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HISTORY OF THE DESERET ALPHABET AND OTHER ATTEMPTS
TO REFORM ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY

by

Douglas Allen New

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Curriculum Development and Supervision

Approved:

Gail Johnson
Major Professor

Raymond D. Dale
Committee Member

Malcolm Alfred
Committee Member

Richard S. Knight
Committee Member

Jay A. Monson
Committee Member

Lawrence H. Pette
Dean of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1985

This Dissertation is Gratefully Dedicated
To My Wife, VerNene

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Douglas Allen New

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ABSTRACT	x
 Chapter	
I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE. .	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose	10
Delimitations	11
Procedure and Methodology	14
Review of the Literature	16
History of the English Language and Background of the Spelling Problem	16
Simplified Spelling and Phonetic Alphabets	17
The Deseret Alphabet	21
Reasons for Non-acceptance of Orthographic Reform	23
Definitions	24
Organization of Chapters	29
II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE	31
III. SIMPLIFIED SPELLING	43
Introduction	43
Early Attempts at Spelling Reform	44
Later Attempts to Simplify Spelling	73
Noah Webster's American Spelling	73
Benn Pitman's Solution	79
Alexander J. Ellis' Glossic	82
The Principles of '76 and the SRA	86
The Simplified Spelling Board	93
Frederick C. Wingfield's Fwnetic Crthqgrafi	107

	Robert E. Zachrisson's Anglic	111
	Nue Spelling	118
	Axel Wijk's Regularized English	124
	Frank C. Laubach's English the New Way	130
	Godfrey Dewey's World English Spelling	133
	The Spelling Action Society's SR1	138
	Summary	142
IV.	AUGMENTED AND NON-ROMANIC ALPHABETS	144
	Introduction	144
	William Thornton's Universal Alphabet	145
	Isaac J. Pitman's Phonotype	146
	Edwin Leigh's Pronouncing Orthography	155
	Alexander Melville Bell's Visible Speech	159
	George Bernard Shaw and the Shavian Alphabet	161
	James Pitman's i.t.a.	173
	John R. Malone's Unifon	182
	Summary	185
V.	THE DESERET ALPHABET	187
	Introduction	187
	Characteristics of the Deseret Alphabet	191
	Creators of the Deseret Alphabet	194
	Reasons for Creation of the Deseret Alphabet	198
	Promotion of the Deseret Alphabet	204
	Reasons for Abandonment	240
VI.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	249
	Introduction	249
	Arguments Against Spelling Reform	250
	Orthographic Change Would Be	
	Prohibitively Expensive	250
	Confusion Would Result	251
	Spelling Would Lose Stability	253
	Etymological Values Would Be Lost	253
	Present Spelling Has Aesthetic Superiority	254
	Simplified Spelling Would Not	
	Promote World Use of English	254
	Spelling Reform is Not Necessary	255

Reasons for Non-acceptance of Spelling Reform	257
Social Inertia Exerts a Powerful Influence	258
Our Orthography Becomes a Precious Tradition	258
Conventional Orthography Bears the Stamp of Authority	259
Only Children or Beginning Learners Require Reform	259
The Reputation of Reformers is Poor	260
Reformers Do Not Agree Among Themselves	261
The Future of Orthographic Reform	262
Recommendations for Future Research	264
REFERENCES	266
APPENDICES	280
Appendix A. Dissertations Dealing with the Initial Teaching Alphabet Completed Before August, 1984	281
Appendix B. The Letter of Franklin D. Richards, L.D.S. Church Historian, to Hubert Howe Bancroft	286
Appendix C. Bibliography	291
Books and Theses	292
Articles and Reports	304
VITA	314

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Extracts from the first eight verses of the Gospel of John in six early English Bibles	40
2. A specimen of Orm's orthography as found in the <u>Ormulum</u>	45
3. An illustration from John Hart's <u>Method or Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned, Whereby They May Bee Taught to Read English, in a very short time, vvith pleasure</u> , 1570	48
4. Title page of Sir Thomas Smith's <u>De Recta et Emendata Linguae Anglicae Scriptione</u> , 1568	50
5. Title page of William Bullokar's <u>Booke at Large</u> , 1580	51
6. Title page of Richard Hodges' <u>The English Primrose</u> , 1644	55
7. The Lord's Prayer and the Creed, written in the Reverend John Wilkins' proposed alphabet	56
8. Title page of G. W.'s <u>Magazine</u> , 1703	61
9. Title page of <u>The Needful Attempt</u> , 1711, author unkown	62
10. Title page of Sayer Rudd's <u>Podromos</u> , 1755	64
11. Benjamin Franklin's Reformed Alphabet	67
12. Benjamin Franklin's first letter to Mary Stevenson, written in his proposed alphabet, dated July 20, 1768	69
13. Typescript of Benjamin Franklin's first letter to Mary Stevenson, written in his proposed alphabet, dated July 20, 1768	70
14. Title page of Noah Webster's <u>Dissertations</u> , 1789	74
15. Noah Webster's Dedication to Benjamin Franklin of <u>Dissertations on the English Language</u> , 1789	75

16.	Title page and a sample lesson from Benn Pitman's <u>First Phonetic Reader</u> , 1855	81
17.	An editorial cartoon lampooning President Theodore Roosevelt's attempt to simplify spelling	101
18.	A specimen of Nue Spelling	123
19.	William Thornton's Universal Alphabet	147
20.	The first of Isaac Pitman's Phonotypic Alphabets	151
21.	Five versions of Fonotypy	152
22.	A specimen of Edwin Leigh's Pronouncing Print	157
23.	A specimen of Alexander Melville Bell's Visible Speech	162
24.	The Shaw Alphabet Reading Key	169
25.	The Shaw Alphabet for Writers	170
26.	A specimen of the Shaw Alphabet	172
27.	The Initial Teaching Alphabet	175
28.	The Unifon Alphabet	183
29.	The Deseret Alphabet	192
30.	The title page of George D. Watt's <u>Exercises in Phonography</u> , 1851	199
31.	<u>The Deseret Alphabet</u> , 1854	210
32.	Deseret Gold Coin, minted 1860, bearing the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," in Deseret characters	218
33.	Title page of the <u>Deseret First Book</u> , 1868	225
34.	A lesson from the <u>Deseret First Book</u> , 1868	226
35.	Title page of the <u>Deseret Second Book</u> , 1868	227
36.	The Errata Sheets from the <u>Deseret First Book</u> and the <u>Deseret Second Book</u> , showing one side of each	229

37. The title page of The Book of Mormon, published in Deseret characters, 1869 233
38. Municipal Election—People's Ticket, (February 14, 1876). Election flier printed in Deseret characters 238

ABSTRACT

History of the Deseret Alphabet
and Other Attempts to Reform English Orthography

by

Douglas A. New, Doctor of Education

Utah State University, 1985

Major Professor: Dr. Gail Johnson
Interdepartmental Doctorate in Curriculum Development and Supervision

The purpose of this paper was to examine some of the many proposals and attempts to reform English spelling. The first chapter contained a statement of the problem, an explanation of the procedure and methodology of the research techniques used in this study, a review of the literature, and a definition of terms used in the study. In order to present the reader with a background into the perceived problems inherent within English orthography, a brief history of the English language, with special reference to its spelling, was presented in the second chapter.

The third chapter examined a variety of attempts to reform the spelling of English words prior to the year 1789. Proposals to simplify English spelling, including the work of Noah Webster, Benn Pitman, Alexander J. Ellis, the Spelling Reform Association, the Simplified Spelling Board, Frederick Wingfield, Robert Zachrisson, the

Simplified Spelling Society, Axel Wijk, Frank Laubach, Godfrey Dewey, and the Australian Spelling Action Society, were then described. Chapter four contained an examination of a number of attempts to produce and popularize phonetic alphabets, including augmented and non-romanic alphabets such as the Universal Alphabet, Phonotype, Pronouncing Orthography, Visible Speech, the Shavian Alphabet, the i.t.a., and Unifon.

Chapter five examined the Deseret Alphabet as a case study of one attempt to create and disseminate a phonemic orthographic system using a non-romanic alphabet. An examination of the social and educational context of its formation, its creators and proponents, the extent of its acceptance and utilization, methods of instruction, and reasons for its abandonment was undertaken. A look at the Alphabet as a linguistic entity, its strengths and shortcomings, was made.

The sixth and final chapter presented tentative reasons for the relative non-acceptance of orthographic reform, as well as the arguments which are presented for the retention of the present orthography. Finally, suggestions of future directions for research are given.

(314 pages)

CHAPTER I
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

For many hundreds of years, the English speaking peoples of the world have been concerned about the spelling, and some would say the misspelling, of their language. A noted scholar of the English language, Professor G.L. Brook, has written:

English spelling is notoriously difficult, and foreigners learning English are bewildered by the lack of correlation between spelling and pronunciation. Those whose native language is English have for so long been accustomed to the vagaries of English spelling that they take them for granted, but it is not uncommon to find even well-educated Englishmen who will admit cheerfully, or even with a touch of pride, that they cannot spell (Brook, 1958, p. 100).

Professor Brook is by no means alone when he writes of the difficulties that spellers of our language have with our capricious and often contradictory orthography. His sentiments have been echoed and re-echoed by those in all strata of society. Even computers are having trouble with English spelling. Hanna programmed a computer with over 3080 spelling rules, then asked the computer to spell 17,310 common English words. The computer spelled only 49% of these words correctly (Hanna, et al, 1966).

This, of course, comes as no surprise to the thousands of teachers who struggle daily to teach their students the mysteries of spelling and reading our mother tongue. The American College Dictionary (Barnhart, 1963, p. xxvii) informs us that only one sound in English (the th, as in thin) has one spelling. The combination of the letters

t and h, however, can produce two sounds, as in thin and then. The sh sound, on the other hand, has fifteen possible spellings. Six other English sounds have eleven spellings each. To make matters worse, the schwa sound, found in 60% of all English words, is not represented by a single letter or symbol, but can be spelled 36 different ways.

Cannon (1869) said:

There are many words in our language about whose spelling and pronunciation usage is divided...The letters E-A-R spell ear, if we prefix the letter B to this word, we do not produce the word beer, but bear (bare.) If we again add the letter D to those we have already got, we produce (not bear'd) but beard--the ornament which some men are so proud of. If to beard we prefix the letter H, we convert the word into heard; but if we leave out the D and add T instead, we make heart.

Now all those words are differently pronounced, and it will thus be seen that the addition of a single letter will often entirely alter the sound of the other letters in the combination. The letter C produces some very amusing changes in words. In October, for instance, it sounds like K, but like S in December. Again, it makes lose, close and transports a lover into clover. To further illustrate our present absurd way of spelling and pronunciation, we give a few more examples. If we take the letters augh, which generally spell AW, and place the letter L before them, we produce laugh, not law. If we rub out the L at the beginning of the word and write T at the end, we are told that the word does not spell aft but aught. If we then place L at the beginning of the word and ER at the end, we do not read it as lawter, but laughter (lafter); and S added to this again makes (not slafter) but slaughter. Y converts one man into many and N gives a crow a crown; P turns lumber into plumber, and shows a rover to be a prover. B throws poor Tom into the tomb; and the magical E turns Sam into the same; makes Mr. Strang look strange, a star to stare, and throws a rag into rage (p. 180).

Geoffrey Chaucer (1957) has lamented:

And for there is so grete dyversite
 In English, and in writyng of our tonge,
 So preye I God, that non myswrite the
 Ne the mysmetere for default of tonge (p. 479).

Apparently, however, the concern over English spelling irregularities has not always existed. Old English was a highly phonetic language, as are its other Germanic cousins, and its letters were pronounced as they appeared. For example, the K in knee was at one time pronounced. Then, in 1066, the French-speaking Normans conquered England. They not only arbitrarily changed the spellings of hundreds of words, but also introduced many French words into the English language. In addition, many other foreign words have been borrowed and adopted into English from German, Spanish, and scores of other languages. And while the pronunciation of our language has changed through the centuries, the orthography has not. Thus, in short, the problem lies in the fact that one sound can have many spellings, and one spelling can produce many sounds, such as the various pronunciations of ough as in rough, hiccough, through, bough, ought, dough, and trough, or the many possible spellings of the sh sound, as in ship, sure, champagne, anxious, mission, nation, social, issue, ocean, nauseous, Sean, pshaw, fuchsia, schist, and conscious.

In light of the long concern over English orthographic inconsistencies, it comes as no surprise that the idea of reforming English spelling is not a new one. The first reformer of whom we have record is an English Augustinian monk named Orm who lived in the 12th century. Many other Englishmen have followed in his stead, including

John Hart, Alexander Gill, and Ben Jonson (Pitman & St. John, 1969). In the United States, Benjamin Franklin devised a phonetic alphabet and staunchly defended spelling reform. With his long exposure to the printed word and his varied and practical interests, Franklin waited until he was in his sixties before he began experimentation with his phonetic alphabet (Franklin, 1972).

Thomas Jefferson also wrote in defense of spelling reform:

A change has long been desired in English orthography, such as might render it an easy and true index of the pronunciation of words. The want of conformity between the combinations of letters, and the sounds they should represent, increases to foreigners the difficulty in acquiring the language, occasions great loss of time to children in learning to read, and renders correct spelling rare but in those who read much (Jefferson, 1904, p. 347).

Noah Webster, author of the first American dictionary and the famous "Blue-backed Spellers," advocated various reforms in his Dissertations on the English Language (1789). Many of his reforms are with us to this day. For example, we leave the U out of colour, the ME out of programme, and spell theatre with an ER.

In England, Sir Isaac Pitman published his Stenographic Shorthand in 1837. While it was not intended as a spelling reform, but rather a system for rapid writing, Pitman was profoundly interested in orthographic reform. He later designed a system of "phonography," as he termed it, to be used as a popular system of phonemic writing. A Phonotypic Journal was published, a popular society to promulgate its proposals was established, and the Bible and a number of other works were printed in phonographic characters (Goodfellow, n.d.).

An early disciple of Pitman, George Darling Watt, later took these reforms to America where they were taught to Brigham Young and other early L.D.S. (abbreviation for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, formal name of the Mormons and their Church) Church leaders (R. Watt, 1977). George Watt also served as the official Church stenographer during the early 1840s and recorded many of the sermons of Joseph Smith. After coming to Utah, Watt's services were in great demand and his reportings filled the pages of the pioneer Deseret News and he recorded many of the sermons found in the Journal of Discourses (Stringham & Flack, 1958). Many of the principles of Pitman's phonography were later incorporated into the Deseret Alphabet.

