Horace Everett Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper); EB rights sold to [Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears%2C_Roebuck_and_Company) in 1920  |
| **12th,supplement to 11th**  | 1921–1922  | 3 volumes with own index, plus the 29 volumes of the 11th[5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote5)  |  | Hugh Chisholm in London, Franklin Henry Hooper in New York City  | Summarized state of the world before, during, and after World War I  |
| **13th,supplement to 11th**  | 1926  | 3 volumes with own index, plus the 29 volumes of the 11th[6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote6)  |  | [James Louis Garvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Louis_Garvin) in London, Franklin Henry Hooper in New York City  | Replaced 12th edition volumes; improved perspective of the events of 1910–1926  |
| **14th**  | 1929–1933  | 24 volumes [7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote7)  |  | [James Louis Garvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Louis_Garvin) in London, Franklin Henry Hooper in New York City  | Publication just before Great Depression was financially catastrophic[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]  |
| **revised 14th**  | 1933–1973  | 24 volumes [7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote7)  |  | Franklin Henry Hooper until 1938; then [Walter Yust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Yust), [Harry Ashmore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Ashmore), Warren E. Preece, William Haley  | Began continuous revision in 1936: every article revised at least twice every decade  |
| **15th**  | 1974–1984  | 30 volumes [8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote8)  |  | Warren E. Preece, then Philip W. Goetz  | Introduced three-part structure; division of articles into [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) and [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia); [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia) Outline of Knowledge; separate index eliminated  |
| 1985–2010 | 32 volumes [9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#editionnote9)  |  | Philip W. Goetz, then [Robert McHenry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_McHenry), currently [Dale Hoiberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dale_Hoiberg)  | Restored two-volume index; some *Micropædia* and *Macropædia* articles merged; slightly longer overall; new versions were issued every few years. This edition is the last printed edition.  |
| **Global**  | 2009  | 30 compact volumes  |  | [Dale Hoiberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dale_Hoiberg)  | Unlike the 15th edition, it did not contain Macro- and Micropedia sections, but ran A through Z as all editions up to the 14th had.  |

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| **Edition notes** 1*Supplement to the fourth, fifth, and sixth editions of the Encyclopædia Britannica. With preliminary dissertations on the history of the sciences.* 2 The 7th to 14th editions included a separate index volume. 3 The 9th edition featured articles by notables of the day, such as [James Clerk Maxwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Clerk_Maxwell) on electricity and magnetism, and [William Thomson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thomson%2C_1st_Baron_Kelvin) (who became Lord Kelvin) on heat. 4 The 10th edition included a maps volume and a cumulative index volume for the 9th and 10th edition volumes: *the new volumes, constituting, in combination with the existing volumes of the 9th ed., the 10th ed. ... and also supplying a new, distinctive, and independent library of reference dealing with recent events and developments* 5 *Vols. 30–32 ... the New volumes constituting, in combination with the twenty-nine volumes of the eleventh edition, the twelfth edition* 6 This supplement replaced the previous supplement: *The three new supplementary volumes constituting, with the volumes of the latest standard edition, the thirteenth edition.* 7 At this point *Encyclopædia Britannica* began almost annual revisions. New revisions of the 14th edition appeared every year between 1929 and 1973 with the exceptions of 1931, 1934 and 1935.[[148]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-ReferenceA-153) 8 Annual revisions were published every year between 1974 and 2007 with the exceptions of 1996, 1999, 2000, 2004 and 2006.[[148]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-ReferenceA-153) The 15th edition (introduced as "Britannica 3") was published in three parts: a 10-volume *Micropædia* (which contained short articles and served as an index), a 19-volume *Macropædia*, plus the *Propædia* (see text). 9 In 1985, the system was modified by adding a separate two-volume index; the *Macropædia* articles were further consolidated into fewer, larger ones (for example, the previously separate articles about the 50 US states were all included into the "United States of America" article), with some medium-length articles moved to the *Micropædia*. The *Micropædia* had 12 vols. and the *Macropædia* 17. The first CD-ROM edition was issued in 1994. At that time also an online version was offered for paid subscription. In 1999 this was offered free, and no revised print versions appeared. The experiment was ended in 2001 and a new printed set was issued in 2001.  |

## See also

* [Scotland portal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AScotland)
* [Chicago portal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AChicago)
* [Books portal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3ABooks)
* [Encyclopædia Britannica Films](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Films)
* [*Great Books of the Western World*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Books_of_the_Western_World)
* [List of encyclopedias by branch of knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_encyclopedias_by_branch_of_knowledge)
* [List of encyclopedias by date](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_encyclopedias_by_date)
* [List of encyclopedias by language § English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_encyclopedias_by_language#English)
* [List of online encyclopedias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_online_encyclopedias)

## Notes

 According to Kister, the initial 15th edition (1974) required over $32 million to produce.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-6)

  Vol. I has (viii), 697, (i) pages, but 10 unpaginated pages are added between pages 586 and 587. Vol. II has (iii), 1009, (ii) pages, but page numbers 175–176 as well as page numbers 425–426 were used twice; additionally page numbers 311–410 were not used. Vol. III has (iii), 953, (i) pages, but page numbers 679–878 were not used.[[143]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKafkerLoveland200922-144)

  Archibald Constable estimated in 1812 that there had been 3,500 copies printed, but revised his estimate to 3,000 in 1821.[[144]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKafkerLoveland200958-146)

  According to Smellie, it was 10,000, as quoted by Robert Kerr in his "Memoirs of William Smellie." Archibald Constable was quoted as saying the production started at 5,000 and concluded at 13,000.[[145]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-148)

1.  10,000 sets sold by Britannica plus 45,000 genuine American reprints by Scribner's Sons, and "several hundred thousand sets of mutilated and fraudulent 9th editions were sold..."[[147]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-151) Most sources estimate there were 500,000 pirated sets.

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  "Encyclopaedia". Encyclopædia Britannica (14th ed.). 1954. Aside from providing an excellent summary of the *Britannica's* history and early spin-off products, this article also describes the life-cycle of a typical *Britannica* edition. A new edition typically begins with strong sales that decay as the encyclopaedia becomes outdated. When work on a new edition is begun, sales of the old edition stop, just when fiscal needs are greatest: a new editorial staff must be assembled, articles commissioned. [Elkan Harrison Powell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elkan_Harrison_Powell) identified this fluctuation of income as a danger to any encyclopaedia, one he hoped to overcome with continuous revision.

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## Further reading

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## External links

**Encyclopædia Britannica**at Wikipedia's [sister projects](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AWikimedia_sister_projects)

* [Definitions](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Britannica) from Wiktionary
* [Media](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category%3AEncyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) from Commons
* [News](https://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Category%3AEncyclopaedia_Britannica) from Wikinews
* [Texts](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) from Wikisource
* [Data](https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q455) from Wikidata
* [Official website](https://www.britannica.com/)
* [Works by or about Encyclopædia Britannica](https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Britannica%2C%20Encyclopædia%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Encyclopædia%20Britannica%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Britannica%2C%20Encyclopædia%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Encyclopædia%20Britannica%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Britannica%2C%20E%2E%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Encyclopædia%20Britannica%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Britannica%2C%20Encyclopædia%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Encyclopædia%20Britannica%22%20OR%20%28Encyclop%2Adia+Britannica%29%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29) at [Internet Archive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Archive)
* [Works by Encyclopædia Britannica](https://librivox.org/author/1721) at [LibriVox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LibriVox) (public domain audiobooks) 
* [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*](https://digital.nls.uk/encyclopaedia-britannica/archive/) at the [National Library of Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Library_of_Scotland), first ten editions (and supplements) in PDF format.
* [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*](http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/work?id=olbp16644) at the [Online Books Page](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_Books_Page), currently including the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th and 11th editions in multiple formats.
* 3rd edition, (1797, first volume, use search facility for others) at Bavarian State Library [MDZ-Reader | Band | Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a dictionary of arts, sciences, and miscellaneous literature | Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a dictionary of arts, sciences, and miscellaneous literature](http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10352038_00007.html)
* 7th edition (1842), [fulltext](https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011679752) via Hathi Trust
* 8th edition (1860, index volume, use search facility for others) at Bavarian State Library [MDZ-Reader | Band | The Encyclopaedia Britannica, or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature | The Encyclopaedia Britannica, or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature](http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10351547_00009.html)
* Scribner's 9th Edition (1878) [archive.org](https://archive.org/search.php?query=title%3A%28britannica%29%20AND%20publisher%3A%28scribner%27s%29)
* 9th and 10th (1902) editions [1902Encyclopedia.com](http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/)

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# History of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica>

The [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) has been published continuously since 1768, appearing in fifteen official editions. Several editions have been amended with multi-volume "supplements" (3rd, 5th/6th), consisted of previous editions with added supplements (10th, and 12th/13th) or gone drastic re-organizations (15th). In recent years, digital versions of the *Britannica* have been developed, both online and on [optical media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_media). Since the early 1930s, the *Britannica* has developed several "spin-off" products to leverage its reputation as a reliable reference work and educational tool.

