A PASSWORD for Norway
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Norway has a long history of close contact with English-speaking countries, and a need for bilingual dictionaries has long been evident. The notorious early encounter between Norwegians and Englishmen in 793, when Vikings attacked the cloister at Lindesfarne, did not result in a dictionary. However, the ensuing period of Norse influence in England left its mark on the English language, which adopted such words as ski, both skirt and shirt, bag, and the third-person plural pronouns they, their and them from Old Norse. Through the centuries Norway and England developed close relations as trading partners. Due to immigration, trade and military collaboration, equally close relations were established with the USA. Second to Ireland, Norway has exported the greatest percentage of its population to the USA through immigration. In more recent times, proportionally large numbers of Norwegians have also immigrated to Canada and Australia. Partly as a result of close contact with the English-speaking world, Norway became a pioneer in the teaching of English in the schools. In the nineteenth century it became the first country in Europe to make English a required subject in school, at the expense of Latin.

When Scandinavians got around to writing dictionaries, Norway had become a part of Denmark, and Danish had usurped Norwegian as the written language. Norwegians, however, were among the early pioneers in the compilation of English-Norwegian dictionaries, published in 1678, 1754 and 1779. Following Norway’s independence from Denmark in 1814, and from Sweden in 1905, the modern Norwegian written languages evolved out of Danish, on the one hand, and systemization of the dialects on the other, and English-Norwegian/English dictionaries began to appear. Today, there are quite a few dictionaries of different sizes on the market. In the past few years most of the major publishing companies have put out a dictionary of 20,000-30,000 entries to meet the needs of upper-secondary school students, so that the user has a good selection to choose from. The most important are the English-Norwegian/English dictionaries published by Cappelen (1990), Kunnskapsforlaget’s (skoleordbok 1992, 1996), Det Norske Samlaget (1998), and Universitetsforlaget’s Lingua (1996). In addition, the monolingual Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, as well as other Oxford dictionaries, and Collins COBUILD, have enjoyed wide popularity for the same student market. HarperCollins has just published an English / Norwegian dictionary this spring, which bears some likeness to Password, but it is actually aimed also at English speakers who use Norwegian. Some fundamental differences between the two dictionaries are discussed below.
There is apparently no pressing need for another English-Norwegian/Norwegian-English dictionary! Nevertheless, Password does contain certain innovations, and it seems to be an excellent lexicographic concept for an audience of upper-secondary school students in Norway. The reasons are based both on practical considerations and on learning potential. One of the most important practical reasons is that the Norwegian guidelines for the final exams in English and other languages have changed. Up until recent years, students were expected to produce their foreign language at the exam either out of their own minds and memories, that is without the aid of a dictionary, or with the aid of an English-English, or other monolingual dictionary depending on the target language. In the course of the process that culminated in the sweeping school reform in 1994, however, students were first given permission to use a foreign language-Norwegian dictionary (e.g. English-Norwegian) in addition to an English-English dictionary, and finally both a foreign language-Norwegian and a Norwegian-foreign language dictionary. This implied that students were expected to buy two or three fairly large and cumbersome dictionaries, in addition to their foreign language textbooks. Most students do not carry these books to school on a daily basis, and even on exam days they often "forget" them. Many do not even bother to buy them in the first place, or they just purchase one of the smaller, lightweight ones. These dictionaries, however, seldom provide the vocabulary necessary in an upper-secondary school setting.

The use of dictionaries during examinations has implications for the learning process. If one is to use a dictionary during an exam, one should have learned how to use it through instruction, practice and experience. A foreign-language dictionary is, after all, an important resource tool for one's life and work, especially if the native language is not an international one. Ideally, an exam should also reveal whether a student has learned to use dictionaries quickly and wisely. Even if one has learned to do this, going back and forth between 2-3 dictionaries during an exam is time-consuming. In addition, the number and clumsiness of the dictionaries has for the most part made it impractical to use them in the classroom on a regular basis, so that the acquisition and use of the "required" dictionaries has, for the most part, become a private matter for the student. The cost of so many volumes is in itself another important consideration.

With this in mind, having a single dictionary which is both a monolingual learner's dictionary and a bilingual wordlist is a splendid idea. Instead of having to buy two or three different dictionaries, students can now get the major features of both types of dictionaries in one volume. This should not only make it realistic to require the students to purchase a copy of the dictionary, but also to use it in the classroom as well as during examinations.

Password has several features that make it an excellent choice for today's students. Although it is a comprehensive dictionary, the layout of the structure of entries makes it quick and easy to look up words. As opposed to other dictionaries, no abbreviations are used, and the student will not experience the frustrations of being stymied by what these might mean. Experience shows that many students give up and/or misunderstand the context when confronted by abbreviations. The English definitions and the example sentences give more usage guidance than is possible in a bilingual dictionary of similar format. For the sake of comparison, the new Collins Engelsk-Norsk Ordbok (HarperCollins, Glasgow, 1998) makes extensive use of abbreviations, and the examples are all translated into Norwegian. This may be useful to some students, but it is not evident that they will actually find what they are looking for quickly and easily as a result.