Samuel Clemens was also an ardent advocate of spelling reform, as was Melvil Dewey, originator of the famed Dewey Decimal Classification system (Elliott, 1981). Theodore Roosevelt, while President of the United States, threw the weight of his office behind a proposal to reform English spelling and mandated that all government documents be printed using the reforms suggested by the Simplified Spelling Board (Vivian, 1979; Dornbush, 1961; "President Roosevelt," 1906). This organization, which exists to this day under a new name (the Simpler Spelling Association), was funded by Andrew Carnegie, and was headed by Brander Matthews, a professor at Columbia University. Other members of the board included Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, William James, the "Father of American Educational Psychology," Mark Twain, Isaac Funk (whose name is associated with the

Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary) and Richard Watson Gilder, editor of Century Magazine (Goodfellow, n.d.)

The National Education Association (NEA) also supported simplified spelling by approving a resolution to "rationalize our spelling" (Vaile, 1904). The Chicago Tribune, among other publications, also launched a drive to simplify spelling and used its pages to propagate these reforms. The Tribune's attempt lasted until 1975 (Vivian, 1979).

George Bernard Shaw, the English playwright, was also intrigued by spelling reform and sought for creation of a phonetic alphabet of 40 letters. While his reforms never caught on, this did not deter Shaw in his efforts, which lasted beyond the grave. Shaw stipulated in his will that a trust be established to finance spelling reform and monies from this trust aided in the formation of the Shavian Alphabet. Shaw's influence can also be indirectly seen in the creation of the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.). Principally the brainchild of Sir James Pitman, grandson of Sir Isaac Pitman, the i.t.a. was not an attempt to reform English orthography, per se, but rather, was an attempt to aid the beginning reader of English. Downing (1964) confirmed this when he wrote that the Pitman Augmented Roman Alphabet (the original name for the i.t.a.):

...has been designed not as a permanent spelling reform but as an initial device to grade the difficulties of written and printed language in order to help the child read the traditional orthography of English. Because the aim of i.t.a. is to improve reading in the conventional alphabet and spelling of English, the design of i.t.a. is quite different from what it might have been if it had been developed as a spelling reform. (p. x).

This "rumpus" over spelling reform (as O'Connor termed it) is not only alive in the United Kingdom and the United States, but Canada and Australia as well (O'Connor, 1976). It has been estimated that there have been over three hundred documented attempts to reform English orthography (Ives, 1979; Groff, 1976; Venezky, 1970).

Statement of the Problem

As has been seen, numerous writers, philosophers, linguists, educators, and others, have indicated that the present orthography of the English language presents decoding problems for both native-speaking English beginning readers, as well as for those for whom English is a second language. Indeed, one writer has produced a book entitled English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading (Dewey, 1971). Additionally, others perceive traditional English orthography as the main cause of spelling difficulties, which, these writers argue, all face to some extent.

Since the twelfth century, various reforms have been proposed to effect changes in English orthography. These reforms may be broadly classified into two general categories: Simplified Spelling and Phonetic Alphabets (Monson, 1953). The various merits and drawbacks to these proposals are debated to this day.

Information concerning historical attempts at orthographic reform are only to be found in scattered documents, many of which are located in specialized journals or are otherwise inaccessible to policy makers, developers of curriculum, teachers, or other interested parties. No attempt has yet been made to bring together these extensive materials into a single, comprehensive, unified historical study. Such a work would prove valuable to historians of education, our language, and our culture. Also, a readily accessible historical perspective of orthographic reform would prove beneficial to educational practitioners and others in their current and future deliberations.

The Deseret Alphabet was a major attempt on the part of a religious society to reform English orthography. It has been the subject of numerous articles, both secular (Walker, 1974; Ellsworth, 1973; Simmonds, 1969) and religious (Asay, 1978; Rowe, 1978; Dederer, 1969). Additionally, its history has been the subject of three Master's theses (Wintersteen, 1970; Olsen, 1952; Monson, 1947).

It has been the subject of much controversy from its inception, with its Mormon supporters echoing the sentiments of Brigham Young, a chief proponent of the Alphabet who said that it would prove to be a great advantage to both foreigners and children in their efforts to learn English (Young, 1868, p. 298). On the other hand, Jules Remy, in a contemporary Gentile (non-Mormon) account predicted that the Alphabet, while "praiseworthy," would, nonetheless, "have no success, and will be abandoned by its authors, on account of the difficulty

which must be experienced in its application" (Remy, 1861, p. 185). This dichotomy of opinion has survived to this day, with some calling the Deseret Alphabet "outstanding" (Carter, 1939) and "noble" (Christensen, 1955), with another labeling it an "educational freak" (Dwyer, 1971.) One writer has even commented that copies of the Deseret News during the 1850s and 1860s which had articles published in the Deseret characters "could have been mistaken for a Turkish tax list" (Ashton, 1950, p. 76). To date, however, no comprehensive examination of the Deseret Alphabet as a reading/spelling curriculum has been undertaken. We do not know how it was taught in the schools, nor where it was taught or by whom.

June Russell Gilstad speaks of the utility and desirability of historical research of reading when she states:

Reading educators ought to inquire, how can knowledge of past reading instruction enable us to have a better understanding of contemporary practices and help to resolve current problems? The answer is that the most extensive and richest source of specific information about current practices is to be obtained from those who initiated and transmitted them to us, namely our predecessors. Information from them will enable us to distinguish specific, inherited practices from one another and, knowing their origins, to develop a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of them....

Historical knowledge, by enabling us to distinguish and understand our current procedures, can provide an enlightened perspective and realistic foundation for contemporary investigations (Gilstad, 1979, pp. 4-5).

These needs represent a number of serious gaps in our knowledge of educational history which need to be filled.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine selected attempts which have been made to reform English orthography. There exist numerous sources, primary and secondary, on the history of the English language. This is also true of sources concerning the need for orthographic reform as well as various proposals and attempts to effect these reforms. These sources are herein synthesized into a comprehensive, yet concise, whole.

This study:

1. Presents a brief history of the English language in order to provide the reader with a background into the perceived problems inherent within English orthography, what they are and how they came to be. This will give a better understanding of the current structure, both written and spoken, of the English language. Also examined is the lack of phoneme-grapheme correlation which are the basis, spelling reformers argue, of the need for spelling reform.

2. Examines attempts, past and present, to simplify the spelling of English words. These attempts seek to phoneticize the spelling of English words by deleting silent letters and double letters and by generally assigning one sound to one letter. In simplified spelling, there are no attempts to add any additional characters or marks to either the alphabet or individual words.

3. Examines the many attempts to produce and popularize

phonetic alphabets. These would include augmented alphabets which use the Roman alphabet as a base (such as the i.t.a.) and non-roman alphabets (such as Franklin's alphabet, Pitman's phonotypic characters, and the Deseret Alphabet.)

4. Examines the Deseret Alphabet as a case study of one attempt to create and disseminate a phonemic orthographic system using a non-roman alphabetic system. An examination of the social and educational context of its formation, its creators and proponents, the extent of its acceptance and utilization, methods of instruction, and reasons for its abandonment, is undertaken. A look at the Alphabet as a linguistic entity, its strengths and shortcomings, is made. This study also determines whether the Deseret Alphabet met the objections of our present orthography.

5. Examines tentative reasons for the relative non-acceptance of orthographic change, as well as the arguments which are presented for the "conservation" of the present orthography (Smith, 1980.) Finally, suggestions of future directions for research and further examination are given.

Delimitations

There have been over three hundred documented attempts or proposals to reform English orthography (Ives, 1979). It is not the purpose of this study to present all of these proposals. Many were

very limited in the scope of their acceptance. Others were merely repetitions of previous proposals. Numerous proposals were made during and prior to the 16th century, when printing was relatively new and books were scarce. There is very little information available about these early proposals, therefore they are given only cursory attention. Finally, relatively few proposals ever get beyond the production stage and are generally untried or untested.

The following criteria are used to determine whether to include a particular spelling reform proposal or attempt in this study. The particular reform need meet only one of the following criteria to be included:

1. The fame of its creators and/or proponents;
 2. The extent of its acceptance and/or utilization, either in the schools or by the public in general;
 3. The amount of existing literature on the particular reform;
- and,
4. The availability of those materials;
 5. The conceptual significance or uniqueness of the particular proposal, as identified in the current literature.

There have been many hundreds of scholarly and popular works written on the history of the English language. Thousands of articles, in both the professional and popular press, have been written. Our language has a rich, varied, and fascinating history. However, it is not the purpose of this study to present the history of our language to

any extent; this has been done elsewhere (Brook, 1958; Pei, 1952; Bryant, 1948). The chapter on the history of the English language is brief and focuses on the changes which have occurred over the centuries in our written and spoken language and which have occasioned the need for orthographic reform and to give the reader enough background to understand the reasoning behind spelling reform.

Various attempts and proposals have been designed to aid the speller, as well as the reader in decoding. These include diacritical markings, color codes, and rebus syllabaries. While they do represent attempts to aid the reader in his attempt to successfully deal with the demands of a difficult orthography, they are not attempts to reform English spelling; therefore, they are not examined in this study.

Finally, the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) has had the most widespread trial in the schools of any of the various orthographic reforms. It has been the subject of numerous theses and dissertations, most of which employed an experimental design which compared the effects of the i.t.a. on spelling and reading scores of children with control groups taught in the traditional orthography. It is beyond the scope of this work to present a critical examination of these studies. For the convenience of the reader, an appendix (Appendix A) is included listing all dissertations completed in the United States dealing with the i.t.a. completed before August, 1984.

Procedure and Methodology

In order to locate pertinent sources or written materials on spelling reform and the Deseret Alphabet, the author first went to a number of preliminary sources. A computer search of the ERIC file, U.S. Government Documents, the Language and Language Behavior Abstracts, and the America: History and Life file was undertaken. Additionally, a manual search of all of the Cumulative Dissertation Abstracts, Cumulative Book Indexes, the Nineteenth Century Readers' Guide, as well as the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature was accomplished. The key words used included; ALPHABET(S); DESERET ALPHABET; ENGLISH LANGUAGE, HISTORY; ENGLISH LANGUAGE, ORTHOGRAPHY; INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET; READING; SPELLING; and SPELLING REFORM.

From this search, it was determined that scores of dissertations, hundreds of books, and thousands of articles, both in professional journals and popular magazines on the subject of spelling reform have been written.

In searching for materials on the Deseret Alphabet, it was necessary to go to the holdings of Utah State University, the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Utah State Historical Society. Additionally, a search was made of the indexes of every periodical having to do with L.D.S. or Utah histories. Also, every available book and dissertation written on the history of Utah and the L.D.S. Church and its leaders (such as Brigham Young, Heber C.

Kimball, and Orson Pratt) and on the life of others prominent in the formation and propagation of the Deseret Alphabet (such as George D. Watt, creator of the Alphabet, and Richard L. Campbell, Territorial Superintendent of Schools) was examined. Every known reference to the Deseret Alphabet has been identified and is now in the possession of the author, as is a photocopy of the two Deseret Readers.

This dissertation employs two methods of historical study. As the reforms proposals are identified and gathered, they are placed into one of the two categories suggested by S.C. Monson (1953): (1) Simplified Spelling, or (2) Phonetic Alphabets. They are then presented in chronological order within these subtopics. This portion of the study is organized and synthesized as a descriptive historical study. No attempt is undertaken to evaluate or interpret the data at this point. A chronicle of the proposals and attempts are given, examining a) who was involved in the reform; b) where it took place; c) when; d) how the reform was designed; e) the extent of its acceptance and/or use; and, f) its conceptual nature, that is, how the reform sought to accomplish its proclaimed end--the improvement of English spelling.

The chapter on the Deseret Alphabet is not only descriptive, but also interpretive in nature. Reasons for its creation, reactions to it, and causes for its abandonment are examined. The concluding chapter analyzes why these reforms have had relatively little support or acceptance, and examines the "case" against spelling reform and the future of orthographic simplification. Analysis, evaluation, and

interpretation is not undertaken for each individual reform proposal examined, nor are the various proposals compared or contrasted with each other.

Occasionally, it is necessary within this study to consult secondary sources. Insofar as possible, the primary sources which are cited are then examined.

Review of the Literature

As this study is largely a gathering and organization of existing literature, only a brief review is given here; this is divided into subsections corresponding with the purposes of this study. This review is designed to lay the foundation for the chapters which follow.

History of the English Language and Background of the Spelling Problem

D.G. Scragg has written a scholarly volume entitled A History of English Spelling (1974). In it, Scragg reviewed the history of the spelling of English words, beginning with Germanic Old English, the introduction of the Roman alphabet by early Christian missionaries, and the invasion of England by the French in 1066. Scragg indicated that while English pronunciation has undergone profound changes, our orthography has not kept pace with those changes. A pivotal factor which arrested English orthographic change was the publication in 1755 of Dr. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language. Not only

did Johnson freeze the spelling of English words so that spelling could no longer be changed easily, in order to be more consonant with the pronunciation of the particular words, but he made the spelling of a number of words more difficult. For example, Johnson changed det to debt in order to show the etymologic background of the word.

Additionally, Scragg has shown that the spelling of many of our words today is the result of printers' mistakes which were repeated and eventually took hold. Well written and scholarly, this study is rich in the use of primary sources.

Simplified Spelling and Phonetic Alphabets

In 1789, Noah Webster published his Dissertations on the English Language: with notes, historical and critical, to which is added an appendix, an Essay on a Reformed Mode of Spelling, with Dr. Franklin's Arguments on that Subject. In this work, Webster acknowledged that spoken languages "are changing, from age to age, in proportion to improvements in science" (p. 391), but that spelling does not keep pace with those changes. Webster then argued for a simplification of spelling, making it more agreeable with the spoken language. Nila Banton Smith wrote that this was an opportune time for Webster to accomplish his reforms as the people of the newly independent United States were anxious for reform, for the throwing off of things which were European, hence decadent, and for the adoption of that which was peculiarly American (Smith, 1965).