The Encyclopedia as known up to 2012 was incurring unsustainable losses and the print editions were ended, but it continues on the Internet.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Cauz-2)



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	+ [2.1 First edition, 1771](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#First_edition,_1771)
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	+ [2.5 Fourth edition, 1810](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Fourth_edition,_1810)
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	+ [2.8 Sixth edition, 1823](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Sixth_edition,_1823)
* [3 A. and C. Black editions (7th–9th, 1827–1901)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#A._and_C._Black_editions_(7th–9th,_1827–1901))
	+ [3.1 Seventh edition, 1842](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Seventh_edition,_1842)
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	+ [3.3 Ninth edition, 1889](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Ninth_edition,_1889)
* [4 First American editions (10th–14th, 1901–1973)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#First_American_editions_(10th–14th,_1901–1973))
	+ [4.1 Tenth edition (supplement to the 9th), 1903](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Tenth_edition_(supplement_to_the_9th),_1903)
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* [7 Development of electronic versions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#Development_of_electronic_versions)
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## Historical context

See also: [Encyclopedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia) and [List of encyclopedias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_encyclopedias)

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| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/9/99/Question_book-new.svg/50px-Question_book-new.svg.png | This section **needs additional citations for** [**verification**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AVerifiability). Please help [improve this article](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica&action=edit) by [adding citations to reliable sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AReferencing_for_beginners). Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. *(June 2016) (*[*Learn how and when to remove this template message*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AMaintenance_template_removal)*)* |

Encyclopedias of various types had been published since antiquity, beginning with the collected works of [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) and the [*Natural History*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_History_%28Pliny%29) of [Pliny the Elder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder), the latter having 2493 articles in 37 books. Encyclopedias were published in Europe and China throughout the [Middle Ages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages), such as the [*Satyricon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyricon) of [Martianus Minneus Felix Capella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martianus_Minneus_Felix_Capella) (early 5th century), the *Speculum majus* (*Great Mirror*) of [Vincent of Beauvais](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_of_Beauvais) (1250), and *Encyclopedia septem tomis distincta* (*A Seven-Part Encyclopedia*) by [Johann Heinrich Alsted](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Alsted) (1630). Most early encyclopedias did not include biographies of living people and were written in [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin), although some encyclopedias were translated into English, such as *De proprietatibus rerum (On the properties of things)* (1240) by [Bartholomeus Anglicus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartholomeus_Anglicus). However, English-composed encyclopedias appeared in the 18th century, beginning with [*Lexicon technicum, or A Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexicon_Technicum) by [John Harris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Harris_%28writer%29) (two volumes, published 1704 and 1710, respectively), which contained articles by such contributors as [Isaac Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton). [Ephraim Chambers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim_Chambers) wrote a very popular two-volume [*Cyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclopaedia%2C_or_Universal_Dictionary_of_Arts_and_Sciences) in 1728, which went through multiple editions and awakened publishers to the enormous profit potential of encyclopedias. Although not all encyclopedias succeeded commercially, their elements sometimes inspired future encyclopedias; for example, the failed two-volume *A Universal History of Arts and Sciences* of [Dennis de Coetlogon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_de_Coetlogon) (published 1745) grouped its topics into long self-contained treatises, an organization that likely inspired the "new plan" of the *Britannica*. The first encyclopedia to include biographies of living people was the 64-volume [*Grosses Universal-Lexicon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grosses_Universal-Lexicon) (published 1732–1759) of [Johann Heinrich Zedler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Zedler), who argued that death alone should not render people notable.

## Earliest editions (1st–6th, 1768–1824)

### First edition, 1771

Main article: [Encyclopædia Britannica First Edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_First_Edition)



[First edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_First_Edition) replica.



Title page from the first edition



A page from the first edition. The flow of short entries is interrupted here by one of the major treatises.

The *Britannica* was the idea of [Colin Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar), a bookseller and printer, and [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29), an engraver, both of [Edinburgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh). They conceived of the *Britannica* as a conservative reaction to the French [*Encyclopédie*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A9die) of [Denis Diderot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Diderot) (published 1751–1766), which was widely viewed as heretical. Ironically, the *Encyclopédie* had begun as a French translation of the popular English encyclopedia, [*Cyclopaedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclopaedia%2C_or_Universal_Dictionary_of_Arts_and_Sciences) published by [Ephraim Chambers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim_Chambers) in 1728. Although later editions of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* were still popular, and despite the commercial failure of other English encyclopedias, Macfarquhar and Bell were inspired by the intellectual ferment of the [Scottish Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Enlightenment) and thought the time ripe for a new encyclopedia "compiled upon a new plan".

Needing an editor, the two chose a 28-year-old scholar named [William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29) who was offered 200 [pounds sterling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pound_sterling) to produce the encyclopedia in 100 parts (called "numbers" and equivalent to thick pamphlets), which were later bound into three volumes. The first number appeared on 10 December 1768 in Edinburgh, priced [sixpence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_sixpence_coin) or 8 [pence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pence) on finer paper.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_online-3) The *Britannica* was published under the [pseudonym](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudonym) "A Society of Gentlemen in Scotland", possibly referring to the many gentlemen who had bought subscriptions.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) By releasing the numbers in weekly instalments, the *Britannica* was completed in 1771, having 2,391 pages. The numbers were bound in three equally sized volumes covering A–B, C–L, and M–Z; an estimated 3,000 sets were eventually sold, priced at 12 pounds sterling apiece.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_History-5) [The 1st edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_First_Edition) also featured 160 copperplate illustrations engraved by Bell. Three of the engravings in the section on midwifery, depicting childbirth in clinical detail, were sufficiently shocking to prompt some readers to tear those engravings out of the volume.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

The key idea that set the *Britannica* apart was to group related topics together into longer essays, that were then organized alphabetically. Previous English encyclopedias had generally listed related terms separately in their alphabetical order, rather like a modern technical dictionary, an approach that the *Britannica's'* management derided as "dismembering the sciences".[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-online_encyclopedia-6) Although anticipated by [Dennis de Coetlogon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_de_Coetlogon), the idea for this "new plan" is generally ascribed to [Colin Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar), although [William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29) claimed it as his own invention.

Smellie wrote most of the first edition, borrowing liberally from the authors of his era, including [Voltaire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voltaire), [Benjamin Franklin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin), [Alexander Pope](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Pope) and [Samuel Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Johnson). He later said:[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

I wrote most of it, my lad, and snipped out from books enough material for the printer. With pastepot and scissors I composed it!

— [*William Smellie*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29), at a meeting of the [*Crochallan Fencibles*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crochallan_Fencibles)

The vivid prose and easy navigation of the first edition led to strong demand for a second. Although this edition has been faulted for its imperfect scholarship, Smellie argued that the *Britannica* should be given the benefit of the doubt:

With regard to errors in general, whether falling under the denomination of mental, typographical or accidental, we are conscious of being able to point out a greater number than any critic whatever. Men who are acquainted with the innumerable difficulties of attending the execution of a work of such an extensive nature will make proper allowances. To these we appeal, and shall rest satisfied with the judgment they pronounce.

— [*William Smellie*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29), in the Preface to the 1st edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica

Smellie strove to make *Britannica* as usable as possible, saying that "utility ought to be the principal intention of every publication. Wherever this intention does not plainly appear, neither the books nor their authors have the smallest claim to the approbation of mankind".

The first edition was reprinted in [London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London), with slight variants on the title page and a different preface, by Edward and Charles Dilly in 1773 and by John Donaldson in 1775.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_online-3) On the occasion of the [200th anniversary of the 1st edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicentennial_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica), [Encyclopædia Britannica Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Inc.) published a facsimile of the 1st edition, even including "age spots" on the paper. This has been periodically reprinted and is still part of Britannica's product line.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-7)

### Second edition, 1783, Supplement 1784

Main article: [Encyclopædia Britannica Second Edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Second_Edition)



[*Encyclopædia Britannica* First and Second Editions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Second_Edition)

After the success of the first edition, a more ambitious [second edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Second_Edition) was begun in 1776, with the addition of history and biography articles.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Trivia_Library_1-8) Smellie declined to be editor, principally because he objected to the addition of biography. Macfarquhar took over the role himself, aided by pharmacist [James Tytler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler), M.A.,[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-9) who was known as an able writer and willing to work for a very low wage.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) Macfarquhar and Bell rescued Tytler from the debtors' sanctuary at Holyrood Palace, and employed him for seven years at 17 shillings per week. Tytler wrote many science and history articles and almost all of the minor articles; by [Robert Burns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Burns)' estimate, Tytler wrote over three-quarters of the second edition.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) Compared to the 1st edition, the second had five times as many long articles (150), including "Scotland" (84 pages), "Optics" (132 pages), and "Medicine" (309 pages), which had their own indices. The second edition was published in 181 numbers from 21 June 1777 to 18 September 1784; these numbers were bound into ten volumes dated 1778–1783, having 8,595 pages and 340 plates again engraved by [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_History-5) A [pagination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagination) error caused page 8000 to follow page 7099. Most of the maps of this edition (eighteen of them) are found in a single 195-page article, "[Geography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography)".

The second edition improved greatly upon the 1st, but is still notable for the large amount of now-archaic information it contained. For example, "Chemistry" goes into great detail on an obsolete system of what would now be called alchemy, in which earth, air, water and fire are named elements containing various amounts of [phlogiston](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phlogiston). Tytler also describes the architecture of [Noah's Ark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah%27s_Ark) in detail (illustrated with a copperplate engraving) and, following [Bishop Ussher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Ussher), includes a remarkably precise [chronology for the Earth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geochronology), beginning with its creation on 23 October 4004 B.C. and noting that the [Great Flood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deluge_%28mythology%29) of 2348 B.C. lasted for exactly 777 days. The 2nd edition also reports a cure for [tuberculosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuberculosis):

He chose a spot of ground on which no plants had been sown, and there he made a hole large and deep enough to admit the patient up to the chin. The interstices of the pit were then carefully filled up with the fresh mould, so that the earth might everywhere come in contact with the patient's body. In this situation the patient suffered to remain till he began to shiver or felt himself uneasy...The patient was then taken out, and, after being wrapped in a linen cloth, was placed upon a mattress, and two hours afterwards his whole body was rubbed with the ointment composed of the leaves of the [*solanum nigrum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solanum_nigrum) and hog's lard.

— [*James Tytler*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler), in the 2nd edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica

and a somewhat melancholy article on "[Love](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love)" that persisted in the *Britannica* for nearly a century (until its 9th edition):

As the force of love prevails, sighs grow deeper; a tremor affects the heart and pulse; the countenance is alternately pale and red; the voice is suppressed in the sauces; the eyes grow dim; cold sweats break out; sleep absents itself, at least until the morning; the secretions become disturbed; and a loss of appetite, a hectic fever, melancholy, or perhaps madness, if not death, constitutes the sad catastrophe.