The Norwegian edition of Password incorporates the basic features mentioned above, and also includes a Norwegian-English wordlist. In order to be as comprehensive as possible without taking up too much space, the layout of this section is in three columns and in relatively small print. However, every effort has been made in the selection of type and lettering to make it fast and easy to find and read the entries, while economizing on the space. An innovation in this edition is presenting each English meaning with a page number, so that the user may check on usage and suitability in the English-English-Norwegian part of the dictionary, and also avoid choosing the wrong part of speech. These features should make Password more learner-friendly than any other local dictionary. Password is also provided with a comprehensive user's guide explaining the system and offering tips on how to get the most out of the dictionary.

Special efforts have been invested in customizing Password to its Norwegian audience. First, we took a critical look at the selection of entries, considering issues of geographical location, climate, culture, religious orientation and the content of the English curriculum in Norway. Password is indeed up to date and contains many new words that are signs of our time, and which are not found in other, comparable dictionaries. But we made further adjustments in the selection of entries to make it even more suitable for the Norwegian users, both in the upper secondary schools and for a general public. Examples of the additions are described below.
New entries were prepared by Password Publishers according to our word lists. At the same time, some entries which Norwegians would have little need to look up were deleted. The entries deleted were largely exotic plants not common in Norwegian nature or homes, and other entries, e.g. cricket terms, since this game is not played in Norway, nor is it important in the English curriculum. The entries that were added included words applicable to describing Norwegian mountain and fjord landscape, weather conditions, winter sports, religious holidays, school life, contemporary illnesses and ailments, and common slang expressions. In addition, an attempt was made to include female sexual organs and words related to bodily functions, and introduce more Americanisms. Eventually, well over 500 new entries were added to the Norwegian Password.

Since Norway is a mountainous country with rural communities, new entries such as mountain range, mountain ridge, mountain birch, mountain community have been added. Norwegian flora, such as the spruce tree; common berries, such as cloudberry, bilberry and rowan berry; wildlife, such as ptarmigan; fish and sea animals, such as rosefish and minkewhale, have all been included. Skiing words, such as ski track trail, ski pole, ski lift, ski jump, have also found their place, as well as the strange Norwegian contraption for winter transport that looks like a chair on runners, the kick-sled or push-chair. Christian holidays, such as Ascension Day, Whitsuntide/Pentecost, Shrove Tuesday and Maundy Thursday have been added as well. New entries related to school life, such as grader, transcript, valedictorian were included, as well as names of school-leaving examinations and college degrees. An attempt has also been made to explain school certificates and diplomas and college degrees in terms of approximate Norwegian equivalents. This is unusual in learner’s dictionaries, and should prove useful to the many Norwegian students who plan to study abroad.

Norway is a society where social welfare issues are avidly and openly debated, and the English curriculum has long placed an emphasis on background studies and social conditions in English-speaking countries. Students may be asked to write on or discuss drug abuse, criminality, the homeless, unwed parents, or the impact of AIDS. We have therefore expanded the list of entries in Password to include concepts such as withdrawal symptoms, bag lady, single-parent family, common-law wife/husband, significant other, sexual abuse, etc. Both in school and other contexts, Norwegian youths need a vocabulary that encompasses their leisure-time activities. Words such as confirmand, confirmation dress/suit, youth mentor have therefore been added too, as well as new entries from the world of sports.

In Norwegian dictionaries primarily aimed at the school market, it is customary to include a section of resource materials. These materials usually include a short grammar, weights and measurements, guidelines for letter writing and geographical names. Various learner’s dictionaries added other categories as well, but not all of these reflect much knowledge of the school curriculum. In Password we have tried to provide resource materials in keeping with the changes in the English curriculum and the globalization process characteristic of our day and time. With respect to traditional resource materials, we have tried to make these easy-to-use references, rather than comprehensive presentations with details on usage and exceptions to the rules. Whenever possible, a “visual” approach has been used. Letter writing is illustrated in model letters, illustrations show a comparison of temperatures, measurements, etc, and formulas and a table of common values show how miles per gallon may be compared to the Norwegian system of measuring engine efficiency.

The curriculum approved for the 1994 reform requires the English curriculum to be “vocationalized” for each of the professional and vocational curricula, and students are required to learn to tell about their own country in English. Finding the English vocabulary to meet these requirements has presented problems for students and teachers alike, as many of the words and concepts are not in learner’s dictionaries. We have therefore included a section on speaking and writing about Norway, and vocabularies for the curricula in music, dance, drama and athletics. Many other fields, of course, have a need for similar resource pages, but these four have the most in-depth English course, and, as opposed to them, special English textbooks exist for most of the other vocational curricula.

Maps of the four most important English-speaking countries are located inside the covers of the book, and a facts section provides the area of each country in square miles and kilometers, and current populations, with estimates for the year 2000. In addition, figures of interest for each of the countries have been selected, e.g. US population figures for whites, blacks and Native Americans, Catholic and Protestant populations in Northern Ireland, English and French speakers in Canada, Aboriginals in Australia. A list of geographical names makes an attempt to reflect our global society, where people are quite mobile, take advantage of virtual travel through the Internet, and may be expected to communicate with each other in English in all parts of the world.

The Norwegian edition of Password will serve as an up-to-date resource book providing tools for understanding texts from the English-speaking world and producing written and oral English on a wide range of subjects relevant in present-day Norway.