A professor of English at Yale University, Thomas R. Lounsbury, labored long and hard for spelling reform. His foremost work on the subject was English Spelling and Spelling Reform (1909) which carried a distinct apologetic tone. In this work, Dr. Lounsbury wrote about "the problem" of "the orthographic situation" in which he briefly dealt with the history of the English language and the lack of consonance between written and spoken English. He proposed simplified spelling as a "method of relief" and then went on to deal with "Objections, real and reputed" against orthographic reform. While Dr. Lounsbury did not present any new proposal to reform spelling, his summation of arguments, pro and con, of the English language, are scholarly and notable. It should be kept in mind, however, that this work was written for the purpose of arousing public support for orthographic simplification.

George Bernard Shaw wrote and spoke often about the English language in general and spelling reform in particular and his writings have been collected in a work entitled Shaw on Language, edited by Dr. Abraham Tauber (1963), with a foreword by Sir James Pitman. This work is a compilation of scores of letters, speeches, and excerpts from Shaw's many works. Shaw's popular play Pygmalion, from which was drawn the musical My Fair Lady, contains many pleas for spelling reform, according to Tauber. It was Shaw who attempted to demonstrate the absurdity of English spelling by writing that FISH should be spelled GHOTI (the GH from enough, O from women, TI from solution.) Also

contained in this book is a brief history of the development of the Shavian Alphabet. This alphabet was created after the death of Shaw, according to the principles laid down in Shaw's Will.

Jown A. Downing was a prolific and vocal supporter of the i.t.a. and one of his works is entitled The Initial Teaching Alphabet Reading Experiment (1964). This work contains a history of the formulation of the i.t.a. and cites research dealing with the implementation of the i.t.a. within the schools and its relative effectiveness in teaching beginning reading as opposed to t.o. (traditional orthography). Downing stressed the fact that the i.t.a. was neither a phonetic alphabet nor an attempt to reform English spelling. A major purpose of the i.t.a. was to prepare readers to cope effectively with reading and writing in the traditional orthography. Examples of works produced in the i.t.a. are reproduced and numerous questions concerning the system are addressed. Downing's work is most notable in that it represents the first of a number of books seeking to popularize the i.t.a. among educators and the general public.

W. Haas, in his work Alphabets for English (1969) presented a number of papers on the broad topic of English orthographic reform. The first, written by Haas himself, is entitled "On spelling and spelling reform." It is a very well-informed and well-formulated survey of the work done in the field of spelling reform. The second paper is by Sir James Pitman and presents the reader with a brief examination of the Initial Teaching Alphabet. The next paper is by

Axel Wijk and deals with his attempt to "regularize English" (see below). P.A.D. McCarthy is the next contributor with his "New Spelling with Old Letters." The basic idea of this system, worked out by the Simplified Spelling Society in Great Britain, is the systematic registration in writing of each phoneme by one and the same grapheme or graphemic group. This system is known as "New Spelling." The fourth paper, "The Bernard Shaw Alphabet," also by McCarthy, details the history of the alphabetic script awarded the chief prize in the competition organized in Great Britain in conformity with G.B. Shaw's will.

McCarthy informs us that Shaw was obsessed with the idea of liberating written English from "the unhappy legacy from Rome," i.e. from the Roman alphabet and its inconsistent use in English, and he bequeathed a large sum of money to be used for the construction of an alphabetic script to be used for English. McCarthy writes of the competition, in which he served as a judge, and of the subsequent printing in this new alphabet of Shaw's Androcles and the Lion (1962). This work is especially worthy of note in that its contributors are well-known in the field of spelling reform and were first-hand witnesses to various attempts to reform English orthography which took place in Great Britain since World War Two.

Reform proposals for English spelling are not the exclusive domain of native English-speakers, as the Swedish Axel Wijk demonstrates. In his Regularized English, Regularized English (1977), Wijk presented "a

proposal for an effective solution of the reading problem in the English-speaking countries." Basically, Wijk proposed a phonetic spelling for English using the traditional alphabet. He "regularized" English by discarding all irregular ways of writing phonemes or phonemic groups. Since there is often more than one way of writing a certain phonic fact, Wijk's scheme is able to preserve an important asset of traditional spelling, that is, to differentiate homophones by spelling them differently. Thus, Wijk argued, we can still distinguish BLUE from BLEW. Wijk's work has been cited by a number of others prominent in the spelling reform movement, some of whom argue that Wijk's "regularization" of English is the most practicable of the recent reform proposals.

The Deseret Alphabet

The most thorough, extensive, and scholarly treatment of the Deseret Alphabet yet published is Samuel Christian Monson's thesis, The Deseret Alphabet (1947). The history of the Alphabet, the reasons for its creation, as well as the causes of its abandonment, are detailed. This study is rich in detail and many primary sources are identified and utilized. His thesis does not, however, deal with the Alphabet as an educational entity, if it was taught, or by whom. Much of Monson's work on the Deseret Alphabet was incorporated in his later dissertation Representative American Phonetic Alphabets (1954). The latter study presents a history of the most well-known American phonetic alphabets,

their creators, and the degree of their usage.

Larry Wintersteen has also produced a thesis entitled The Deseret Alphabet. (1970). While it is largely a reiteration of previously published materials on the Deseret Alphabet, and relies too heavily upon secondary sources (three-fourths of Wintersteen's citations are from secondary sources), it is notable in that Wintersteen includes a number of interviews with people who remember being taught reading using the Alphabet or know of those who were. While not particularly well written, and frequently inaccurate in his citations of primary sources (over 50% of his Deseret News citations, for example, were inaccurate), his usage of oral history makes this work unique in the field.

Floris Springer Olsen's thesis is entitled Early Nineteenth Century Shorthand Systems and Possible Similarities Between Any of Them and the Deseret Alphabet (1952). In it, she examined the history of the Deseret Alphabet and compares it with various shorthand systems in terms of similarities of characters, sounds which the characters represent, and manners in which the systems operated.

Another scholarly examination of the Deseret Alphabet has been undertaken by William V. Nash in his research paper, "The Deseret Alphabet" (1957). In it, Nash presented the history of the Alphabet, characteristics of the symbols, source of the Deseret characters, as well as the use of the Alphabet. This paper is rich in detail and contains an excellent bibliography of original sources.

Juanita Brooks has also written an erudite article entitled "The Deseret Alphabet." Appearing in the Utah Historical Quarterly in 1944, her examination of the Alphabet has been cited often by other writers in their works on the Deseret Alphabet.

Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Flack (1958) have written the most thorough and comprehensive biography of George D. Watt yet undertaken, England's First "Mormon" Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt. Though apologetic in tone, Stringham and Flack present the reader with a view of Watt's early life and introduction to the Pitman Phonotype, his conversion to Mormonism, and his labors as a recorder of the sermons of early Church leaders. An entire chapter is devoted to Watt's central role in the development and early dissemination of the Deseret Alphabet. This book was written for Watt's many descendants and is by no means a critical examination of the man or his work.

Scores of other articles have appeared both in scholarly journals and popular magazines, as well as in L.D.S. Church publications. It has also been given brief mention in many histories of Utah and the Mormons, as well as in the biographies of a number of early Church leaders. Descriptions of the Alphabet have also appeared in the writings of a number of travelers who came to the early Utah Territory and later reported their adventures.

Reasons for Non-acceptance
of Orthographic Reform

Spelling for the Millions (1977) by Edna L. Furness is more a book

on how to improve your spelling than on spelling reform, but it does deal with the need for spelling reform and what we can do until such reform is effected. Philip T. Smith's article, "In Defence of Conservatism in English Orthography" (1980), is one example of the many arguments which have been used against spelling reform. Smith's basic premise is that traditional English orthography provides the reader with many kinds of linguistic clues which aid in comprehension and word identification. He stated that there is evidence from a variety of psycholinguistic tasks which shows that both adults and children exploit this information and allows them to read more easily. He also argued that a fast and effective writing system need not stay close to the phonemic details of speech.

Finally, a short story on spelling reform "Meihem In Ce Klasrum" (Mayhem in the Classroom) by Dolton Edwards (1952) has been published in The Astounding Science Fiction Anthology. This story dealt with the "history" of the reformation of English orthography from the time the President of the United States inaugurated National Easy Language Week in 1946 to the ultimate simplification of spelling by the year 1975. It is an imaginative and amusing view of what would happen to a world in which spelling had been simplified.

Definitions

(Note: These definitions have been taken from A Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms published by the International Reading Association

(Harris & Hodges, 1981). The only exceptions are the definitions of "Deseret," "Gentile," and "Mormon.")

Alphabetic writing -a writing system in which one or several letters represents one speech sound or phoneme, but not a syllable, morpheme, or word.

Analphabetic -not alphabetic; using a system other than our Roman alphabet.

Augmented alphabet -any number of expanded English alphabets designed to make spelling and reading easier by the addition of letters so that each grapheme represents a different phoneme of the spoken language.

Color coding -the use of color cues to indicate the relationship between specific letters or graphemes and the sounds they represent.

Decode -to change communication signals into messages; especially, to get the intended meaning from an analysis of the spoken or graphic symbols of a familiar language. Note: to learn to read, one must learn the conventional code in which something is written in order to decode the written message. In reading practice, the term is used primarily to refer to word identification rather than to higher units of meaning.

Deseret -A Book of Mormon term meaning "honeybee." The symbolism of the industriousness of the bee and the unity of the hive was selected by Brigham Young as an ensample for the Latter-day Saints. Even in modern-day Utah, variations on the bee and the hive are found on the state flag and the state seal, and the bee is the Utah state insect.

Deseret is also a common term in present-day Utah, with a bank, a mortuary, a pharmaceutical company, and a chain of second-hand thrift stores each having "Deseret" in their names.

Diacritic or Diacritic (-al) mark -a mark added to a grapheme to indicate a specific pronunciation. Note: Diacritic marks are generally used to augment an alphabet so that a unique symbol is available for each speech sound or phoneme in a particular language.

Digraph -two letters which represent one speech sound, as ch for /ch/ in chin.

Encode -to change a message into symbols.

Etymology -the study of the origins and development of the structure and meanings of words.

Gentile -the Mormon term for people not of their faith.

Grapheme -a written or printed orthographic representation of a phoneme, as b and oy for /b/ and /oi/ for boy. Note: In English, a grapheme may be a single alphabet letter or a group of letters as in boy above, and includes all of the ways in which it may be written or printed.

Grapheme-phoneme correspondence -the relationship between a grapheme and the phoneme(s) it represents; letter-sound correspondence. Note: technically, grapheme-phoneme correspondence refers to letter-to-sound correspondence, not vice-versa.

Homograph -a word with the same spelling as another word, whether or not pronounced alike, as pen (a writing instrument) vs. pen (an

enclosure,) or bow (and arrow) vs. bow (of a ship.)

Homophone -technically, a word with the same pronunciation as another word, whether or not spelled alike, as hair and hare , or scale (of a fish) and scale (a ladder.)

Lexicography -dictionary making, as writing, editing, compiling a dictionary.

Linguistics -the study of the nature and structure of language and languages; the study of the nature of language communication.

Mormon -common nickname for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or for the Church itself. It comes from the title of the L.D.S. book of scripture, The Book of Mormon.

Orthography -the study of the nature and use of symbols in a writing system; a writing system, generally, one in which the speech sounds of a language are represented by alphabetic characters.

Phoneme -a minimal linguistic unit in spoken language whose replacement can result in a meaning difference, as /p/ , /b/ in pin and bin.

Phoneme-grapheme correspondence - the relationship between a phoneme and its graphemic representation(s), as /s/, spelled s in sit, c in city, and ss in grass. Note: technically, phoneme-grapheme correspondence refers to sound-to-letter correspondence, not vice-versa.

Phonemic alphabet -a writing system with a predominant one-to-one correspondence of phonemes with graphemes, and in which other correspondences are predictable by simple rules.

Phonetic alphabet -an alphabet containing a distinctive alphabetic character for each distinguishable speech sound, or phone, of a language.

Phonetics -the scientific study of speech sounds; specifically, their physical structure, production, transmission, and reception, as well as their transcription, analysis, and classification.

Phonetic spelling -the respelling of entry words in a dictionary or glossary according to a pronunciation key; incorrect spelling of a word as though it were phonetically regular.

Phonology -the study of speech sounds and their functions in a language or languages.

Rebus -the use of a picture or symbol that suggests a word or a syllable.

Spelling -the process of representing language by means of a writing system, or orthography.

Spelling reform -an individual or organized effort to simplify an orthography, generally one based on a correspondence of phonemes and graphemes so that spelling conforms to pronunciation, and vice-versa.

Syllabary -a list of syllables, or the characters representing syllables.

Transliterate -to represent or spell (words, letters, or characters of one language) in the letters or characters of another language or alphabet.

Organization of Chapters

This study is organized into chapters in the following manner:

1. Chapter one contains this dissertation proposal, including a statement of the problem and an introduction to the study.

2. Chapter two contains background information on the history of the English language. This gives a better understanding of the current structure, both written and spoken, of the English language. Also examined is the lack of phoneme-grapheme relationship which is the basis, spelling reformers argue, of the need for spelling reform.

3. Chapter three contains a history of various spelling reform proposals before 1789. This chapter also deals with various efforts to simplify spelling while retaining our traditional alphabet.

4. Chapter four examines various attempts to produce and popularize phonetic alphabets, including augmented alphabets that use the Roman alphabet as a base, and non-romanian alphabets.

5. Chapter five deals with the Deseret Alphabet as a case study of a reading/spelling curriculum using a non-romanian phonemic alphabet. An examination of the social and educational context of its formation, its creators and proponents, the extent of its acceptance and utilization, methods of instruction, reactions to it, and reasons for its abandonment, is undertaken. A look at the Deseret Alphabet as a linguistic entity, its strengths and shortcomings, is made. This chapter also determines whether or not the Alphabet met the objections

of our present orthography. The chapter on the Deseret Alphabet is not only descriptive, but interpretive in nature.