— [*James Tytler*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler), in the 2nd–8th editions of the Encyclopædia Britannica

Like the first edition, the second was sold in sections by subscription at the printing shop of [Colin MacFarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_MacFarquhar). When finished in 1784, complete sets were sold at Charles Elliot's book shop in Edinburgh for 10 pounds, unbound. Over 1,500 copies of the second edition were sold this way by Elliot in less than one year,[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-11) making the second edition enough of a financial success that a more ambitious third edition was begun a few years later.

The long period of time during which this edition was written makes the later volumes more updated than the earlier ones. Volume 10, published in 1783 after the [Revolutionary War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War) was over, gives in the entry for Virginia: "Virginia, late one of the British colonies, now one of the United States of North America..."[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-12) but the entry in Volume 2 for Boston, published in 1778, states, "Boston, the capital of New England in North America, ....The following is a description of this capital before the commencement of the present American war."[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-13)

The causes of the [Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution) are outlined concisely by Tytler in the article "Colonies" thus:

Because several of the colonies had claimed the soul and exclusive right of imposing taxes upon themselves, the statute 6 Geo. III. c. 12 expressly declares, that all his Majesty's colonies in America, have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate to and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain; who have full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects to the crown of Great Britain in all cases whatsoever. And the attempting to enforce this by other acts of Parliament, penalties, and at last by military power, gave rise, as is well known, to the present revolt of our colonies.

A 204-page appendix, written in 1784, is found at the end of Vol. 10. It does not have its own title page, but merely follows with pagination continuing from 8996 to 9200. The appendix introduces articles on Entomology, Ichthyology, Weather, Hindus (spelled Gentoos), and others, and contains many new biographies, including one of Captain James Cook. It curiously contains 25 new pages on Air, which give very little new information about air itself, but mainly cover hot air ballooning, one of Tytler's hobbies. The first page of the supplement begins with the words "Appendix containing articles omitted and others further explained or improved, together with corrections of errors and of wrong references." The appendix also includes 10 plates, namely CCCXIV to CCCXXIII.

### Third edition, 1797

Main article: [Encyclopædia Britannica Third Edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Third_Edition)



[Third edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Third_Edition) dated 1797

The third edition was published from 1788 to 1797 in 300 weekly numbers (1 shilling apiece); these numbers were collected and sold unbound in 30 parts (10 shilling, sixpence each), and finally in 1797 they were bound in 18 volumes with 14,579 pages and 542 plates, and given title pages dated 1797 for all volumes. [Macfarquhar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Macfarquhar) again edited this edition up to "Mysteries" but died in 1793 (aged 48) of "mental exhaustion"; his work was taken over by [George Gleig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig), later Bishop Gleig of Brechin (consecrated 30 October 1808). [James Tytler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler) again contributed heavily to the authorship, up to the letter M.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-14) [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29), Macfarquhar's partner, bought the rights to the *Britannica* from Macfarquhar's heirs.

Nearly doubling the scope of the 2nd edition, Macfarquhar's encyclopedic vision was finally realized. Recruited by Gleig, several illustrious authorities contributed to this edition, such as Dr. [Thomas Thomson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Thomson_%28chemist%29), who introduced modern chemical nomenclature in a chart appended to the Chemistry article,[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-15) and would go on to re-write that article in the 1801 supplement (see below), and [John Robison](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Robison_%28physicist%29), Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, who wrote several well-regarded articles on sciences then called [natural philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_philosophy). The third edition established the foundation of the *Britannica* as an important and definitive reference work for much of the next century. This edition was also enormously profitable, yielding 42,000 pounds sterling profit on the sale of roughly 10,000 copies. The 3rd edition began the tradition (continued to this day) of dedicating the *Britannica* to the reigning British monarch, then [King George III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_III_of_the_United_Kingdom). In the Supplement to the Third Edition, Gleig called him "the Father of Your People, and enlightened Patron of Arts, Sciences and Literature", and expressed:

...that, by the Wisdom of Your Councils, and the Vigour of Your Fleets and Armies, Your MAJESTY may be enabled soon to restore Peace to Europe; that You may again have leisure to extend Your Royal Care to the Improvement of Arts, and the Advancement of Knowledge; that You May Reign long over a Free, Happy and a Loyal People...

— [*George Gleig*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig), in the Dedication of the Supplement to the 3rd edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica

The [3rd edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Third_Edition) is also famous for its bold article on "Motion", which erroneously rejects [Isaac Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton)'s theory of [gravitation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gravitation). Instead, Dr. Gleig, or more likely, [James Tytler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler), wrote that gravity is caused by the [classical element of fire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_%28classical_element%29). He seems to have been swayed by [William Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Jones_%281726%E2%80%931800%29)' *Essay on the First Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1762), which in turn was based on [John Hutchinson's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hutchinson_%28writer%29) [MA thesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Arts_%28Oxford%2C_Cambridge_and_Dublin%29), *Moses' Principia*, which was written in 1724 but rejected by [Oxford University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University). Nevertheless, Gleig was sanguine about the errors of the 3rd edition, echoing [William Smellie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Smellie_%28encyclopedist%29)'s sentiment in the 1st edition quoted above:

For perfection seems to be incompatible with the nature of works constructed on such a plan, and embracing such a variety of subjects.

— [*George Gleig*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig), in the 3rd edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica

The first "American" encyclopedia, [*Dobson's Encyclopædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobson%27s_Encyclop%C3%A6dia), was based almost entirely on the 3rd edition of the *Britannica* and published at nearly the same time (1788–1798), together with an analogous supplement (1803), by the Scottish-born printer, [Thomas Dobson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Dobson_%28printer%29). The first United States [copyright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright) law was passed on 30 May 1790—although anticipated by Section 8 of Article I of the [United States Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) (ratified 4 March 1789)—but did not protect foreign publications such as the *Britannica*. Unauthorized copying of the *Britannica* in America was also a problem with the 9th edition (1889). Unlicensed copies were also sold in Dublin by James Moore under the title, *Moore's Dublin Edition, Encyclopædia Britannica*; this was an exact reproduction of the *Britannica*'s 3rd edition.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) By contrast, Dobson's work had various corrections and amendments for American readers.

### Supplement to the third edition, 1801, 1803

A two-volume supplement to the [third edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Third_Edition) was published in 1801, having 1,624 pages and 50 copperplates by D. Lizars. A revised edition was published in 1803. This supplement was published by a wine-merchant, [Thomas Bonar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Bonar), the son-in-law of the *Britannica's* owner [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29); unfortunately, the two men quarreled and they never spoke for the last ten years of Bell's life (1799–1809). Bonar was friendly to the article authors, however, and conceived the plan of paying them as well as the article reviewers, and of allowing them to retain copyright for separate publication of their work.

The *Britannica* explicitly positioned itself as a conservative publication in reaction to the radical French [*Encyclopédie*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A9die) of [Diderot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diderot) published between 1751 and 1766.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_encyclopedia-16) In the royal dedication penned on 10 December 1800, Dr. Gleig elaborated on the editorial purpose of the *Britannica*

The French Encyclopédie had been accused, and justly accused, of having disseminated far and wide the seeds of anarchy and atheism. If the Encyclopædia Britannica shall in any degree counteract the tendency of that pestiferous work, even these two volumes will not be wholly unworthy of your Majesty's attention.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-online_encyclopedia-6)

— [*George Gleig*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gleig), in the Dedication of the Supplement to the 3rd edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica

### Fourth edition, 1810

The fourth edition was begun in 1800 and completed in 1810, comprising 20 volumes with 16,033 pages and 581 plates engraved by [Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29). As with the 3rd edition, in which title pages were not printed until the set was complete, and all volumes were given title pages dated 1797, title pages for the 4th edition were sent to bookbinders in 1810, dated that year for all volumes. The editor was Dr. [James Millar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Millar_%28scientist%29), a physician, who was good at scientific topics but criticized for being "slow & dilatory & not well qualified". The mathematical articles of Prof. Wallace were widely praised in the 4th edition. Overall, the 4th edition was a mild expansion of the 3rd, from 18 to 20 volumes, and was updated in its historical, scientific, and biographical articles.

Some of the long articles were entirely re-written for the 4th edition. For example, the 56-page "Botany" of the 3rd edition was replaced in the 4th with a 270-page version by moving all the individual plant articles into one. Conversely, the 53-page "[Metallurgy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metallurgy)" of the 3rd was removed, and replaced by the note "see Gilding, Parting, Purifying, Refining, Smithery." The article "Chemistry," which was 261 pages long in the 3rd, written by [James Tytler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Tytler), and had been re-written in that edition's supplement as a 191-page treatise by [Thomas Thomson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Thomson_%28chemist%29), appears in the 4th edition as an entirely new 358-page article, which, according to the preface to the 5th edition, was authored by Millar himself. The new treatise was necessary because the copyright to the supplement to the 3rd, which included Thomson's excellent treatise, was not owned by Britannica. (Thomson would much later author the article for the 7th edition). The article "Electricity", 125 pages in the 3rd edition, was completely re-written for the 4th edition and was 163 pages. By contrast, the 125-page "[Metaphysics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics)" of the 3rd was largely unchanged for the 4th, and the 306-page "Medicine" of the 3rd was only superficially edited in the 4th and of roughly equal length. (Medicine had been a similar 302 pages in the 2nd edition). The 79-page "Agriculture" of the 3rd was entirely and excellently re-written, and is 225 pages, for the 4th edition. Sixty pages of new information were added onto the end of "America," which grew to 138 pages, with an index and new maps. "[Entomology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entomology)" was expanded from 8 pages and one plate in the 3rd edition to 98 pages and 4 plates in the 4th, with a 3-page index. Human "Physiology" was entirely re-written, and went from 60 pages to 80, with an index. "Physics," on the other hand, is unchanged from the 3rd.