6. Chapter six examines the various reasons for the non-acceptance of orthographic reform, the "case" against spelling reform, the effects which reforms have had to date, and the future of orthographic simplification. Also in this chapter, recommendations of future directions for research are presented.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Dissatisfaction with the ability of children and adults to spell correctly has been a persistent concern since at least the thirteenth century (Ebel, 1969). The inconsistencies of English orthography elicited E.O. Vaile (1901) to call English spelling "accursed." Lounsbury (1909, p. 47) wrote that no other spelling in the world is "by any means so wretched as ours." Monroe (1915, p. 393) wrote that "English spelling is recognized to be worse than that of any other modern language..." The noted linguist and author, Mario Pei (1965), has written:

English spelling is by far the worst, the most inconsistent, of all spellings on earth...(p. 432).

English spelling, as has been frequently pointed out by G.B. Shaw, Senator Robert Owen, and others, is a monument to traditionalism so weird as to be practically incredible. We have only five written vowels but at least thirteen vowel sounds, plus some thirty vowel combinations, or diphthongs...A group like ou appears with a different phonetic value in each of these words: "house," "cough," "cousin," "through," "furlough," "could."

The process of learning to spell is an endless one, continuing through elementary school, high school, and college, and often not quite completed by the time the English-speaking student emerges with a university degree. In this one respect, English is a tongue of infinite difficulty, far harder than any of its kindred Indo-European languages (pp. 303-304).

The first objective of this study is to present a brief history of the English language in order to provide the reader with a background

into the perceived problems inherent within English orthography, what they are and how they came to be. This will give a better understanding of the current structure, both written and spoken, of the English language. Also examined is the lack of phoneme-grapheme correlation which are the basis, spelling reformers argue, of the need for spelling reform.

There have been many hundreds of scholarly and popular works written on the history of the English language. Thousands of articles, in both the professional and popular press, have been written. Our language has a rich, varied, and fascinating history. However, it is not the purpose of this study to present the history of our language to any extent; this has been done elsewhere. This chapter on the history of the English language is brief and focuses on the changes which have occurred over the centuries in our language, providing the reader with enough background to understand the reasoning behind spelling reform. For an in-depth study of the history of English, the reader is invited to peruse the works on the history of the English language and English spelling listed in the bibliography.

Monroe (1915) pointed out that in considering the principles of orthography we need to bear in mind the fact that words were spoken long before they were written down. "Even now the real life of the language lies in the spoken word rather than in the written page" (p. 391). Writing is a means of recording that which has an independent existence of its own. The object of writing is to give permanence to

the spoken word and to expand its influence.

English belongs to the family of about 100 Indo-European languages. From their original home, which is believed to have been somewhere in east-central Europe, the Indo-European peoples began to disperse about 3000 B.C., first to the south-east, then across all of Europe and into western Asia as far as India. The term "Indo-European" refers to the extent of the various tribes' migrations. After the tribes, of which we know very little, separated, each tribe's language developed in isolation. English is in the Germanic branch of Indo-European, together with Dutch, Frisian, Flemish, German, and the Scandinavian languages (Pei, 1965).

The first external influence on English came in pre-English times through contact on the continent between the Roman legions and the Germanic tribes. These tribes borrowed Latin words describing warfare, trade, and home life. Examples include the words street, wall, pound, butter, and bishop.

A second stage of borrowing from Latin occurred during the period when the Roman legions occupied Britain. During this time, from the beginning of the first century to the fifth century, Romans were in contact with the original Celtic inhabitants of Britain. Although Latin did not replace the Celtic languages, it did influence them. The place names of towns ending in -cester (Worcester), -caster (Lancaster), -wick (Southwick), and -wich (Sandwich) are continuing examples of Roman influence upon English (Deighton, 1971).

During the fifth century, invaders from the Danish peninsula, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, invaded Britain, driving the native Celts to the northern and western portions of Britain. From the Germanic invaders came some geographic names, such as London, Dover, York, and Thames. Germanic languages replaced the Celtic languages in what came to be known as Angle Land or Enga Land. Even today, in French, England is called Anglaterre. In Spanish, it is called Inglaterra. Both mean "land of the Angles."

A third stage of borrowing from Latin came after Christianity was systematically introduced into Britain, in 597 A.D., when a mission from Pope Gregory the Great, headed by Augustine, landed in Kent. Christian influence brought about a significant change in Anglo-Saxon life, and they borrowed a large number of Latin religious, domestic, and educational words. These include candle, hymn, nun, monk, priest, temple, cap, school, and grammar (Deighton, 1971).

In the ninth century came the invasions of the Scandinavians, or Vikings, who conquered the northeastern half of England. These invaders spoke various dialects of Old Norse; like Old English, it was a Germanic language, and many common nouns and verbs were introduced by them. These include law, husband, egg, give, and take. Also adopted into standard English were the pronouns they, their, and them. With the assimilation of Scandinavian influences into English, the period of Old English, A.D. 450 to 1066, came to a close (Francis, 1963).

The Norman conquest of 1066 was the beginning of the Middle English period, during which the vocabulary and word-forming processes of English were significantly affected. William of Normandy's conquest was a military, political, and cultural one, and until about 1200 the language of the conquerors prevailed over English, which was relegated to a position of little prestige. The Normans were a rich, powerful, and refined class, and French became the language of the court and of commerce. Even those whose native speech was English, if they desired to assume a position in the upper classes, had to learn French early. Only the ordinary people continued to use English freely and exclusively. Although these masses lacked wealth and power, their very numbers forced bilingualism upon their superiors. French was the last foreign influence on English before the Renaissance.

The works of Geoffrey Chaucer, and to a lesser extent, John Wyclif's translation of the Bible into English, brought Middle English to its peak, which period ended about 1450. The Late Middle English period saw the beginning of what is known as the Great Vowel Shift, considered the most significant change in pronunciation in the language's history. Nist (cited in Deighton, 1971, p. 369) has classified the Great Vowel Shift as "a major dislocation [in] the pronunciation of the English language." The pronunciation of vowels changed markedly. At the same time, a number of consonants and consonant clusters either changed their pronunciation or became silent. Thus Chaucer's boot was pronounced like our boat, and his bleed like

our blade. Other phonological changes took place in English during this time, thus the /gh/ in laughter changed from /x/ to /f,/ and the /k/ in knee became silent.

Nist (cited in Deighton, 1971, p. 370) has illustrated the major changes in phonology that resulted from the Great Vowel Shift. Several words common to both Middle and Modern English and their corresponding present-day rhymes are presented below:

COMMON WORD	MIDDLE ENGLISH	MODERN ENGLISH
house	goose	louse
bite	sweet	light
blood	road	mud
meat	fate	sweet
fly	sea	sigh
debate	pot	eight
love	groove	of
rout	cute	pout
wait	height	late
blow	sue	so

"The present-day result of these influences is that of all the leading languages on earth, English is notoriously the worst speller--that is, its written system corresponds poorly with its spoken" (Deighton, 1971, p. 370).

While English was undergoing the Great Vowel Shift, the Early Modern Period of English began with the publication by William Caxton of the first book printed in England in 1476. During this time, the rediscovery of Greek and Roman history, philosophy, and literature brought many new words into English. Italian, Spanish, German, and Dutch words were also absorbed into English, and French words continued

to enter during the Renaissance period.

As England established an empire, and later America spread its interests throughout the world, many languages influenced English. Among these influences are Arabic (algebra, alcohol), some of the languages of India (thug, bungalow), Chinese and Japanese (tea, chop), Australian (kangaroo), Malay (taboo, gong), Hungarian (paprika), Afrikaans (trek, spoor), and Native American (tepee, papoose). This borrowing of foreign words has contributed to the inconsistencies of English spelling because the pronunciations of many foreign words have been anglicized without a corresponding graphemic change. Monroe (1915) has written:

Inconsistency is introduced when words are borrowed from foreign tongues, since they sometimes bring with them the spelling they had in the language in which they were born, a language which had its own system of symbols satisfactory to itself but not likely to be identical with the system of the other language into which the new word is adopted; and the orthographic confusion is made worse when some of the imported words are allowed to retain their original symbols and others are respelt in accordance with native usage (p. 392).

Modern English spelling is historically related to the emergence of the Phoenician alphabet (about 1000 B.C.) and its subsequent refinement in Greek (900 B.C.) and Latin (600 B.C.). From Italy the Latin alphabet passed, in the course of Roman conquest, to Gaul and Britain. The present English alphabet owes much to Anglo-Saxon scribes—mostly monks and religious clerics—who drew together the alphabet of Old English. It was with the coming of the Christian missionaries that the continuous history of English orthography began

(Scragg, 1974). They used what Latin graphemes they could, borrowed some from the older runic alphabet, and invented some. The result was an alphabetic system that came very close to being isomorphic, that is, achieving a one-to-one sound-spelling correspondence. During the period of Old English, those who could write, spelled the language with a high degree of spelling accuracy.

Following the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066, an increasing divergence between the signs of the alphabet and the sounds they represent took place. First of all, the English language was suppressed and for more than two centuries the official language of the English court was French. At the same time the language of the British peasant was being driven underground, English was being deluged with a vast influx of loan words, at first from French, then from the other Romance languages, and from Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Still other factors, such as learned restoration (the desire on the part of some lexicographers to show the etymologic origins of words), spelling pronunciation, and transliteration from Greek to Latin, also contributed to the growing confusion in English spelling. These factors, respectively, gave English the silent b in doubt and debt, the k represented by c in perfect, and the unnecessary h in rhyme and rhythm.

Finally, to make matters worse, printers of the Early Modern English Period helped codify and systematize the orthography of the language at a time when it was undergoing spectacular changes in

pronunciation. Unfortunately, many of the spellings of words which early printers introduced were either the result of that which was most convenient for the printer, or else were downright errors. For example, many spellings in the first King James Bible of 1611 were inconsistent, the preferred spelling being that which suited the spacing (Scragg, 1974).

By 1700 the stabilization of English spelling was complete. Relatively few changes have taken place in spelling since that time, and have affected comparatively few words. (See Figure 1 for a representation of the changes and eventual standardization of English spelling.) The major exceptions to this, however, were the changes introduced by Noah Webster. In his patriotic zeal to produce a peculiarly American language, Webster simplified the spellings of many words, dropping the silent u in honour and colour, the k in publick and musick, and the use of s instead of c in defense. Webster's Blue-backed Spellers, and his later dictionary, have had great influence in determining American spelling and were the chief cause of the divergence of British and American orthography.

Thus, while the pronunciation of English has changed extensively since Caxton's first printing in 1476, the writing system has changed comparatively little. This freezing of English spelling according to the conventions of the fifteenth century in spite of subsequent changes in pronunciation is one of the principal causes of the difficulties and inconsistencies of modern English spelling.

Figure 1. Extracts from the first eight verses of the Gospel of John in six early English Bibles.

WYCLIFFE—1380

1. IN the bigynnyng was the word and the word was at god; and god was the word; 2. this was in the bigynnyng at god; 3. alle thingis weren made bi hym; and withouten hym was made no thing. that thing that was made 4. in him was liif, and the liif was the ligt of men; 5. and the ligt schyneth in derknessis; and derknessis comprehendid not it. 6. A man was sente fro god to whom the name was Ion; 7. this man cam in to witnessyng, that he schulde bere witnessyng of the ligt, that alle men schulden bilue bi hym; 8. he was not the ligt, but that he schulde bere witnessyng of the ligt.

CRANMER—1539

1. IN the begynnyng was the worde, and the worde was wyth God; and God was the worde. 2. The same was in the begynnyng with God. 3. All thynges were made by it, and without it, was made no-thinge that was made. 4. In it was lyfe, and the lyfe was the lyght of men, 5. and the lyght shyneth in darcknes, and the darcknes comprehended it not. 6. There was sent from God a man, whose name was Iohn. 7. The same cam as a wytnes to beare wytnes of the lyght, that all men through hym myght beleue. 8. He was not that lyght; but was sent to beare wytnes of the lyght.

RHEIMS—1582

1. IN the beginning vvas the WORD, and the WORD vvas vwith God, and God vvas the WORD. 2. This vvas in the begin-ning vwith God. 3. Al things vvere made by him; and vwithout him vvas made nothing. That vwhich vvas made, 4. in him vvas life, and the life vvas the light of men; 5. and the light shineth in darke-nesse, and the darknesse did not compre-hend it. 6. There vvas a man sent from God, vwhose name vvas Iohn. 7. This man came for testimonie: to giue testimonie of the light, that al might beleue through him. 8. He vvas not the light, but to giue testimonie of the light.

TYNDALE—1534

1. IN the begynnyng was the worde; and the worde was with God; and the worde was God. 2. The same was in the begynnyng with God. 3. All thinges were made by it; and with out it; was made nothinge; that was made. 4. In it was lyfe; and the lyfe was the lyght of men; 5. and the lyght shyneth in the darcknes; but the darcknes comprehended it not. 6. There was a man sent from God; whose name was Iohn. 7. The same cam as a wytnes to beare wytnes of the lyght; that all men through him myght beleue. 8. He was not that lyght; but to beare wytnes of the lyght.

GENEVA—1557

1. IN the begynnyng was the word, and the worde was with God, and that worde was God. 2. The same was in the begynnyng with God. 3. Althinges were made by it, and without it was made nothing that was made. 4. In it was lyfe, and the lyfe was the light of men. 5. And the light shineth in darknes, and the darknes comprehended it not. 6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was Iohn. 7. The same came for a wytnes, to beare wytnes of the light, that all men through hym might beleue. 8. He was not that light, but was sent to beare wytnes of the light.

AUTHORIZED—1611

1. IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. The same was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5. And the light shineth in darknes, and the darknes comprehended it not. 6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was Iohn. 7. The same came for a witness, to beare witness of the light, that all men through him might beleue. 8. He was not that light, but was sent to beare witness of that light.

Note. From Alphabets and Reading (p. 68) by J. Pitman and J.

St. John, 1969, London: Pitman Publishing Association.

In short, Pitman and St. John (1969) have identified the sources of confusion and inconsistency inherent within English spelling:

- 1) The etymological origins of words, the blending of different tongues that gave rise to the English language, and the continual assimilation of foreign words.
- 2) Changes in pronunciation that made the original phonemic representations of words anachronistic.
- 3) The individual, and often mistaken, preferences of printers and dictionary makers (p. 62).

Thus, today, the forty plus phonemes of the English language are represented by 251 spellings (Pei, 1965). A single letter or group of letters may stand for many different sounds. For example, /ough/ takes on many sounds, as in cough, hiccough, though, through, bough, dough, and rough. Conversely, many sounds may be represented by the same letter or combination of letters. The multitude of English orthographic anomalies may be seen in the fact that the /sh/ sound has fifteen possible spellings or in the many ways of representing the sound in /i/ (such as eye, aye, aisle, isle, assign, phial, indict, choir, quire, dye, die, style, rhinoceros, rheinberry, rhinestone, rhyme, buy, by, beguile, seismic, life, height, hi, and sigh). To make matters worse, the unaccented vowel, or schwa, sound, found in 60% of all English words, is not represented by a single letter or symbol, but can be spelled 36 different ways. Further examples of English orthographic irregularities are included in Chapter I of this work.

The result of all this can be summed up in the words of a nineteenth century American schoolmaster who wrote:

Our children spell their way laboriously, carefully, tearfully, many times, through the eight grades of the primary and grammar schools, completing something every here and there, but never the spelling. Entering the High Schools, they find it there in every year of the course—twelve years for the course in spelling—spelling everywhere and everywhen; spelling oral and written; spelling singly and in classes; spelling solo and in concert; spelling from card and from speller; spelling from readers First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth; spelling from text-books in arithmetic, grammar, geography, and history; and, in addition to all this, long lists of selected words are placed upon the blackboards for no other purpose than that their spelling may be memorized. Then after leaving school, there must needs be...further study in the orthographic art (cited in Scragg, 1974, p. 92).

CHAPTER III
SIMPLIFIED SPELLING

Introduction

This chapter examines orthographic reform schemes, past and present, to simplify the spelling of English words. These attempts seek to phoneticize the spelling of English words by deleting silent letters and double letters and by generally assigning one sound to one letter or groups of letters. In simplified spelling, there are no attempts to add any additional characters or marks to either the alphabet or individual words. The first part of this chapter deals with attempts to reform English spelling before 1789, the year Noah Webster published his Dissertations on the English Language. The early reform proposals examined in this chapter include both attempts to simplify spelling and to popularize phonemic alphabets.

Following this examination of early proposals to reform English orthography, later attempts to simplify the spelling of English words are presented in this order:

1. Noah Webster's American Spelling
2. Benn Pitman's Solution
3. Alexander J. Ellis' Glossic
4. The Principles of '76 and the SRA
5. The Simplified Spelling Board

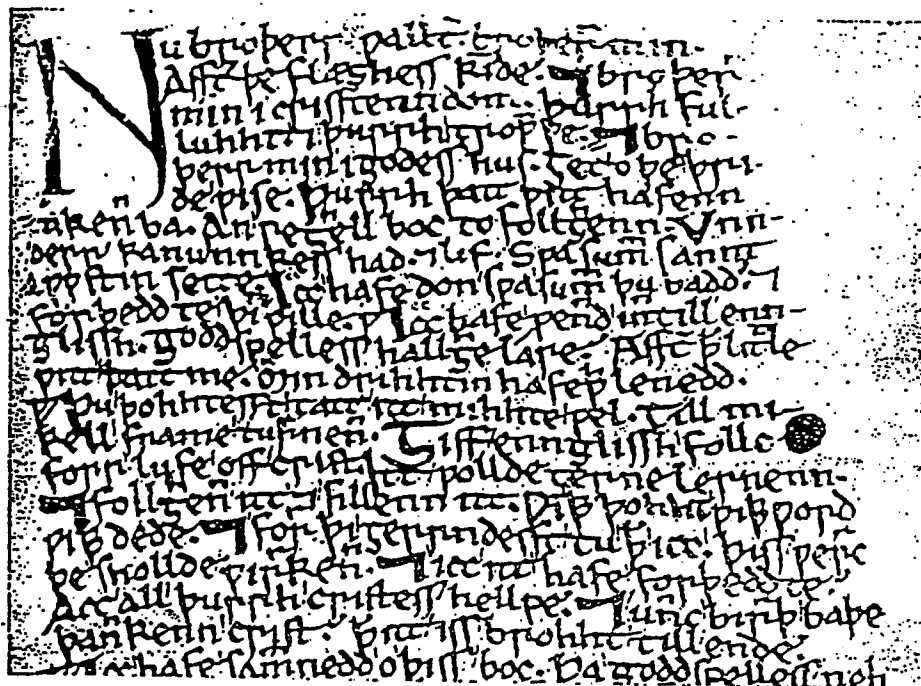
6. Frederick C. Wingfield's Fwnetic Orthqgrafi
7. Robert E. Zachrisson's Anglic
8. Nue Spelling
9. Axel Wijk's Regularized English
10. Frank C. Laubach's English the New Way
11. Godfrey Dewey's World English Spelling
12. The Spelling Action Society's SR1

(Note: Archaic and non-traditional [reformed] spellings which appear in the original documents have been retained in this chapter.)

Early Attempts at Spelling Reform

The first spelling reformer of whom we have record was an English Augustinian monk named Orm (or Ormin) who lived during the twelfth century. He composed the Ormulum, a religious poem paraphrasing the Scriptures which was "designed to improve both men and their orthography" (Tauber, 1958, p. 11). The chief difficulty then encountered with Middle English orthography was distinguishing between long vowel sounds and short ones. Orm proposed to solve this by doubling the consonants following the short vowel sounds. Thus, fire was to have been spelled fir; and fir, firr (See Figure 2 for an example of Orm's work). His proposal to revise and rationalize English orthography got no support, and his manuscript lay in obscurity until it was exhumed by nineteenth century philologists and spelling reformers (Mencken, 1945).

Figure 2. A specimen of Orm's orthography as found in the Ormulum.



Transliteration of the first twelve lines of the manuscript:

Nu broper^r walll. broper^r min.
 Afft þe flashess kide. 7 broper^r
 min i cristennom. þurh ful-
 luhht. 7 þurh trow^{pe}. 7 bro-
 per^r min i Godess hus. 7 ec o þe pri-
 de wise. Þurh þatt witt hafenn
 tåken^a ba. An re3^bell boc to foll^benn. Vnn-
 derr kanunnkess had. 7 lif. Swa sum^m sannt
 Awwstin sette! Icc hafe don swa sum^m þu hadd. 7
 forþedd te þi^a wille. 7 Icc hafe wen^d in^{till} enn-
 3lish. Goddspellless hall³c lare! Afft þ lit^{le}
 witt tatt^a me. Min drihtin hafe^þ lenedd.

^a altered from þatt

Translation:

Now brother Walter, my brother
 by way of nature, and my brother
 in Christianity, through
 baptism and through faith, and
 even in the third way my brother in
 God's house, in that we have
 both undertaken to follow the Rule
 for the state and life of a canon that St
 Augustine laid down. I have done as you asked, and
 carried out your wishes. I have turned into
 English the holy teaching of the Gospel by means of
 the little wit that my Lord has granted me.

Note. From A History of English Spelling (p.29) by D.G.

Scragg, 1974, New York: Barnes and Noble.

G.H. Vallins (1954) stated that although Orm's design bears little resemblance to modern spelling reform proposals, the monk nevertheless recognized two principles that underlie all reform designs which followed him, namely: "that consistency, and the perfect correspondence of sound and symbol - that is, the use of one symbol to represent one sound and one sound only - was the chief necessity....Though no poet, in the realm of spelling he was a notable pioneer" (pp. 91-92).

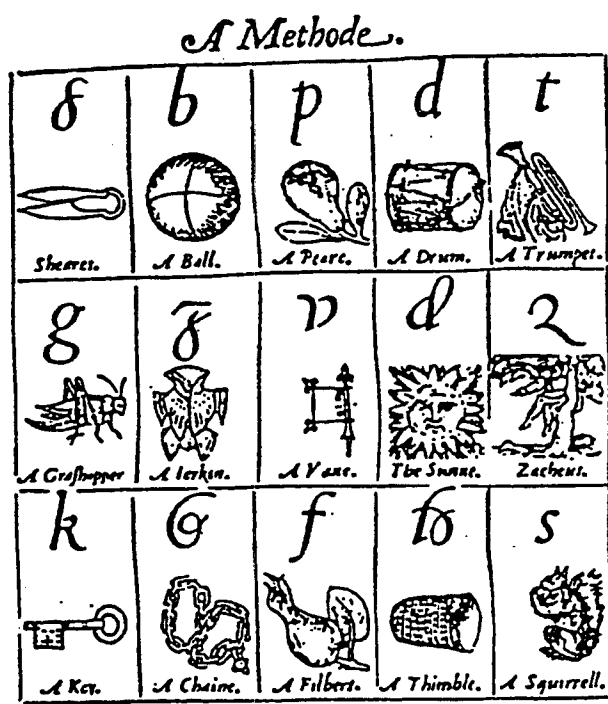
Orm was followed three and a half centuries later by Sir John Cheke, a professor of Greek at Cambridge University. Cheke proposed to discard the useless final e (as in give) and to differentiate between short and long vowel sounds by doubling the latter. In favor of a "clean and pure" English, he opposed the use of loanwords, as well as the use of silent consonants, for example, the b in doubt. As part of his attempt to reform English spelling, Cheke prepared his translation of the Four Gospels using his simplified spelling. This manuscript was not published during Cheke's lifetime, but it circulated in manuscript form and influenced a number of other scholars (Pitman & St. John, 1969).

In 1551, another attempt to create a more phonetic writing system was made by John Hart, author of The Opening of the Unreasonable Writing of our English Toung: Wherein is Shewed What Necessarili is to be Left, and What Folved for the Perfect Writing Thereof (Iles, 1965). This work remained in manuscript, and was not published during Hart's

lifetime, but in 1569 he published a revised version of this manuscript in which he explained and defended his system, entitled An Orthographie, Conteyning the Due Order and Reason, Howe to Write or Painte Thimage of Mannes Voice, Most Like to the Life or Nature. The main difference between the manuscript and the Orthographie is that the latter contained extensive passages of transcription in Hart's phonetic system. Hoping to reform English orthography on a strictly phonetic basis, he used new letters for such combinations as sh, ch, th, and dg. In addition, Hart placed diacritical marks under the vowels. In 1570, he elaborated his system in A Method or Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned, Whereby They May Bee Taught to Read English, in a very short time, vvith pleasure (Tauber, 1958; Mencken, 1945). In this work, Hart defends his use of additional characters, arguing "...nor is any man bounde to the shape of this or that letter, but that which is easiest to be written, and best giueth the Reader the vnderstanding of the writers meaning, and is most easiest to be taught, to the ignorant of all letters." In an effort to demonstrate the effectiveness of his system, Hart described how,

As by the way of pastime, I haue done from a Welshman's mouth, though I vnderstood no worde thereof, and did reade it againe to him, and diuers others of that language, so as one amongst them (which knew me not) sayde vnto the rest in Welsh, that I coulde speake Welsh so well as he. But the rest knowing the contrary, laughing tolde me what he sayde, whom I forthwith certified, that I did it, by an order and certaine knowledge what I did write, and not by any acquaintance with the tongue. The like haue I done to the Irishe, and may as easily doe of the Barbarian, or Russian speeches" (Hart, 1570, Preface. Cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 77 See Figure 3 for an example of Hart's system).

Figure 3. An illustration from John Hart's Method or Comfortable Beginning for All Unlearned, Whereby They May Bee Taught to Read English, in a very short time, vvith pleasure, 1570.



Note. From Readiness for Reading with i.t.a. and t.o. (p. 55)

by D.V. Thackray, 1971, London: Geoffrey Chapman.

In 1568, one of Cheke's disciples, Sir Thomas Smith, a Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth I, published a Latin tract entitled De Recta et Emendata Linguae Anglicae Scriptione (See Figure 4). Written as a series of dialogues, it proposed English orthographic reform by means of a thirty-four letter alphabet (the Alphabetum Anglicum) and a diacritical mark and accent system. Smith's system was the first of many phonemic alphabets proposed for English, as it was published a year before Hart's Orthographie (Pitman & St. John, 1969).

William Bullokar published a series of four books in "amended" spelling, the first of which was Booke At Large, for the Amendment of Orthographie for English Speech..., in 1580, "wherein, a most perfect supplie is made for the wantes and double sounde of letters in the olde Orthographie....for the easie, speedie, an perfect reading and writing of English, (the speech not changed, as some vntruly and maliciously, or at the lest ignorantlie blowe.abroade" (Bullokar, 1580, Preface. Cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 90. See Figure 5). As a teacher, Bullokar found that the lack of agreement between the sounds and spelling of English caused children a great deal of difficulty when they were trying to learn how to read. Out of this discrepancy grew "quarrels in the teacher, and lothsomnesse in the learner, and great payne to both; and the conclusion was, that both teacher and learner must go by rote, for no rule could be followed" (Bullokar, 1580, p. v). Bullokar wished to correct this situation by reforming English orthography and making spelling conform to pronunciation. Bullokar's

Figure 4. Title page of Sir Thomas Smith's De Recta et Emendata
Linguae Anglicae Scriptione, 1568.



Figure 5. Title page of William Bullokar's Booke at Large, 1580.



*Bullokar's Booke at large, for the Amēd-
ment of Orthographie for English speech: whercin,
a most perfect supplie is made, for the wantes and double
founde of letters in the olde Orthographie, with Examples for the
same, with the easie conferre and vse of both Orthographies,
so some expences in Bookes for a time, vntill this amēdment grow to a generall vse, for
the easie, speedie, and perfect reading and writing of English, (the speech noe
changed, as some vntruly and maliciously, or at the least ignorantlie blowe
abroade) by the which amēdemēte the same Authour hath also framed
a ruled Grammar, to be imprinted heereafter, for the same speech, to no
small commoditie of the English Nation, not only to come to easie, speedie, and
perfect vse of our owne language, but also to their easie, speedie, and readie
entrance into the secretes of oiker Languages, and easie and speedie
pathway to all Strangers, to vse our Language, heerebefore very
hard vnto them, to no small profite and credite to this our
Nation, and stay therevnto in the weightiest causes.
There is also imprinted with this Orthographie
a short Pamphlet for all-Learners, and a
Primer agreeing to the same, and as
learners shall go forward there-
in, other necessarie Bookes
shall speedily be prou-
ided with the same .
Orthographie.*

Heerevnto are also ioyned written Copies with
the same Orthographie.

Giue God the praise, that teacheth alwaies.

When truth trieth, error flieth.

Scerne and allowed according to order.

Imprinted at London by

Henrie Denham.