In addition, some long articles appear for the first time in the 4th edition. "Geology" is new, even though the word had been coined in 1735.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-17) Accordingly, the 3rd edition's 30-page entry "Earth," as well as its 24-page article "Earthquake," and the geological sections of its article "[Natural History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_History)", were dropped, as these topics are found in the 4th edition's newly written article, which is 78 pages long and has its own index. For other examples, the 4th edition has a 96-page article "[Conchology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conchology)", which listing does not appear in the 3rd or its supplement, and "[Erpetology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herpetology)", 60 pages long in the 4th edition, with a 3-page index, is a new listing as well. After "Science" is a new 24-page article "Amusements In Science", which is a virtual [Mr. Wizard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watch_Mr._Wizard) for the opening of the 19th century.

The majority of copy in the 4th edition, however, is unchanged from the 3rd. Large blocks of text were carried over, line-by-line, unchanged in their typesetting, with some minor editing here and there. For example, the "Boston" article in the 3rd edition contains the sentence, "The following is a description of this capital before the commencement of the present American war." This line is exactly as it had appeared in the 2nd edition, which was written during the war. (The war had been over for years when the 3rd edition was published). In the 4th edition, the word "present" was replaced with "late," the rest of the article remaining entirely unchanged. The article "America" reprinted the entire 81 pages of the 3rd edition, but appended 52 new pages after it, and an index for the 133-page article.

The copyright of the material in the supplement to the 3rd edition was held by [Thomas Bonar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Bonar), who asked 20,000 pounds sterling for it, which Bell declined. The supplemental material was licensed for the fourth edition for 100 pounds, but this copyright issue remained a problem through the 6th edition and the material was not used. The supplements had to be purchased separately.

### Fifth edition, 1817

[Andrew Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Bell_%28engraver%29) died in 1809, one year before the 4th edition was finished. In 1815, his heirs began producing the fifth edition but sold it to [Archibald Constable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Constable), who finished it; Dr. Millar was again the editor. Completed in 1817, the fifth edition sold for 36 pounds sterling (*2011: £2,200*) and consisted of 20 volumes with 16,017 pages and 582 plates. In 1816, Bell's trustees sold the rights to the *Britannica* for 14,000 pounds to Archibald Constable, an apprentice bookseller, who had been involved in its publication from 1788. To secure the copyrights for the 3rd edition supplement, Constable gave Bonar a one-third stake in the *Britannica*; after Bonar's death in 1814, Constable bought his rights to the *Britannica* for 4,500 pounds sterling.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)



Comparing the 4th edition (left) to the 5th. In lines 4 and 16 of the second paragraph, the word iron was corrected with the word zinc.

The fifth edition was a corrected reprint of the fourth; there is virtually no change in the text. The errata are listed at the end of each volume of the 4th edition, and corrected in the 5th, but the number of errata is small and in some volumes there are none. The plates and plate numbers are all the same, but with the name A. Bell replaced with W. Archibald or other names on all plates, including the maps. Some of the plates have very minor revisions, but they are all basically Bell's work from the 4th or earlier editions, and these new names were probably added for business reasons involving copyright royalties. W. Archibald was probably Constable himself.

Being a reprint of the 4th, set in the same type, Encyclopædia Britannica's 5th edition was one of the last publications in the English language to use the [long s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_s) in print. The long s started being phased out of English publications shortly after the turn of the 19th century, and by 1817 it was archaic. The Supplement To The Fifth edition, (see below), as well as the 6th edition, used a modern font with a short s.

While the 6th volume of the 5th edition was being printed, Constable became owner of Britannica, as well as Bonar's 3rd edition supplements.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-18) Legal disputes over the copyright of the 3rd edition supplements continued, however, and for this reason a new supplement was written by Constable's company, which was completed in 1824.

### Supplement to the fifth edition, 1824 (later known as the supplement to the fourth, fifth and sixth editions)

After securing sole-ownership rights in December 1816, Constable began work on a supplement to the 5th edition, even before the fifth edition had been released (1817). The supplement was completed in April 1824, consisting of 6 volumes with 4933 pages, 125 plates, 9 maps, 3 "dissertations" and 160 biographies, mainly of people who had died within the preceding 30 years.

This supplement contained a rudimentary form of an index, listing the 669 articles in alphabetical order at the end of volume six, by volume but not page number, but it did not contain any sort of cross referencing. The index was called "Table of the Articles and Treatises Contained in This Work" and was 9 pages long. It was nothing to be compared to a typical encyclopedia index, such as the ones found at the end of the seventh and further editions of Britannica.

This supplement had remarkably illustrious contributors. Constable was friends with Sir [Walter Scott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Scott), who contributed the articles "Chivalry", "Romance", and "Drama". To edit the supplement, Constable hired [Macvey Napier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macvey_Napier), who recruited other eminent contributors such as Sir [Humphry Davy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humphry_Davy), [Jean-Baptiste Biot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Biot), [John Stuart Mill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill), [William Hazlitt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Hazlitt), [David Ricardo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ricardo), and [Thomas Malthus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Malthus). [Peter Mark Roget](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Mark_Roget), compiler of the famous [Roget's Thesaurus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roget%27s_Thesaurus) and a former secretary of the [Royal Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Society), contributed the entry for [physiology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physiology).[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-19) [Thomas Young's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Young_%28scientist%29) article on [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) included the translation of the [hieroglyphics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_hieroglyphs) on the [Rosetta Stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosetta_Stone).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_History-5)[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-20)

The supplement was compiled, for the first five volumes, at a pace which would have given it more than the 6 volumes it eventually would consist of; the alphabet from A-M was put into those five. It was apparently rushed to completion with volume 6, which contained the rest of the alphabet, viz:

* Vol. I: A–ATW, 648 pages.
* Vol. II: AUS–CEY, 680 pages.
* Vol. III: CHE–ECO, 726 pages.
* Vol. IV: EDI–HOR, 708 pages.
* Vol. V: HUN–MOL, 586 pages.
* Vol. VI: NAI–Z, 863 pages.

### Sixth edition, 1823



Comparing the 5th edition, top, with the 6th. The only change was the typeface, which included the removal of the [long s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_s) from the font.

Constable also produced the sixth edition, which was completed in May, 1823. It was published in 40 half-volume parts, priced 16 shillings in boards (32 pounds for the set). The editor was [Charles Maclaren](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Maclaren). The 6th edition was a reprint of the 5th with a modern typeface. It even used the preface to the 5th edition, dated December 1, 1817, as its own. Only the short page, "Advertisement To The Sixth Edition", which was bound in volume 1 after the forward and dated January, 1822, set it apart. In that advertisement, it is claimed that some geographical articles would be updated, and that the articles in the supplement to the 3rd edition would be inserted into the encyclopedia in their proper alphabetical places. Although the advertisement claimed that these articles would be included in this manner, they were not, and the author of the preface to the 7th edition states that none of this material entered the main body until that edition, and even gives a list of the articles which were.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-21)



Comparing the 5th edition to the 6th, showing one of the geographical updates. The population of New York City was increasing rapidly, and that figure needed to be revised.

Almost no changes were made to the text, it was basically a remake of the 5th with very minor updates. All in all, the fourth, fifth, and sixth editions are virtually the same as each other. Rather than revising the main text of the encyclopedia with each edition, Constable chose to add all updates to the supplement. It's probable that the 6th edition only exists because of the need to remove the [long s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_s), which had gone out of style, from the font, which required the whole encyclopedia to be re-typeset.

The Supplement to the 5th edition was finished in 1824, and was sold with those sets, as well as with sets of the 6th edition, to be delivered at its completion. This supplement curiously was started during the production of the 5th edition but was not finished until after the 6th was completed. It also was sold as a unit for owners of the 4th edition, and became known as "Supplement to the 4th, 5th and 6th edition."

Unfortunately, Constable went bankrupt on 19 January 1826 and the rights to the *Britannica* were sold on auction; they were eventually bought on 16 July 1828 for 6150 [pounds sterling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pound_sterling) by a partnership of four men: [Adam Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Black) (a publisher), Alexander Wight (a banker), Abram Thomson (a bookbinder) and Thomas Allen, the proprietor of the [*Caledonian Mercury*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caledonian_Mercury). Not long after, Black bought out his partners and ownership of the *Britannica* passed to the Edinburgh publishing firm of [A & C Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%26_C_Black).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Trivia_Library_1-8)

Britannica by the 6th edition was in some regards hopelessly out of date. The supplement to the 3rd edition contained updates which were not included in it, and which had become dated themselves anyway, the 4th edition expanded the text somewhat but revised very little, and the 5th and 6th were just reprints of the 4th. The supplement to the 4th/5th/6th edition addressed the issue of updates in a clumsy way, often referring back to the encyclopedia, essentially making the reader look everything up twice. What was needed was a completely new edition from the ground up. This was to be accomplished with the magnificent 7th edition.

## A. and C. Black editions (7th–9th, 1827–1901)

### Seventh edition, 1842



Early 19th-century editions of *Encyclopædia Britannica* included seminal works such as [Thomas Young's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Young_%28scientist%29) article on [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt), which included the translation of the [hieroglyphics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_hieroglyphs) on the [Rosetta Stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosetta_Stone).



Endpaper from the 7th edition

The 7th edition was begun in 1827 and published from March 1830 to January 1842, although all volumes have title pages dated 1842. It was a new work, not a revision of earlier editions, although some articles from earlier editions and supplements are used. It was sold to subscribers in monthly "parts" of around 133 pages each, at 6 shilling per part, with 6 parts combined into 800 page volumes for 36 shillings. The promise was made in the beginning that there would be 20 volumes, making the total £36 for the set. Volume 1 was only 5 parts, entirely made up of dissertations. Volume 2, in 6 parts, was the beginning of alphabetical listings. The 12th part, another dissertation, was ready in 1831, and would have been the first part of volume 3, but the publishers put it into a separate volume at 12 shillings. In total the subscribers wound up paying for 127 parts (£38, two shillings).