1580.

new orthography made use of thirty-seven symbols, accent marks, apostrophes, and hooks above and below letters (Tauber, 1958).

Bullokar published his books at his own expense, and considering that new type for his symbols needed to be cast, that expense was considerable. Before printing the book, he publicly presented his ideas in London and offered free samples of his writing system. Bullokar was eager to introduce his system into the classroom. For this purpose, he transliterated Aesops Fablz in tru Ortoigraphy with Grammar-nots and the Short Sentences of the Wys Cato from the Latin and had them published together in 1585. He also translated Cicero's Of Offices, but this work was not printed. Bullokar's plan for the reform of English included a dictionary and grammar book as well as the new writing system. He never did compile the dictionary, but in 1586 he published his Bref Grammar for English, the earliest surviving printed grammar of the English language (Pitman & St. John, 1969).

The most extensive treatise on English spelling of the sixteenth century was Richard Mulcaster's Elementarie, published in 1582 (Tauber, 1958). Concerned that "the right writing of our English tung" was "yet in question," Mulcaster encouraged modest changes in English orthography, usually the elimination of superfluous letters. He wrote that custom and common usage, as well as sound, form "the triumvirate in their gouernment of the pen," and, therefore, should govern spelling. Mulcaster also included a glossary of 7,000 words in his orthography in an appendix to his work (cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 91).

In approximately 1617, Alexander Hume wrote Of the Orthographie and Congruitie of the British Tongue: A Treatise, Noe Shorter Than Necessarie, for the Schooles. In it, Hume urged regulation of the uncertain and unpredictable orthographic situation, which situation he blamed on the printers. His own work, however, contained numerous spelling inconsistencies.

Dr. Alexander Gill, successor to Richard Mulcaster as High Master at St. Paul's, conceived the first spelling reform effort of the seventeenth century. It was an augmented alphabet of forty letters, presented in his Logonomia Anglica, published in 1618. Gill argued that English pronunciation should be determined by "the agreement of good men...and the practice of the learned." He went on, "Just as accomplished artists represent the appearance of the human face so that it resembles the living feature, so it should be proper to transcribe the sounds so that we do not misrepresent the true pronunciation in any way" (Gill, 1618, p. 87). Gill stated that the four major considerations of spelling are: (1) derivation; (2) difference; (3) accepted custom, and; (4) dialect (Tauber, 1958).

The influence of Gill can be found in the works of John Milton, who was a student at St. Paul's for four years. Following Gill's reasoning, Milton spelled prizner for prisoner, biznes for business, and fjer for fire. "The poet also wrote femal, facil, and apostat and avoided etymological spellings that conflicted with pronunciation,

writing: iland, sutle, sovrán, etc" (Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 78).

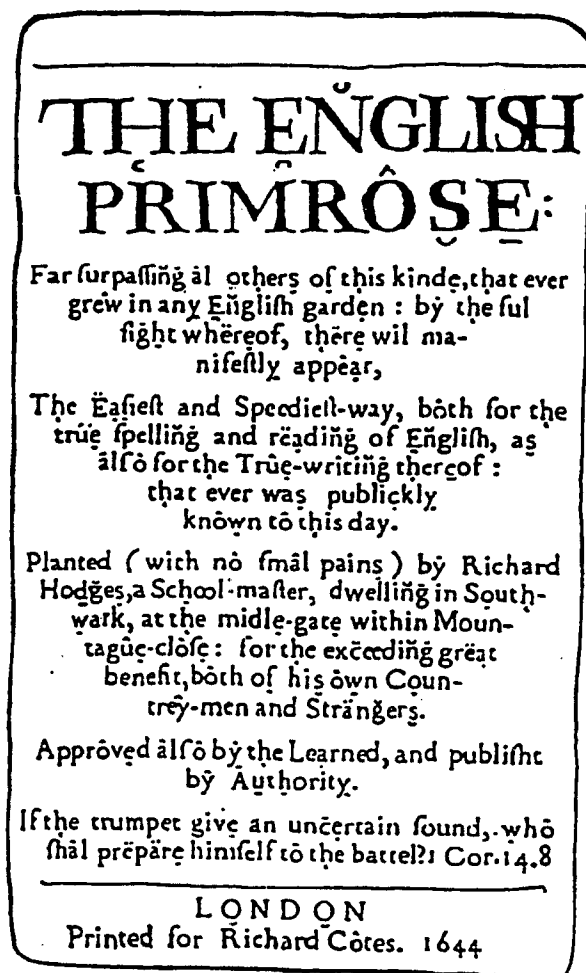
In 1644, Richard Hodges, a Southwark schoolmaster, published a spelling-book entitled The English Primrose (See Figure 6). Hodges, in the Preface to this work, declared it to be "Far surpassing al others of this kinde, that ever grew in any English garden....The Easiest and Speediest-way, both for the true spelling and reading of English, as also for the True-writing thereof: that was ever publicly known to this day." He further states that the Roman alphabet and English spelling made it impossible for learning to read to--

...bee pleasing to the Scholars. 'Tis most true, that they poor boys bee often chiden, rebuk't, knockt and whipt, when the fault is not in them, that they apprehend not what is taught, but in the uncertain, and perplext, and intricate expressing of our Tongue, by letters wrong named; and by their various sounds and forces attributed to them" (Hodges, 1644, Introduction. Cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 91).

Hodges' system involved a complex employment of diacritical markings and the elimination of most double consonants. He also complained about the redundancy of c and k in words like lack and luck but accepted that "for the present," one must bear with them (cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 91).

Oliver Cromwell's brother-in-law, the Bishop of Chester, the Reverend John Wilkins, produced An Essay Toward a Real Character and a Philosophical Language in 1668. In it, Wilkins sought to analyze the nature of the English language and reform its spelling by use of a 450-character phonetic alphabet (See Figure 7 for a specimen of Wilkins' orthography). The work contained many engravings showing the

Figure 6. Title page of Richard Hodges' The English Primrose, 1644.



Note. From Readiness for Reading with i.t.a. and t.o. (p. 55)

by D.V. Thackray, 1971, London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Figure 7. The Lord's Prayer and the Creed, written in the Reverend John Wilkins' proposed alphabet.

The Lords Prayer.

Yr fadher haitfi art in héven, halloëd bi dbyi nám, dhyi cingdyn cym, dhyi ill bi dyn, in erth az it iz in héven, giv ys dhis dai yr daili bred, and fergiv ys yr trespassez az vi fergiv dhem dhat trespas against ys, and led ys nat int temptacion, byt deliver ys fram evil, far dhyi iz dhe cingdim, dhe pyët and dhe glari, far ever and ever, Amen.

Yi biliv in God dhe fadher almyiti maker of héven and erth, and in Dzhesys Cryist hiz onli syn yr Lord, hve vaz cansèved byi dhe holi Gost, barn af dhe Virgin Mari, syffered ynder Pensiy: Pyilat, vaz crucified ded and byriëd. Hi descended into hel, dhe thyrd dai hi ros again fram dhe ded. Hi ascended into héven, hær hi sitteth at dhe ryit hand af Gød dhe fadher, fram hær hi shal cym to dzhydzh dhe caic and dhe ded. Yi biliv in dhe holi Gost, dhe holi catholic tshyrtth, dhe cammynion af Saints, dhe fergivnes af sinz, de resyrrection af dhe bady, and lyif everlasting. Amen.

Note. From A History of English Spelling (p. 100) by D.G. Scragg, 1974, New York: Barnes and Noble Books.

action of the palate and tongue to reflect the physiology involved in the production of speech sounds, but Wilkins' work apparently made no impression on his contemporaries (Mencken, 1945).

Ben Jonson's posthumous work, English grammar, published in 1640, sought to use the Roman alphabet exclusively to bring about moderate orthographic reform. Jonson's plan included the omission of the final double consonant (as in tell), the gh (as in light), and the redundant c (as in pickle). Although he expressed pessimism about the possibility of effecting even moderate reform, Jonson liberally included Greek and Latin quotations in his work for support.

In 1662, James Howells published Of Divers Superfluous Letters In The English Orthography, and Some Seleccions Discovered in the German Practice of the Language, A New English Grammar. Because foreigners "found such a difference betwixt the printed words and the pronouncing of them in English that they throw away their books," Howells proposed a spelling reform designed to make English "the more docible and easy to be learnt by Forreners" (Howells, 1662, p. 7). In order to make words shorter and more phonetic, he recommended: (1) the deletion of the u in words such as honour; (2) spelling logic, not logique; (3) the omission of ne in sinne, sunne, etc.; (4) the ending y and not ie, as in bodily; (5) eI instead of le as in tinkel; (6) the omission of silent final e, as in give and; (7) the omission of p in assumption, and i in parliament. In an "Advertisement" to Howells' work, he wrote:

Among other Reasons which make the English Language of so small Extent, and put Strangers out of Conceit to learn

it, one is, That we do not pronounce as we write: which proceeds from divers superfluous Letters that occur in many of our Words, which adds to the Difficulty of our Language. Therefore the Author hath taken Pains to retrench such redundant unnecessary Letters in this Work (though the Printer hath not been so careful as he should have been) as among multitudes of other Words may appear in these few, done, some, come: Which though we to whom the Speech is connatural, pronounce as monosyllables, yet when Strangers come to read them, they are apt to make them Dyssyllables, as do-ne, so-me, co-me: therefore such an 'e' is superfluous.

Moreover, those Words that have the Latin for the Original, the Author prefers that Orthography rather than the French, whereby divers Letters are spared, as Physic, Logic, Afric, not Physique, Logique, Afrique: Favor, Honor, Labor, not Favour, Honour, Labour, and very many more; as also he omits the Dutch 'k' in most Words; Here you shall read Peep^{le}, not Peo-ple, Tresure, not Treasure, Toung, not Tongue, &c. Parle^{ment}, not Parli^{ament}, Busines, Witnes, Sicknes, not Business, Witness, Sickness; Star, War, Far, not Starre, Warre, Farre, and Multitudes of such words, wherein the last two letters may well be spared. Here you shall also read Pit, Piety, Witty, not Piti-e, Pieti-e, Witti-e, as Strangers at first sight pronounce them, and abundance of such like words....(cited in Norton, 1907, p. 9).

Many of Howell's suggestions eventually found their way into our language, "without Literature receiving any violent shock" (Norton, 1907, p. 9).

Early English spelling reform was not without its opponents, as witnessed by Robert Clavell's Friendly Advice to the Correctour of the English Press At Oxford Concerning the English Orthographie, published in 1682. In it, the author condemned those who would "innovate our writing" and destroy the God-given purity of English spelling. Tracing the English language back to its origin at Babel, Clavell attacked phonetic spelling as "barbarous." Additionally, since spelling reform was never consented to by the King, it was obviously an act of

rebellion. Reformers even had the temerity to tamper with the orthography of the Bible. Clavell concluded that further changes in spelling would threaten the social order of the realm (Tauber, 1958, pp. 21-22).

Francis Bacon was another opponent of spelling reform, and wrote of it in his De Augmentic Scientiarium:

And with regard to the common orthography itself, a controversy and question has been raised among us, namely, whether words ought to be written as they are pronounced, or in the usual way. But this apparently reformed style of writing (viz., in which the spelling should agree with the pronunciation) belongs to the class of unprofitable subtleties. For the pronunciation itself is continually changing; it does not remain fixed; and the derivations of words, especially from foreign tongues, are thereby completely obscured. And as the spelling of words according to the fashion is no check at all upon the fashion of pronunciation, but leaves it free, to what purpose is this innovation? (cited in Booth, 1907, p. 79).

Jonathan Swift also attacked the "folly" of phonetic spelling in his Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue in 1712:

Not only the several Towns and Counties of England, have a different Way of pronouncing, but even here in London they clip their Words after one Manner about the Court, another in the City, and a third in the Suburbs; and in a few Years, it is probable, will all differ from themselves, as Fancy or Fashion shall direct: All which reduced to Writing, would entirely confound Orthography (cited in Scragg, 1974, p. 102).

Not to be deterred, in 1691, John Ray published A Note on the Errours of Our Alphabet. The last of the seventeenth century spelling reformers, Ray called attention to the lack of system in English spelling and suggested that plans be developed to deal with it, as well

as achieve consistency and uniformity of spelling throughout England.

The most outstanding work on spelling reform published during the first half of the eighteenth century was written by "G.W." (according to David Abercrombie, G.W. was probably John White, a Devon schoolmaster) in 1703 and carried the cumbersome title Magazine, or, Animadversions on the English Spelling; Observing The Contradictions of the English Letters Warring themselves against themselves, and one with another, by Intrusions and Usurpations; with Amendment offer'd For the Benefit of all Teachers and Learners, Writers and Readers, Composers and Scriveners, whether Strangers or Natives, who are concern'd with our English Tongue. The greater part of the pamphlet is taken up with expounding the illogicalities and inconsistencies of English spelling. In this work, G.W. presented his "compleat Alfebet" of 34 letters, as well as a considerable number of words and some complete text in his new spelling (G.W., 1703. Introduction by D. Abercrombie, 1958. See Figure 8).

In the year 1711, an unknown author penned The Needful Attempt, to Make Language and Divinity Plain and Easie (See Figure 9). Although designed to promote spelling reform, its main interest to current historians is the evidence it provides about the English pronunciation of the time.

The year 1755 saw the publication of Podromos: Or, Observations on the English Letters by Sayer Rudd, an English physician and cleric. Considered by historians to be an important treatise on English

Figure 8. Title page of G.W.'s Magazine, 1703.

MAGAZINE,

OR,

ANIMADVERSIONS

ON THE

English Spelling;

OBSERVING

The Contradictions of the English Letters
Warring themselves against themselves,
and one with another, by Intrusions and
Usurpations; with Amendment offer'd.

For the Benefit of all Teachers and Lear-
ners, Writers and Readers, Composers
and Scriveners, whether Strangers or
Natives, who are concern'd with our
English Tongue.

Nunquam sera est ad bonos mores via. Syntax.

By G. W.

LONDON: Printed for the Author. 1703.
Price Sixpence.

Figure 9. Title page of The Needful Attempt, 1711, author unknown

THE
Needful Attempt,
 TO MAKE
 LANGUAGE
 AND
 DIVINITY
 Plain and Easie.

Exterorum gratiâ (si qui fortè inspexerint)
 paucula quædam, paginarum quartæ,
 & quintæ, latinè redduntur; quæ præci-
 pue usûs catholici censentur.

L O N D O N :

Printed, and are Sold by T. Morphett near
 Stationers-Hall; and W. Smith Bookseller
 in Cambridge. 1711.

spelling and pronunciation, it was written as an attempt to simplify English orthography (See Figure 10).

The greatest blow to spelling reform, according to many proponents of change (Dewey, 1971; Lounsbury, 1909; Vaile, 1901), came in 1755 with the publication of Samuel Johnson's magnum opus, A Dictionary of the English Language. While the standardization and stabilization of "correct" spelling was not Johnson's main goal in preparing the dictionary, his work ratified customary usage, rather than supported change. Johnson, in an attempt to apply the principles of etymology in spelling, placed the silent b in debt, and mistakenly added the k to musick and publick. Not only was Johnson's scholarship sometimes faulty, it was also inconsistent, as when he recommended such contradictory pairs as deceit and receipt, moveable and immovable, sliness and slyly, and deign and disdain. Johnson did not think that phonetic considerations should outweigh all others in spelling, and, as he stated in the Preface to his Dictionary:

Thus have I laboured, by settling the orthography...to perform all the parts of a faithful lexicographer. In this part of the work, where caprice has long wanted, I have endeavored to proceed with a scholar's reverence for antiquity, and a grammarian's regard to the genius of our tongue. I have attempted few alterations and among those few, perhaps the greater part is from the modern to the ancient practice (Johnson, 1755, Preface).

Although Johnson was not an advocate of change, he did make the attempt at minor spelling reforms, as in catcal (catcall) and unrol (unroll), which failed to be accepted. His chief objection to phonetic spelling was that spelling would lose the quality of permanence if

Figure 10. Title page of Sayer Rudd's Podromos, 1755.

ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ:
 O R,
 OBSERVATIONS
 ON THE
 ENGLISH LETTERS.

BEING

An Attempt to reform OUR ALPHABET, and
 regulate OUR MANNER of SPELING, parti-
 cularly, in such words as admit THE ASSI-
 MATION.

Written originally for the USE of

Mess^{rs}. NORRIS and RANDOLPH;

By SAYER R U D D, M. D.
 Minister of *Walmer*, and Master of the Academy at
Deale, in KENT.

Perueniri ad summa, nisi ex principiis, non potest.
 QUINT. Inst. L. X. C. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for THE AUTHOR; and Sold by M^{rs}.
 DAVEY and LAW in *St. Mary-Lane*; BAKER of
Tembridge; SMITH of *Leicester*; and SILVER of
Southwick.

MDCCCLV.

pronunciation was the guide. Johnson's work had a tremendous influence, both in England and America, and most words are still spelled as Johnson spelled them. Those few who dared to differ with Johnson's mode of spelling were attacked as "unmanly" by a writer named Armstrong in his essay, "The Modern Art of Spelling," in 1757 (Tauber, 1958, p. 27). However, since the publication of Johnson's Dictionary in 1755, Dr. Johnson "has been saddled with unjustified odium" by spelling reformers; "Bernard Shaw, for instance, cavilled at 'Dr, Johnson's monumental misspelling, which is now more sacred than the creed and the catechism'" (Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 73).

Henry Gallup Paine's remarks in his Handbook of Simplified Spelling are representative of those who credit Johnson with being the major stumbling-block to spelling reform:

At a time when English spelling was still unsettled, when etymology was largely based on guesswork, and English filology was in its infancy, his literary reputation gave to his dictionary...an "authority" far beyond that which it--or indeed any dictionary compiled at that time--could possibly merit.

Thru whim or indolence he approved, in certain instances, spelling that were inconsistent with those he adopted for other words of the same general class. Thus, while retaining the Latin p in receipt, he left it out of deceit; he speld deign one way, and disdain another; he speld uphill but downhil, muckhill but dunghil, instill but distil, inthrall but disinthral ...In other instances his carelessness permitted him to deviate in the text from the spellings given in the vocabulary....

[Johnson accepted] a vast number of unhistorical, illogical, and unscientific forms. Words that have greatly altered in pronunciation since Johnson's day continue to be speld as he speld them; and the change and growth of our flexible language has failed to be recorded by an orthography

that owes much of its inflexibility to his influence (Paine, 1920, pp. 7-8).

A man well acquainted with Samuel Johnson's work, Benjamin Franklin, writer, publisher, inventor, and statesman, was also the first American spelling reformer. In 1768, while living in London, Franklin wrote A Scheme for a New Alphabet and Reformed Mode of Spelling. It contained an alphabet of 26 letters, including the traditional letters of the Roman alphabet without c, v, q, w, x, and z, with six new letters for sounds he felt were imperfectly represented in traditional spelling (See Figure 11). There were no silent or superfluous letters in the Franklin alphabet. Except for two six-line verses and the Lord's Prayer which Franklin transcribed into his system, a word list which was the first step in composing a dictionary, and a letter which he wrote to Mary Stevenson in defense of it, and her reply thereto, nothing ever came of his scheme (Ives, 1979; Franklin, 1972). Franklin's letter, dated July 20, 1768, contained this:

I wish you to consider this Alphabet, and give me Instances of such English Words and Sounds as you may think can not perfectly be expressed by it. I am persuaded it may be completed by your help. The greater difficulty will be to bring it into use. However, if Amendments are never attempted and things continue to grow worse and worse they must come to be in a wretched condition at last; such indeed I think our Alphabet and Writing already in; but if we go on a few centuries longer, our words will gradually cease to express Sounds, they will only stand for things, as the written words do in the Chinese Language, which I suspect might originally have been a literal Writing like that of Europe, but through the Changes in Pronunciation brought on by the Course of Ages and through the obstinate Adherence of that People to old Customs, and among others to their old manner of Writing, the original Sounds of Letters and Words are lost, and no longer considered (Franklin, 1972, p. 175. A

Figure 11. Benjamin Franklin's Reformed Alphabet.

[TABLE of the REFORMED ALPHABET.]		To be printed.
Classical.	Sounded [respectively] as in [the Words in the Column below.]	[Manner of pronouncing the Sounds.]
o	Old.	o
• a	John, Folly; Awl, Ball.	a
u	Man, can.	u
e	Men, lend, Name, Lane.	e
i	Did, Sin, Deed, seen.	i
u	Tool, Fool, Rule.	u
• y	uni, un; as in umbrage, unto, &c. and as in er.	y
b	hunter, happy, high.	bub
g	give, gather.	gi
k	keep, kick.	ki
• fi	(fi) Ship, wish.	ifb
• ng	(ng) ing, repeating, among.	ing
n	end.	en
r	Art.	r
t	Teeth.	ti
d	Deed.	di
l	ell, tell.	el
f	Effence.	es
z	(ez) Wages.	ez
• h	(th) think.	eh
• dh	(dh) thy.	eh
f	Effect.	ef
u	ever.	ev
b	Bees.	b
p	peep.	pi
m	ember.	em

* [N.B. The six new letters are marked with an asterisk to distinguish them, and two new letters are proposed, &c.]

Note. From The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (vol. 15, pp. 176-177) by B. Franklin (W.B. Willcox, Ed.), 1972, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

copy of the complete text of this letter to Miss Stevenson is found in Figures 12 and 13).

Miss Stevenson, also writing in the Franklin alphabet, responded on September 26, 1768:

Dear Sir,

I have transcribed your alphabet, &c. which I think might be of service to those who wish to acquire an accurate pronunciation, if that could be fixed; but I see many inconveniences, as well as difficulties, that would attend the bringing your letters and orthography into common use. All our etymologies would be lost; consequently we could not ascertain the meaning of many words; the distinction too between words of different meaning and similar sound would be useless, unless we have living writers publish new editions. In short, I believe we must let people spell on in their old way, and (as we find it easiest) do the same ourselves (cited in Webster, 1789, p. 407).

Franklin, writing in reply, offered a number of generic arguments for, and in defense of, spelling reform. Franklin's defense of spelling reform, some writers have argued, was more important than the Franklin scheme itself (Tauber, 1958; Webster, 1789). Franklin's reply, dated September 28, 1768, is here reproduced, in toto, because of the great stock which ensuing spelling reformers have placed in it. So well did it reflect the aims and mood of later reformers that Noah Webster, Isaac Pitman (in his Spelling Reform Tract no. 113) and others have often reproduced it (Scragg, 1974).

Dear Madam,

The objection you make to rectifying our alphabet, "that it will be attended with inconveniences and difficulties," is a very natural one; for it always occurs when any reformation is proposed, whether in religion, government, laws, and even down as low as roads and wheel carriages. The true question then is not, whether there will be no difficulties or

Figure 12. Benjamin Franklin's first letter to Mary Stevenson, written in his proposed alphabet, dated July 20, 1768.

Dear Pali,

Ritfrijnd, July 20. 68.

Yi intended to hav sent in Ziz Papers surer,
lyt bing bizi farrgat-it.

Mr Kolman has mended diti: lyt iur gud
Mijer has bin indijord uiz e slyit Fivyr, atand
uiz mytfe fiibilnes and uirnes. fi uind. nat-
lax mi to send in nyrd av it-at Zi tyjn, and in
nax betur.

Zi uif. iur to konsider Zis Alfabet, and giu
mi Instances of sylf Iglyf Words and Saunds
az iu mac Zink kannat perfektly bi shprest
lyt it. Zi am persuaded it mee bi kemplited
lyt iur help. Zi greter difikyli uil bi to
bring it into ius. Howevr, if Amendments
ur never affented, and Zigs kantine to go
~~uivns~~ and ~~uivns~~, Zee myt lym to bi in a rattled
Kandifryn at last; sylf indid yi Zink our
Alfabet and Kyitig ahiedu in; lyt if uig an
az uir hev dyn e fiv Sentaria langor, iur
nyrd uil graduoli uis to shprez Saunds, Zee
uil onli stand for Zigs, az Zi ridin nyrd Du
in Zi Phinix languadp, kuitf yi suspckt
myt.

Mis Stevenson

Note. From The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (vol. 15, p. 175)
by B. Franklin (W.B. Willcox, Ed.), 1972, New Haven, CT: Yale
University Press.

Figure 13. Typescript of Benjamin Franklin's first letter to Mary Stevenson, written in his proposed alphabet, dated July 20, 1768.

Dür Pali, Ritsmynd, Dsulüi 20.-68
 Yi intended to hev sent iu diz Pepers sunyr, büt büg bizi fargat it.
 Mr Kolman hez mended decli: büt iur gud Mýchyr hez bin indispoz'd uith e slqit Fivyr, atended uith mýts fiibilnes and uirines. Si uiuld nat allau mi to send iu uýrd av it at di tým, and iz nau beter.
 Yi uis iu to kansider dis Alfabet, and giv mi Instanses af sýts Iglis Uýrds and Saunds az iu mee tink kannat perfektüi bi eksprest búi it. Yi am persueeded it mee bi kamplited búi iur help. Di greeter difikýlti uil bi to brig it into ius. Hauevyr, if Amendments eer nevyr atempted, and tigs kantinu to gro uýrs and uýrs, dee mýst kým to bi in a retsed Kandisýn at last; sýts indiid üi tink aur Alfabet and Rýitig alredi in; büt if ui go an az ui hev dýn e fiu Senturiz langer, aur uýrds uil graduali süs to ekspres Saunds, dee uil onli stand far tigs, az di ritün uýrds du in di Tsuiniiz Languads, huits üi suspekt mýit oridsinali hev bin e litiral Rýitig lük dat af Iurop, büt tru di Tseendsez in Pronýsiesýn braat an búi di Kors af Eedses, and tru di abstinet Adhirens af dat Pipil to old Kýstýms and amýg ýchýrs to dheer old manýr ov Rýitig, di oridsinal Saunds af Leters and Uýrds eer last, and no langýr kansidered. Yi am, mýi düir Frend, Iurz afeksýnedli,
B. FRANKLIN

Note. From The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (vol. 15, p. 174) by B. Franklin (W.B. Willcox, Ed.), 1972, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

inconveniences; but whether the difficulties may not be surmounted; and whether the conveniences will not, on the whole, be greater than the inconveniences. In this case, the difficulties are only in the beginning of the practice; when they are once overcome, the advantages are lasting. To either you or me, who spell well in the present mode, I imagine the difficulty in changing that mode for the new, is not so great, but that we might perfectly get over it in a week's writing. As to those who do not spell well, if the two difficulties are compared, viz. that of teaching them true spelling in the present mode, and that of teaching them the new alphabet and the new spelling according to it, I am confident that the latter would be by far the least. They naturally fall into the new method already, as much as the imperfection of their alphabet will admit of; their present bad spelling is only bad, because contrary to the present bad rules; under the new rules it would be good. The difficulty of learning to spell well in the old way is so great, that few attain it; thousands and thousands writing on to old age, without ever being able to acquire it. It is besides, a difficulty continually increasing; as the sound gradually varies more and more from the spelling; and to foreigners it makes the learning to pronounce our language, as written in our books, almost impossible.

Now as to the inconveniences you mention: The first is, "that all our etymologies would be lost; consequently we could not ascertain the meaning of many words." Etymologies are at present very uncertain; but such as they are, the old books still preserve them, and etymologists would there find them. Words in the course of time, change their meaning, as well as their spelling and pronunciation; and we do not look to etymologies for their present meanings. If I should call a man a knave and a villain, he would hardly be satisfied with my telling him, that one of the words originally signified a lad or servant, and the other an under plowman, or the inhabitant of a village. It is from present usage only, the meaning of words is to be determined.

Your second inconvenience is, "the distinction between words of different meaning and similar sound would be destroyed." That distinction is already destroyed in pronouncing them; and we rely on the sense alone of the sentence to ascertain which of the several words, similar in sound, we intend. If this is sufficient in the rapidity of discourse, it will be much more so in written sentences, which may be read leisurely, and attended to more particularly in case of difficulty, than we can attend to a

past sentence, while the speaker is hurrying us along with new ones.