It was edited by [Macvey Napier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macvey_Napier), who was assisted by [James Browne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Browne_%28writer%29), LLD. It consisted of 21 numbered volumes with 17,101 pages and 506 plates. It was the first edition to include a general index for all articles, a practice that was maintained until 1974. The index was 187 pages, and was either bound alone as an unnumbered thin volume, or was bound together with volume I. Many illustrious contributors were recruited to this edition, including Sir [David Brewster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Brewster), [Thomas de Quincey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_de_Quincey), [Antonio Panizzi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Panizzi) and [Robert Stephenson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Stephenson). [James Wilson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Wilson_%28zoologist%29) did all of Zoology, Dr. Hampden did all of Greek philosophy, and [William Hosking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Hosking) contributed the excellent article Architecture. [Thomas Thomson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Thomson_%28chemist%29), who wrote Chemistry for the 3rd edition supplement 40 years earlier, was recruited to write that article again for the 7th edition. Mathematical diagrams and illustrations were made from woodcuts, and for the first time in Britannica's history, were printed on the same pages as the text, in addition to the copperplates.

The 7th edition, when complete, went on sale for £24 per set. However, Adam Black had invested over £108,766 in its production: £5,354 for advertising, £8,755 for editing, £13,887 for 167 contributors, £13,159 for plates, £29,279 for paper, and £19,813 for the printing.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) In the end, roughly 5,000 sets were sold but Black considered himself well-rewarded in intellectual prestige.

Title pages for all volumes were printed in 1842 and delivered with the completed set. An index to the entire set was created that year as well, and was the first of its kind for Britannica. Being only 187 pages long, it did not warrant its own volume, and was sent to bookbinders with instructions to include it at the beginning of volume 1, the dissertations volume, which had been printed in 1829. This same arrangement would also be used for the 8th edition, but not the 9th.

### Eighth edition, 1860



1858 advertisement for then-available volumes 1 through 19 of the 8th edition, cloth-bound at 24 shillings per volume

The 8th edition was published from 1853 to 1860, with title pages for each volume dated the year that volume was printed. It contained 21 numbered volumes, with 17,957 pages and 402 plates. The index, published in 1861, was 239 pages, and was either bound alone as an unnumbered 22nd volume, or was bound together with volume I, the dissertations volume. Four of these dissertations were carried over from the 7th edition, and two were new to the 8th. The five included in volume 1 of the 8th (1853) were authored by Dugald Stewart, James Mackintosh, Richard Whately, John Playfair, and John Leslie, in that order, with the Whately work being a new one. A sixth dissertation, by J.D. Forbes, was issued in 1856, in a separate quarto volume, "gratis, along with Vol. XII".

The alphabetical encyclopedia began at the beginning of volume 2. The price was reduced to 24 shillings per volume, cloth-bound. In addition to the Edinburgh sets, more sets were authorized by Britannica to the London publishers Simpkin, Marshall and Company,[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-22) and to [Little, Brown and Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little%2C_Brown_and_Company) of Boston.

Since [Macvey Napier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macvey_Napier) died in 1847, Adam Black selected for its editor Dr. [Thomas Stewart Traill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Stewart_Traill), a professor of medical jurisprudence at Edinburgh University. When Dr. Traill fell ill, he was assisted by a young Scottish philosopher, John Downes. Black was able to hold costs to roughly £75,655. This edition began the tradition of a contributors' banquet to celebrate the edition's completion (5 June 1861).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

The Eighth edition is a thorough revision, even more so than the Seventh. Some long articles were carried over from the 7th edition, but most were completely re-written, and new articles by illustrious contributors were added. In all, there were 344 contributors, including [Lord Macaulay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Macaulay), [Charles Kingsley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Kingsley), [Robert Chambers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Chambers_%28journalist%29), the Rev. [Charles Merivale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Merivale), Dr. [Joseph Dalton Hooker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Dalton_Hooker), Baron [Robert Bunsen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Bunsen), Sir [John Herschel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Herschel), Professors [Richard Owen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Owen), [John Stuart Blackie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Blackie) and [William Thomson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thomson%2C_1st_Baron_Kelvin) (Lord Kelvin). [Photography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography) is listed for the first time. This edition also featured the first American contributor to the *Britannica*, [Edward Everett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Everett), who wrote a 40,000-word hagiographic biography of [George Washington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

In being a living proof that pure patriotism is not a delusion, or virtue an empty name, no one of the sons of man has equalled George Washington.

— [*Edward Everett*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Everett), in the eighth edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica

The consequences of reducing the costs of production of the 8th edition can be seen today in surviving sets. With only 402 plates, this edition has the fewest since the second edition, and far fewer woodcuts within the text pages were used than in the 7th edition. The maps are all reprinted from the 7th edition, even the ones that should have been updated. In the first few volumes, a sheet of onion-skin paper faces each plate, but after volume 6, they were eliminated. To save money, the end pages and covers were not marbled, as this was an expensive process. Finally, the end pages contain advertisements for other products sold by A & C. Black, such as atlases and travel guides, and advertisements encouraging subscribers to continue their enrollments.

### Ninth edition, 1889

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| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/9/99/Question_book-new.svg/50px-Question_book-new.svg.png | This section **needs additional citations for** [**verification**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AVerifiability). Please help [improve this article](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica&action=edit) by [adding citations to reliable sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AReferencing_for_beginners). Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. *(April 2016) (*[*Learn how and when to remove this template message*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AMaintenance_template_removal)*)* |

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| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/b/b4/Ambox_important.svg/40px-Ambox_important.svg.png | This section **possibly contains** [**original research**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ANo_original_research). Please [improve it](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica&action=edit) by [verifying](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AVerifiability) the claims made and adding [inline citations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACiting_sources#Inline_citations). Statements consisting only of original research should be removed. *(April 2016) (*[*Learn how and when to remove this template message*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AMaintenance_template_removal)*)* |

The landmark ninth edition, often called "the Scholar's Edition",[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_History-5) was published from January 1875 to 1889 in 25 volumes, with volume 25 the index volume. Unlike the first two Black editions, there were no preliminary dissertations, the alphabetical listing beginning in volume 1. Up to 1880, the editor, and author of the Foreword, was [Thomas Spencer Baynes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Spencer_Baynes)—the first English-born editor after a series of Scots—and [W. Robertson Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Robertson_Smith) afterwards. An intellectual prodigy who mastered advanced scientific and mathematical topics, Smith was a professor of theology at the [Free Church College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ%27s_College%2C_Aberdeen) in [Aberdeen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen), and was the first contributor to the *Britannica* who addressed the historical interpretation of the [Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible), a topic then already familiar on the Continent of Europe. Dr. Smith contributed several articles to the 9th edition, but lost his teaching position on 24 May 1881, due to the controversy his (ir)religious articles aroused; he was immediately hired to be joint editor-in-chief with Baynes.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

The 9th and 11th editions are often lauded as high points for scholarship; the 9th included yet another series of illustrious contributors such as [Thomas Henry Huxley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Henry_Huxley), [Lord Rayleigh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Strutt%2C_3rd_Baron_Rayleigh), [Algernon Charles Swinburne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algernon_Charles_Swinburne) and [William Michael Rossetti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Michael_Rossetti). [Robert Louis Stevenson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Louis_Stevenson), then 25, contributed an article about [Robert Burns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Burns) that, being unenthusiastic, was never printed.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) There were roughly 1100 contributors altogether,[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-23) a handful of whom were women; this edition was also the first to include a significant article about women ("Women, Law Relating to"). Evolution was listed for the first time, in the wake of [Charles Darwin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Darwin)'s writings, but the subject was treated as if still controversial, and a complete working of the subject would have to wait for the 11th edition. The 8th edition has no listing for the subject at all.

Compared to the 8th edition, the 9th was far more luxurious, with thick boards and high-quality leather bindings, premier paper, and a production which took full advantage of the technological advances in printing in the years between the 1850s and 1870s. Great use was made of the new ability to print large graphic illustrations on the same pages as the text, as opposed to limiting illustrations to separate copperplates. Although this technology had first been used in a primitive fashion the 7th edition, and to a much lesser extent in the 8th, in the 9th edition there were thousands of quality illustrations set into the text pages, in addition to the plates. The 9th edition was a critical success, and roughly 8,500 sets were sold in Britain. [A & C Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%26_C_Black) authorized the American firms of [Charles Scribner's Sons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Scribner%27s_Sons) of New York, [Little, Brown and Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little%2C_Brown_and_Company) of Boston, and Samuel L. Hall of New York, to print, bind and distribute additional sets in the United States, and provided them with stereotype plates for text and graphics, specifications on the color and tanning quality of the leather bindings, etc., so the American-produced sets would be identical to the Edinburgh sets except for the title pages, and that they would be of the same high quality as the Edinburgh sets. Scribner's volumes and Hall volumes were often mixed together in sets by N.Y. distributors and sold this way as they were interchangeable, and such sets are still found this way. A total of 45,000 authorized sets were produced this way for the US market.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) Scribners' claimed U. S. copyright on several of the individual articles.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-24)

In spite of this, *several hundred thousand* cheaply produced bootlegged copies were also sold in the U.S., which still did not have copyright laws protecting foreign publications.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-25) Famous infringers of that era include the [Philadelphian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia) Joseph M. Stoddart, who employed a spy in the *Britannica's* own printshop, Neill and Company, in Edinburgh. The spy would steal the proofreader's copies and send them by fastest mail to the United States, allowing Stoddart to publish his version simultaneously with the *Britannica* and at nearly half the price ($5 versus $9 per volume). His right to do so was upheld in an infamous decision by Justice Arthur Butler who argued

To reproduce a foreign publication is not wrong. There may be differences of opinion about the morality of republishing a work here that is copyrighted abroad; but the public policy of this country, as respects the subject, is in favor of such replication...It is supposed to have an influence upon the advance of learning and intelligence.

— Justice Arthur Butler, in his 1879 decision upholding Joseph Stoddart's right to republish the 9th edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica[[*This quote needs a citation*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AInline_citation#When_you_must_use_inline_citations)]

Another successful infringer was Henry G. Allen, who developed a photographic reproduction method for the *Britannica* and charged only half as much as Stoddart ($2.50 per volume). Other people alleged to have copied the 9th edition included [John Wanamaker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wanamaker) and the Reverend [Isaac Kaufmann Funk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Kaufmann_Funk) of the [Funk and Wagnalls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funk_and_Wagnalls) encyclopedia. Richard S. Pearle & Co. of Chicago photoengraved some sets in 1891, and added 3 volumes of "American Revisions and additions," the first 2 in 1891 and the third in 1892. In 1893 they published sets with volumes 1–24 from the original Britannica, the 3 "American" volumes 25–27, and the index as Vol. 28. Some copies of this version say they were printed by Werner, also of Chicago, and from 1902 to 1907 Werner printed the commonly found "New Werner Edition," of 30 volumes (24 volumes plus 5 *New American Supplement* volumes and a new index for all 29 volumes). In 1890, James Clarke published the *Americanized Encyclopædia Britannica, Revised and Amended* which was only 10 volumes, as was the 1895 Belford-Clark issue by the same name (Chicago).

In addition to American unauthorized copies, there were American supplements which were written to be appended to authorized copies of Britannica. The Hubbard Brothers of Philadelphia produced a 5-volume American supplement between 1882 and 1889, in quality leather bindings designed to match the authorized volumes in appearance. Of good scholarship, it contained biographies of Americans and geographies of US places, as well as other US interests not mentioned in the main encyclopedia.

In 1896, Scribner's Sons, which had claimed US copyright on many of the articles, obtained court orders to shut down bootlegger operations, some of whose printing plates were melted down as part of the enforcement.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-25) Publishers were able to get around this order, however, by re-writing the articles that Scribner's had copyrighted; for example, the "United States" article in Werner's 1902 unlicensed edition was newly written and copyrighted by R.S. Pearle.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-26)

In 1903, [Saalfield Publishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saalfield_Publishing) published the *Americanized* [Encyclopædia Britannica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) in 8 volumes with a 4 volume supplement (when the British edition had 24 volumes).[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] The [Encyclopædia Britannica Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica%2C_Inc.) had acquired all the rights to the encyclopedia[[*clarification needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3APlease_clarify)] in America.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] In addition, [D. Appleton & Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._Appleton_%26_Company) claimed that the 4 volume supplement[[*clarification needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3APlease_clarify)] used material from [*Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appletons%27_Cyclop%C3%A6dia_of_American_Biography).[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] To avoid further litigation, the suit against Saalfield Publishing was settled in court "by a stipulation in which the defendants agree not to print or sell any further copies of the offending work, to destroy all printed sheets, to destroy or melt the portions of the plates from which the infringing matter in the Supplement as it appears in the *Americanized* [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) has been printed, and to pay D. Appleton & Co. the sum of $2000 damages."[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-27)

[Horace Everett Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper) was an American businessman, and a close associate of James Clarke, one of the leading American bootleggers.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] Hooper recognized the potential profit in the *Britannica* and, again in 1896, learned that both the *Britannica* and [*The Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Times_%28London%29) of London were in financial straits.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] Hooper formed a partnership with Clarke, his brother George Clarke, and [Walter Montgomery Jackson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Montgomery_Jackson) to sell the *Britannica* under the sponsorship of *The Times*, meaning that *The Times* would advertise the sale and lend its respectable name. Hooper and his energetic advertising manager, Henry Haxton, introduced many innovative sales methods: full-page advertisements in *The Times*, testimonials from celebrities, buying on installment plans, and a long series of so-called 'final offers'.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] Although the crass marketing was criticized as inappropriate to the *Britannica's* history and scholarship, the unprecedented profits delighted the manager of *The Times*, [Charles Frederic Moberly Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Frederic_Moberly_Bell),[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) who assessed Hooper as "a ranker who loved to be accepted as a gentleman. Treat him as a gentleman and one had no trouble with him; treat him as an essentially dishonest ranker and one got all the trouble there was to get."[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-28) The American partnership sold over 20,000 copies of the *Britannica* in the United States (four runs of 5000), after which Hooper and Jackson bought out the two Clarke brothers in early 1900.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) [A & C Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%26_C_Black) had moved to London in 1895 and, on 9 May 1901, sold all the rights to the *Britannica* to Hooper and Jackson, then living in London.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

The sale of the *Britannica* to Americans has left a lingering resentment among some British citizens, especially when it is perceived that parochial American concerns are emphasized.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-25) For example, one British critic wrote on the centenary of the sale:[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-29)

The full horror of what an American editorial monopoly entails is seldom appreciated. The American editors who write short in-house articles are ignorant and parochial...The *Encyclopædia Britannica* is a publication so contemptuous of Britain, the land of its birth, that it cannot be bothered to ascertain correct usage when speaking of [the Thames](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Thames), a publication so insular as to give an entry to [Alan Whicker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Whicker) but none to [Lords Carrington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Carington%2C_6th_Baron_Carrington) or [Whitelaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Whitelaw%2C_1st_Viscount_Whitelaw). It amounts to more than impertinence.

— [*Charles Mosley*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Mosley_%28genealogist%29), in the [*Manchester Guardian Weekly*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guardian_Weekly#Evolution_and_editorship_1969-2007) (10 July 1988)[*[25]*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-25)

## First American editions (10th–14th, 1901–1973)

### Tenth edition (supplement to the 9th), 1903

Again under the sponsorship of [*The Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Times_%28London%29) of London, and with Adam & Charles Black in the UK, the new owners quickly produced an 11-volume supplement to the 9th edition; being 9 volumes of text, 25–33, a map volume, 34, which was 1 inch taller than the other volumes, and a new index, vol 35, also an inch taller than 25–33, which covered the first 33 volumes (the maps volume 34 had its own index). The editors were [Hugh Chisholm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Chisholm), Sir [Donald Mackenzie Wallace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Mackenzie_Wallace), [Arthur T. Hadley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_T._Hadley) and [Franklin Henry Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Henry_Hooper), the brother of the owner Horace Hooper. Taken together, the 35 volumes were dubbed the "10th edition". The re-issue of the 9th edition under the moniker "10th edition" caused some outrage, since many articles of the 9th edition were over 25 years old. This led to the popular joke: "*The Times* is behind the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is behind the times."[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-thomas_1992-30)



A & C. Black and *The Times* of London produced the 10th edition

The 1903 advertising campaign for the tenth edition was an onslaught of [direct marketing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_marketing): hand-written letters, telegrams, limited-time offers, etc.. The following quote, written in 1926, captures the mood[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-31)

Who that is old enough does not remember the "campaign" of 1903, the insidious payment by instalments, the sets dumped at your door, bookcase and all, on receipt of a guinea, the scholarships, the competition questions, the reply-paid telegrams pursuing you to the innermost sanctuary of your home ("From my bath I curse you", one man wired back!), the "Going, going, gone" tactics—"Only five days left and one of them the shortest!" so irrelevant, but so arresting!

— Janet E. Courtney, long-time employee of the Britannica, from her book, Recollected in Tranquillity

An excellent collection of prospectuses received by a single person (C. L. Parker) in that year has been preserved by the [Bodleian Library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodleian_Library) (catalogued under #39899.c.1). The advertising was clearly targeted at middle and lower-middle-class people seeking to improve themselves.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-thomas_1992-30) The advertising campaign was remarkably successful; over 70,000 sets were sold, bringing in over £600,000 pounds profit.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) When one British expert expressed surprise to [Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper) that so many people would want an outdated encyclopedia, he replied, "They didn't; I *made* them want it."[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

Even after the Tenth edition was published, some American infringement companies were still printing thousands of copies of the Ninth without the supplements. See above. Some of these companies were adding their own "Americanized" supplements, but none of them reproduced the Tenth. Copyright violation did not end until shortly before the Eleventh edition came out.

### Eleventh edition, 1910

Main article: [Encyclopædia Britannica Eleventh Edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Eleventh_Edition)



[*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Eleventh_Edition)

The renowned eleventh edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica* was begun in 1903, and published in 1910–1911 in 28 volumes, with a one-volume Index. Edited by [Hugh Chisholm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Chisholm) in London and by [Franklin Henry Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Henry_Hooper) in [New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City), the 11th edition was the first to be published substantially at one time, instead of volume by volume. Its illustrious contributors are legion, including [Baden Baden-Powell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baden_Baden-Powell) writing on [kite-flying](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kite); [Arthur Eddington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Eddington) on astronomy; [Edmund Gosse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Gosse) on [literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) and [Donald Tovey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Tovey) on music. Sometimes called the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, this edition is still highly regarded for its lucid explanations of scholarly subjects. Being in the [public domain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain), the complete text is freely available online.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-32) The 11th edition retained the high scholarship and eminent contributors that marked the 9th edition, but tempered that scholarship with shorter, simpler articles that were more intelligible to lay-readers. Thus, the 9th and 11th editions had 17,000 and 40,000 articles, respectively, although they were roughly equivalent in size. This shift accommodated the American business strategy of popularizing the *Britannica* for a mass market, while still retaining its quality as a reference work. The high literary and scholarly level of the 11th edition is largely due to the zeal of its owner, [Horace Everett Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper), who held scholarship in high regard and spared no expense to make the 11th edition as excellent as possible.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

After a heated legal dispute and all-too-public corporate wrangling over ownership of the *Britannica* (1908–1909), Hooper bought out [Walter Jackson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Montgomery_Jackson), becoming the sole owner of the *Britannica*. The public furor caused [*The Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Times_%28London%29) to cancel its sponsorship contract with Hooper, feeling that the interests of the newspaper were not being served.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) After failing to win over [Oxford University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University), Hooper managed to secure [Cambridge University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_University) as a new sponsor; thus, the 11th edition was published initially by [Cambridge University Press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_University_Press), and scholars from Cambridge University were allowed to review the text and veto any overly aggressive advertising.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) Perhaps because of this, the *Britannica* encountered financial difficulties, whereupon it was licensed to [Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears_Roebuck) and Co. of [Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago), who issued a physically smaller but complete version known as the "handy edition," with each volume almost pocket-sized. The owner of Sears, philanthropist [Julius Rosenwald](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Rosenwald), was friends with Horace Hooper and enthusiastic about the *Britannica's* promise; he single-handedly saved the *Britannica* from [bankruptcy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bankruptcy) several times over the next fifteen years. Although Sears' handy set was successful in 1915–1916, sales dropped significantly when the United States entered World War I.

The 11th edition employed 35 named female contributors, out of 1500 total (2.3%). Although this was not much of an increase over the 10th edition (which named 37 female contributors out of 1800 total), it was heralded publicly as a major advance in recognizing the contributions of women in learned circles.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-thomas_1992-30) However, the 11th edition did employ hundreds of women to write unsigned articles; some women, such as Irish medical expert Harriet Hennessy, even rose to be (uncredited) department editors.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-thomas_1992-30)

Sales figures for the 11th edition were comparable to those of the 9th, which sold hundreds of thousands of copies including the unlicensed sets. Unlike the 9th, however, the 11th edition was not infringed, all sets being printed legitimately by Britannica. It can be seen[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] that the 9th and 11th editions were massively better-sellers than previous editions. This is mainly due to the increase in population of, and sales in, the United States, which were mere colonies with low population when Britannica started out in 1768.



1913 [advertisement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertisement) for the [11th edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Eleventh_Edition), with the slogan "When in doubt—"look it up" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*"

### Twelfth and thirteenth editions (competing supplements to the eleventh)

The poor sales of the war years brought the *Britannica* to the brink of [bankruptcy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bankruptcy). The [CEO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_executive_officer) of [Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears_Roebuck), [philanthropist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philanthropist) [Julius Rosenwald](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Rosenwald), was devoted to the mission of the *Britannica* and bought its rights on 24 February 1920 from his friend [Horace Everett Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Everett_Hooper) for $1.25 million. In 1922, a 3-volume supplement to the eleventh edition was released that summarized the developments just before, during and after World War I; these three volumes, taken together with the eleventh edition of 1910, became known as the twelfth edition. The articles describing World War I and the political changes brought about by it took up a large portion of the supplement, but articles on such things as radio (still called wireless telephony) are informative. The editor of the supplement was [Hugh Chisholm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Chisholm), who also had been the main editor of the eleventh edition, as well as the 1902 eleven-volume supplement to the ninth edition, known as the tenth edition. Horace Hooper died in 1922, a few weeks after the publication of the twelfth edition.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-wells_1968-10) This edition was a commercial failure, losing Sears roughly $1.75 million, after which Sears gave it back to Hooper's widow, Harriett Meeker Cox, and her brother, William J. Cox, who ran the company from 1923 to 1928.

The passage of a few years led to a better perspective on that era. In 1926, the *Britannica* released three new volumes covering the history of 1910–1926, which were intended to supplant those of the twelfth edition. Again taken together with the eleventh edition, the new volumes became known as the thirteenth edition, which maintained the *Britannica's* tradition of illustrious contributors: [Harry Houdini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Houdini), [Albert Einstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein), [Marie Curie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Curie), [Sigmund Freud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud), [Henry Ford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Ford), [Leon Trotsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky), [Ferdinand Foch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_Foch), [Gustav Stresemann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Stresemann), [Thomas G. Masaryk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_G._Masaryk) and [Elihu Root](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elihu_Root).

In 1928, Rosenwald bought back the rights to the *Britannica*, leaving Cox as publisher. Cox argued forcefully for a new fourteenth edition, pointing out that the eleventh edition (the bulk of the twelfth and thirteenth editions) was badly out of date. Cox also tried to involve the [University of Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago) in producing the *Britannica*, even including a $1 million advance from Rosenwald as a temptation; however, the trustees of the University turned down his proposal, a choice they almost repeated a generation later under [William Benton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Benton_%28senator%29).

### Fourteenth edition, 1929

By 1926, the eleventh edition was beginning to show its age, and work on a new edition was begun. The editors were [J. L. Garvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._L._Garvin) in London and [Franklin Henry Hooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Henry_Hooper) in [New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City). It has 24 volumes, reduced from 29 in the 11th edition, yet has 45,000 articles compared to 37,000.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-ReferenceA-33) It has 15,000 illustrations, of which 1,500 are full plates.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-ReferenceA-33) The 14th edition took three years to complete, at the then exorbitant cost of $2.5 million, all of it invested by [Julius Rosenwald](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Rosenwald) of [Sears, Roebuck and Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears%2C_Roebuck_and_Company). It was very different from the 11th edition, having fewer volumes and simpler articles, continuing the business strategy of popularizing the *Britannica* for the American mass market at the expense of its scholarship.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Trivia_Library_1-8)[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-25) The 14th edition also drew criticism for deleting information unflattering to the [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church).[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-34) Nevertheless, the 14th also included many illustrious contributors, including eighteen [Nobel laureates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize) in science, such as [Robert Millikan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Millikan), [Albert Abraham Michelson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Abraham_Michelson) and [Arthur Compton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Compton). More coverage was given to popular entertainment,[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-35) with [Gene Tunney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Tunney) writing on [boxing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxing), [Lillian Gish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lillian_Gish) on [acting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acting) and [Irene Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irene_Castle) on [ballroom dancing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballroom_dancing). [George Bernard Shaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw) contributed a well-regarded article on [socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) In all, there were roughly 3500 named contributors, of which roughly half were American.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4) The 14th edition was again criticized for [sexism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexism), by a woman who wrote to editor Walter Yust that too many biographies were of men; Yust made a count and found that 6% of its 13,000 biographies were of [women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kogan_1958-4)

The 14th edition was published in September 1929, and had 23 volumes with a one-volume Index that also contained a complete atlas. Unfortunately, the [Great Depression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression) struck scarcely a month after the release of the 14th edition, and sales plummeted. Despite the unfailing support of the [Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears_Roebuck) company, the *Britannica* almost went bankrupt over the next few years. Rosenwald died in 1932, and General [Robert E. Wood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_E._Wood) took over; Cox was removed as publisher and the Secretary-Treasurer of Sears, [Elkan Harrison Powell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elkan_Harrison_Powell), was installed as the new President of the *Britannica*. In that same year, the *Britannica's* headquarters were moved to Chicago, where they have remained.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-36)

### Policy of continuous revision

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| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/9/99/Question_book-new.svg/50px-Question_book-new.svg.png | This section **does not** [**cite**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACiting_sources) **any** [**sources**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AVerifiability). Please help [improve this section](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica&action=edit) by [adding citations to reliable sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AReferencing_for_beginners). Unsourced material may be challenged and [removed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AVerifiability#Burden_of_evidence). *(November 2010) (*[*Learn how and when to remove this template message*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AMaintenance_template_removal)*)* |

[E. H. Powell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elkan_Harrison_Powell) identified and fixed a key vulnerability of *Britannica*, namely, that its sales (and, hence, the company's income) fluctuated strongly over the life-cycle of an edition. After the release of a new edition, sales would generally begin strong, and decline gradually for 10–20 years as the edition began to show its age; finally, sales would drop off precipitously with the announcement that work had begun on a new edition, since few people would buy an obsolete encyclopedia that would soon be updated. These strong fluctuations in sales led to economic hardship for the *Britannica*.

To address this problem, Powell suggested in 1933 the policy of continuous revision, with the goal of keeping the *Britannica* "always timely and always salable". The basic idea was to maintain a continuous editorial staff that would constantly revise the articles on a fixed schedule. Earlier encyclopedias did not maintain a continuous editorial staff, but rather assembled one just prior to beginning a new edition. Rather than releasing supplemental editions or volumes, new printings would be made every year with only enough copies made to cover the sales for that year. An analysis of the *Britannica's* articles suggested that roughly 75% required only occasional revising, whereas 25% required revision every 1–3 years. The articles were therefore divided into 30 classifications and a schedule for their revision worked out, such that every article would be checked at least twice a decade.

Powell also conceived the *Britannica's* "Book of the Year", in which a single volume would be released every year covering the developments of the previous year, particularly in rapidly changing fields such as science, technology, culture and politics. The "Book of the Year" was published in print annually from 1938 to 2018.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-37) Powell also introduced the Library Research Service (1936), in which owners of the *Britannica* could write to have their personal questions researched and answered by the editorial staff.

Under Powell's leadership, the *Britannica* began to capitalize on its reputation by aggressively developing "spin-offs", such as the 12-volume *Britannica Junior* for children (published 1934, and revised to 15 volumes in 1947), the historical timeline *The March of Man* (published 1935, and edited by Albert Bushwell Hart, Isaac J. Cox and Lawrence H. Dawson), the *Encyclopædia Britannica World Atlas* (published 1942, and prepared by G. Donald Hudson) and [*10 Eventful Years*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10_Eventful_Years), a summary of the national and international events surrounding World War II (1937–1946).

### Transfer of ownership to William Benton

[Sears Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears_Roebuck) published the *Britannica* until 1943. In 1941, Sears offered the rights to the *Britannica* as a gift to the [University of Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago). The story of this offer was recounted at the [bicentennial banquet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicentennial_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica) of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_bicentennial-38)

It was after lunch on the afternoon of December 9, 1941 that General [Robert E. Wood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_E._Wood), Chairman of [Sears, Roebuck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sears%2C_Roebuck_and_Company) and [William Benton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Benton_%28senator%29), then vice-president of the [University of Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago), were discussing the attack on [Pearl Harbor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pearl_Harbor) which had occurred two days earlier. At the end of this conversation, as coffee was served, Bill changed the subject and said to Wood, "General, don't you think it is rather unsuitable for a mail-order house to own the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and isn't it even more unsuitable in wartime?"

"Yes", replied General Wood, "Sears, Roebuck should never have acquired it in the first place."

"Does it make any money?" Bill asked. Wood replied that sales would earn his company some $300,000 before taxes that year. Bill replied, "Well, General, you know that universities do not have any money. They cannot buy businesses. Why don't you make a gift of the *Britannica* to the University of Chicago?"

General Wood did not reply immediately but walked to his car. As he got into the car, he turned to Bill Benton and said, "All right, Bill, I will give you the *Britannica*."

The [University of Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago) declined the offer, viewing the mission of the university as not entirely consistent with a large commercial publishing house; however it continues even today to be involved in its production, offering editorial advice and allowing its name to be associated with the *Britannica*.

Thus, in 1943, the wealthy and powerful [William Benton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Benton_%28senator%29), a former U.S. senator and advertising executive, obtained exclusive control of the *Britannica*, which he published until his death in 1973. His widow Helen Hemingway Benton continued to publish the *Britannica* until her own death in 1974. The [Benton Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benton_Foundation) continued to manage the *Britannica* from 1980 until it was sold to [Jacqui Safra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqui_Safra) in 1996. The University of Chicago was the sole beneficiary of the Foundation, and in the mid-1990s the university provided funding to stem the encyclopedia's losses.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Feder_1995-39)

## The fifteenth edition

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### First version (1974–1984)

Despite the policy of continuous revision, the 14th edition of the *Britannica* gradually became outdated. Beginning in the early 1960s, the failings of the 14th edition began to be collated and published by [physicist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physicist) [Harvey Einbinder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Einbinder), culminating in his highly critical 390-page book, *The Myth of the Britannica* (1964).[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-brit-myth-40) Goaded into action, the *Britannica* began to work on a new edition, the current 15th.

The 15th edition was produced over ten years at a cost of $32 million and released in 1974 in 30 volumes. The so-called *New Encyclopædia Britannica* (or *Britannica 3*) had a unique three-part organization: a single *Propædia* (*Primer for Education*) volume, which aimed to provide an outline of all known, indeed knowable, information; a 10-volume *Micropædia* (*Small Education*) of 102,214 short articles (strictly less than 750 words); and a 19-volume *Macropædia* (*Large Education*) of 4,207 longer, scholarly articles with references, similar to those of the 9th and 11th editions.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-chauncy_1975-41) The *Micropædia* and *Macropædia* articles are listed in alphabetical order; the 4,287 contributors to the *Macropædia* articles are identified scrupulously, but the *Micropædia* articles are generally anonymous and unreferenced.

This 15th edition had no general index, which had been a feature of the *Britannica* since its 7th edition; even in the 2nd edition, individual long articles had their own indices. The idea of [Mortimer J. Adler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_J._Adler) was that the *Propædia* and the *Micropædia* could serve the role of an index. More generally, Dr. Adler felt that the *Britannica* should not merely serve as a reference work, but also aspire to be a categorization of *omne scibile* (everything knowable), to fulfill [Francis Bacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon)'s grand conception of [epistemology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology). Thus, the *Propædia* was intended to be the road-map of all knowledge, within which every fact, technique, and theory could be organized. With this edition EB became the first encyclopedia that serves both functions of fact-checking and self-education.

The lack of an index and the unusual organization into *two* sets of alphabetically organized articles provoked much criticism.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-kister_1994-25) In a typical contemporary assessment, "It is called the *Micropædia*, for 'little knowledge,' and little knowledge is what it provides. It has proved to be grotesquely insufficient as an index, radically constricting the utility of the *Macropædia.*"[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-42) or, more laconically, "This arrangement has nothing to recommend it except commercial novelty".[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-43) Most readers could not predict whether a given subject would be found in *Micropædia* or the *Macropædia*; the criteria by which the articles were sorted were not obvious even to scholars,[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-chauncy_1975-41) despite Dr. Adler's claims that the sorting followed naturally from the *Propædia's* outline of all knowledge.

### Second version (1985–2010)

In 1985, the *Britannica* responded to reader requests by restoring the index as a two-volume set. The number of topics indexed by the *Britannica* has fluctuated from 500,000 (1985, the same as in 1954) to 400,000 (1989,1991) to 700,000 in the 2007 print version. Presumably, this recent increase reflects the introduction of efficient electronic indexing, since the size of the encyclopedia has remained nearly constant at approximately 40 million words from 1954 to the present and far less than 40% of the encyclopedia has changed from 1985 to 2007.

Under the editorship of [Philip W. Goetz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_W._Goetz), the 1985 version of the 15th edition introduced other major changes. The 4,207 articles of the first version *Macropædia* were combined into 674 longer articles; for example, the individual articles for each of the 50 [U.S. states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) were merged into what became a 310-page article "[United States of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_of_America)". The [*Macropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrop%C3%A6dia) was also restricted somewhat from 19 volumes to the present 17 volumes. At the same time, the number of [*Micropædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microp%C3%A6dia) volumes was increased from 10 to the present 12 volumes, although the number of articles was reduced from 102,214 to roughly 65,000. The strict 750-word limit was softened to allow articles of medium length, such as [Internet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet), which almost fills one page. Superficially, the [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia)*'*s Outline of Knowledge was simplified for easier use. In reality, by breaking the intrinsic links between a topic in [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia) with its associated EB articles the intended function (or usefulness) of [*Propædia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prop%C3%A6dia) is hindered significantly.

On March 14, 2012, Britannica announced it would not be printing any more sets of its paper version, which accounted for less than 1 percent of its sales, and would instead focus on its DVD and online versions. It had not printed any new sets since 2010.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-44)

## The Global Edition

Britannica Global Edition was printed in 2009. It contained 30 volumes and 18,251 pages, with 8,500 photographs, maps, flags, and illustrations in smaller "compact" volumes. It contained over 40,000 articles written by scholars from across the world, including Nobel Prize winners. Unlike the 15th edition, it did not contain Macro- and Micropedia sections, but ran A through Z as all editions up to the 14th had. It currently is out of print and sold out. The last printing was in 2011. The following is Britannica's description of the work:[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-45)

The editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, the world standard in reference since 1768, present the Britannica Global Edition. Developed specifically to provide comprehensive and global coverage of the world around us, this unique product contains thousands of timely, relevant, and essential articles drawn from the Encyclopædia Britannica itself, as well as from the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, the Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions, and Compton’s by Britannica. Written by international experts and scholars, the articles in this collection reflect the standards that have been the hallmark of the leading English-language encyclopedia for over 240 years.

## Development of electronic versions

In the 1980s, [Microsoft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft) approached Britannica to collaborate on a [CD-ROM](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CD-ROM) encyclopedia, but the offer was declined. Senior managers at Britannica were confident in their control of the market and that their healthy profits would continue. At this time complete sets of the encyclopedia were priced between [$](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USD)1,500 and $2,200, and the product was considered part of a luxury brand with an impeccable reputation handed down from generation to generation. The management did not believe that a CD-ROM could adequately compete or supplement their business. Microsoft responded by using content from [*Funk & Wagnalls Standard Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funk_%26_Wagnalls_Standard_Encyclopedia) to create what is now known as [*Encarta*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encarta).[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-46)

In 1981, the first digital version of the *Britannica* was created for the [LexisNexis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LexisNexis) service.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EB_online-3)

In 1990, the *Britannica's* sales reached an all-time high of $650 million, but [*Encarta*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encarta), released in 1993, soon became a software staple with almost every computer purchase and the *Britannica's* market share plummeted. Britannica countered by offering a CD-ROM version of their product,[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-47) although it could not generate the print version's $500–600 in sales commissions. Britannica decided to charge $995 for just the CD-ROM, while bundling a free disc with the print version, hoping that including the CD-ROM would persuade buyers to stay with the brand.

In 1994, an online version was launched,[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Britannica_History-5) with subscriptions for sale for $2,000. By 1996 the price of the CD-ROM had dropped to $200, and sales had dropped to $325 million—about half of their 1990 levels. Only 55,000 hard copy versions were sold in 1994, compared with 117,000 in 1990, and sales later fell to 20,000.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-48) Facing financial pressure, Britannica was bought in 1996 by Swiss financier [Jacob Safra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Safra) for $135 million, a fraction of its book value. Safra introduced severe price-cutting measures to try to compete with *Encarta*, even offering the entire reference free of charge for a time (around 18 months, from October 1999 to March 2001) on the [Internet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet).

In 2003, Britannica co-operated with a [Taiwanese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiwan) company[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-49) to provide a [Traditional Chinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_Chinese)-English bilingual online encyclopedia following the 2002 edition of Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia (the first bilingual product of Britannica) and announced plans to translate the rest of the encyclopedia into Chinese.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-50)

Former editor-in-chief [Robert McHenry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_McHenry) believes that Britannica failed to exploit its early advantages in the market for electronic encyclopedias. Britannica had, for example, published the second [multimedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multimedia) encyclopedia titled [*Compton's MultiMedia Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compton%27s_Encyclopedia) as early as 1989 (the first one being the [*Academic American Encyclopedia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_American_Encyclopedia) published by [Grolier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grolier_Multimedia_Encyclopedia)), but did not launch *Britannica CD* until 1994, a year after Microsoft launched their *Encarta* encyclopedia. McHenry believes these failures were due to a reluctance among senior management to fully embrace the new technology, caused largely by the overriding influence of the sales staff and management. The sales personnel earned commissions from door-to-door selling of the print encyclopedias, which McHenry believes led to decisions about the distribution and pricing of the electronic products being driven by the desires of the sales personnel rather than market conditions and customer expectations.[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-EBonline-51)

After ending publication of its print edition, which at the end supplied only 1% of the company's revenue,[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-52) it hoped to transition to a CD or online version. Sales of both of these were disappointing — competition with [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia) is mentioned.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica#cite_note-Cauz-2) Sales of the CD/DVD ended with the 2015 "[Ultimate Reference Suite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_Ultimate_Reference_Suite)".

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