Your third inconvenience is, "that all the books already written would be useless." This inconvenience would only come on gradually in a course of ages. I and you and other now living readers would hardly forget the use of them. People would long learn to read the old writing, tho they practiced the new. And the inconvenience is not greater than what has actually happened in a similar case in Italy. Formerly its inhabitants all spoke and wrote Latin; as the language changed, the spelling followed it. It is true that at present, a mere unlearned Italian cannot read the Latin books, tho they are still read and understood by many. But if the spelling had never been changed, he would now have found it much more difficult to read and write his own language; for written words would have no relation to sounds; they would only have stood for things; so that if he would express in writing the idea he has when he sounds the word Vescovo, he must use the letters Episcopus.

In short, whatever the difficulties and inconveniences now are, they will be more easily surmounted now, than hereafter; and some time or other it must be done, or our writing will become the same with the Chinese, as to the difficulty of learning and using it. And it would already have been such, if we had continued the Saxon spelling and writing used by our forefathers.

I am, my dear friend,
Yours affectionately,

B. Franklin
(cited in Webster, 1789, pp. 408-410).

In 1786, Franklin invited a young schoolmaster, Noah Webster, to come and visit in order to discuss their common interest in language. In the Preface to his Dissertations on the English Language: with Notes, Historical and Critical, To which is added, by way of Appendix, an Essay on a Reformed Mode of Spelling, with Dr. Franklin's Arguments on that Subject, Webster paid homage to the "Sage Philosopher" and acknowledged that it was Franklin who first interested Webster in the

subject of spelling reform, noting that "such a reformation is practicable and highly necessary" (p. xi. See Figure 14). Although Webster "respectfully" dedicated his work to "His Excellency," Benjamin Franklin (See Figure 15), he declined to support Franklin's spelling reform scheme. This was in spite of the fact that Franklin had given Webster the dictionary which Franklin had prepared and the type which he had cast in the new alphabet (Webster, 1789, p. 407, note). Although Franklin's alphabet and spelling reform proposal were not used, Franklin did have a tremendous impact upon Noah Webster, whose reforms to this day distinguish American spelling from that of Britain.

Later Attempts to Simplify Spelling

Noah Webster's American Spelling

In 1789, Noah Webster produced an Appendix to his Dissertations entitled "An Essay on the Necessity, Advantages and Practicality of Reforming the Mode of Spelling, and of Rendering the Orthography of Words Correspondent to the Pronunciation." Webster began this Essay:

It has been observed by all writers on the English language, that the orthography or spelling of words is very irregular; the same letters often representing different sounds, and the same sounds often expressed by different letters. For this irregularity, two principal causes may be assigned:

1. The changes to which the pronunciation of a language is liable, from the progress of science and civilization.
2. The mixture of different languages, occasioned by revolutions in England, or by a predilection of the learned, for words of foreign growth and ancient origin (Webster, 1789, p. 391).

In this same Essay, Webster wrote:

The question now occurs; ought the Americans to retain

Figure 14. Title page of Noah Webster's Dissertations, 1789.

DISSERTATIONS
ON THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE :
WITH NOTES,
HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL,
To which is added,
BY WAY OF APPENDIX,
AN ESSAY ON
A
REFORMED MODE OF SPELLING,
WITH
DR. FRANKLIN'S ARGUMENTS ON THAT SUBJECT.

BY NOAH WEBSTER, JUN. ESQUIRE.

PRIMA DISSENTIUM ELEMENTA, IN QUIBUS ET
IPSIS PARUM ELABORATUR. FACIUS.



PRINTED AT BOSTON, FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY ISAIAH THOMAS AND COMPANY,
MDCCLXXXIX.

Figure 15. Noah Webster's Dedication to Benjamin Franklin of
Dissertations on the English Language, 1789.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY,

Benjamin Franklin, Esq; LL. D. F. R. S.

Late PRESIDENT of the COMMONWEALTH of PENNSYLVANIA,

The following DISSERTATIONS

Are most respectfully Inscribed,

By His Excellency's

Most obliged and most obedient Servant.

The Author.

DEDICATIONS are usually designed to flatter the Great, to acknowledge their services, or court their favor and influence. But very different motives have led me to prefix the venerable name of FRANKLIN to this publication.

RESPECT for his Excellency's talents and exertions, as a great Philosopher and a warm Patriot, I feel in common with all the lovers of science and freedom; but my peculiar admiration of his character, arises from considering it as *great in common things.*

A ?

HIS

these faults which produce innumerable inconveniences in the acquisition and use of the language, or ought they at once to reform these abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the orthography of the AMERICAN TONGUE? (pp. 393-394).

Webster then presented his list of "necessary" alterations:

1. The omission of all superfluous or silent letters, as 'a' in bread. Thus bread, head, give, breast, built, meant, realm, friend, would be spelt bred, hed, giv, brest, bilt, ment, relm, frend. Would this alteration produce any inconvenience, any embarrassment or expense? By no means. On the other hand, it would lessen the trouble of writing, and much more, of learning the language; it would reduce the true pronunciation to a certainty, and while it would assist foreigners and our own children in acquiring the language, it would render the pronunciation uniform, in different parts of the country, and almost prevent the possibility of changes.

2. A substitution of a character that has a certain definite sound, for one that is more vague and indeterminate. Thus by putting 'ee' instead of 'ea' or 'ie,' the words mean, near, speak, grieve, zeal, would become meen, neer, speek, greev, zeel. This alteration could not occasion a moments [sic] trouble; at the same time it would prevent a doubt respecting the pronunciation; whereas the 'ea' and 'ie' having different sounds, may give a learner much greater difficulty. Thus greef should be substituted for grief; kee for key; beleev for believe; laf for laugh; dawter for daughter; plow for plough; tuf for tough; proov for prove; blud for blood; and draft for draught. In this manner 'ch' in Greek derivatives, should be changed into 'k'; for the English 'ch' has a soft sound, as in cherish; but 'k' always a hard sound. Therefore, character, chorus, cholic, architecture, should be written karacter, korus, kolic, arkitecture; and were they thus written, no person could mistake their true pronunciation.

Thus 'ch' in French derivatives should be changed into 'sh'; machine, chaise, chevalier, should be written masheen, shaze, shevaleer; and pique, tour, oblique, should be written peek, toor, obleek.

3. A trifling alteration in a character, or the addition of a point would distinguish different sounds, without the substitution of a new character...

These, with a few other inconsiderable alterations, would answer every purpose, and render the orthography sufficiently correct and regular (pp. 394-396).

Webster then listed the "numerous, great and permanent" advantages of the alterations which he suggests in his simplified spelling proposal:

1. The simplicity of the orthography would facilitate the learning of the language...with the proposed orthography, a child would learn to spell, without trouble, in a very short time, and the orthography being very regular, he would ever afterwards find it difficult to make a mistake. It would, in that case, be difficult to spell wrong, as it is now to spell right.

Besides this advantage, foreigners would be able to acquire the pronunciation of English...

2. A correct orthography would render the pronunciation of the language, as uniform as the spelling in books...Such uniformity in these States is desirable; [sic] it would remove prejudice, and conciliate mutual affection and respect.

3. Such a reform would diminish the number of letters about one fifteenth or eighteenth...an advantage that should not be overlooked.

4. But a capital advantage of this reform in these states would be, that it would make a difference between the English orthography and the American...I am confident that such an event is an object of vast political consequence....

A national language is a band of national union. Every engine should be employed to render the people of this country national; to call their attachments home to their own country; and to inspire them with the pride of national character. However they may boast of Independence, and the freedom of their government, yet their opinions are not sufficiently independent; an astonishing respect for the arts and literature of their parent country, and a blind imitation of its manners, are still prevalent among the Americans. Thus an habitual respect for another country, deserved indeed and once laudable, turns their attention from their own interests, and prevents their respecting themselves (pp. 396-398).

Webster presented a number of "objections" to his spelling reform,

which included the ones Franklin dealt with in his letter to Mary Stevenson. He also listed habit and indolence as obstacles to improvement, "But," Webster wrote, "America is in a situation the most favorable for great reformatations; and the present time is, in a singular degree, auspicious." He went on:

Now is the time, and this is the country...

Let us then seize the present moment, and establish a national language, as well as a national government....As an independent people, our reputation abroad demands that, in all things, we should be federal; be national; for if we do not respect ourselves, we may be assured that other nations will not respect us. In short, let it be impressed upon the mind of every American, that to neglect the means of commanding respect abroad, is treason against the character and dignity of a brave independent people (pp. 405-406).

In 1793, Webster produced A Grammatical Institute of the English Language, consisting of a spelling book, a grammar, and a reader. The success of the first part of the book was tremendous and was later reprinted separately under the title, The American Spelling Book. It has been estimated that over one hundred million copies of this "Blue-Backed Speller" were sold in the next hundred years (Mencken, 1948). In all editions of his spelling book, however, Webster chose to retain the traditional spelling of the day (Deighton, 1971; Mencken, 1945).

Webster's simplified spellings did not begin to take hold until he published his second dictionary, A Dictionary of the English Language Compiled for the Use of Common Schools in the United States, in 1807. In it, Webster introduced a number of changes which characterize

American spelling to this day, including:

1. Eliminating the final u in words such as savior, favor, and honor;
2. Omitting the final k in music, physic, and logic, etc.;
3. Eliminating the silent e in ax, and;
4. Using single letters for digraphs in words such as fetus, diarrhea, economy, and ecumenical.
5. Changing c to s in defense, offense, and pretense.

Webster was also responsible for changing waggon to wagon, gaol to jail and words such as centre and metre to center and meter. While he tried to introduce other reforms, such as wimmen for women, bild for build, and ribin for ribbon, they were not well accepted and never took hold. While Webster failed to produce a distinctive American spelling, many of the reforms he advocated are now standard American spelling (Tauber, 1958).

Benn Pitman's Solution

Isaac Pitman's younger brother, Benn, after teaching school and promoting his brother's reforms in England, moved to America and settled in Cincinnati. He continued to work in the area of spelling reform, writing and publishing several books on the subject. He also developed a reform scheme of his own. In the preface of one of his books, A Solution to the Alphabetic Problem, Benn Pitman wrote:

The perversity of English spelling and its failure to indicate pronunciation are not realized by the average teacher or parent for they judge from a habit, acquired by ten, twenty or more years of familiarity. To the child each

word, when first encountered, is a puzzle. How shall a collection of letters be pronounced? How shall a given word be spelled? (Pitman, 1910, p. 4).

Pitman provides the solution with his Complete Alphabet, a scheme which provided for 39 sounds of the English language, while making no change in the the traditional alphabet other than the elimination of c, q, and x, and the addition of a dot to indicate a long vowel. Pitman's seven rules for phonetic spelling were:

1. Let each of the consonant signs represent the one sound for which it is now commonly employed.
2. Use consonant digraphs according to the same rule.
3. Dispense with the useless duplicates c, q, x.
4. Use the vowel signs for their most usual powers.
5. Dispense with the dot over i and j, and use this distinct and unobtrusive sign as a diacritic mark, to indicate the Long Vowels.
6. The three remaining simple vowels, as heard in alms, Paul, and pool, for which letters are not provided in the present alphabet, may be represented by the digraphs aa, au, and oo.
7. The diphthongs heard in coil and cowl are suggestively represented by oi and ow (Pitman, 1910, p. 8).

Unlike his brother Isaac, Benn advocated a gradual spelling reform process, and in later years joined the Simplified Spelling Board (Iles, 1965). His work first appeared in 1855, with the printing, in Cincinnati, of A Child's First Primer and The First Phonetic Reader (See Figure 16). The Primer was a book of 145 pages, the first 56 of which consisted of lists of syllables in Benn Pitman's Complete Alphabet, each page concentrating on one sound. Short rhymes teaching

Figure 16. Title page and a sample lesson from Benn Pitman's First Phonetic Reader, 1855.

First
Phonetic Reader.

BY BENN PITMAN.

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[21]

Jerj Wof-ig-ton.

Hwen Jérj Wof-ig-ton woz a-bót siks yerz old, hiz fq-der gav him a hac-et, ov hwig he woz ver-i fond, and woz kon-stant-li gō-ig a-bót, gop-ig ev-er-i tīg dat kam in hiz wa.

Wun da, in de gqr-den, hwar he had of-n a-muzd him-self hak-ig hiz mud-erz pe-buf-ez, he un-luk-i-li trjd de ej ov hiz hac-et on de bod-i ov a bu-ti-fal yun Ig-glij ger-i-trz, hwig he bqkt so ter-i-bli dat j dō not be-lev de tre ev-er got de bet-er ov it.

De nekst mern-ig, de old jentl-man, fjnd-ig ɾt hwot had be-fel-n hiz fa-vor-it tre, kam in-tu de hrs, and askt fer de e-tor ov

moral lessons made up the bulk (78 pages) of the material to be read by the child. The final section of 11 pages contained a treatise on alphabetic irregularities, an explanation of the Complete Alphabet, and a short discussion of how speech sounds are produced.

His most important book, A Solution to the Alphabetic Problem, was not published until over half a century later, in 1910. In it, he repeated his arguments for spelling reform. He concluded his pleas:

It is time that the hesitating, time-wasting perplexities of children over their spelling and reading should cease; phonetic spelling will save all their time and tears (Pitman, 1910, p. 21).

Alexander J. Ellis' Glossic

In 1843, Alexander John Ellis, King's Scholar at Eton, philologist, and man of great wealth, first met Isaac Pitman and began a lifetime of interest in spelling reform. In 1848, Ellis published his book, A Plea for Phonetic Spelling, in which he demonstrated graphically the many irregularities of English spelling. Ellis also worked with Pitman on the development of the Phonotype Alphabet (which is discussed in the next chapter) and on the development of several more augmented alphabets (Harrison, 1965).

In 1867, after Ellis lost faith in converting people to Fonotypy, he began work on his own and created the "Paleotype" phonetic alphabet which contained hundreds of characters. Realizing the difficulties of this spelling reform, Ellis suddenly changed his whole approach to the subject and started to think in terms of digraphic spelling.

Tauber explains Ellis' change of mind:

He wanted a simplified spelling which could be immediately used for all kinds of printing at any printing press throughout the world that possessed a font of Roman letters. The sound values assigned to the old letters should be derived from existing associations so that they would suggest their sound almost spontaneously to anyone who could read. The new spelling must be such that anyone who learned to read in it should be able to read the conventional spelling as well. The new spelling should occupy less space, if possible (Tauber, 1958, p. 30).

Tauber concludes, "these principles became the credo for many followers in America and England" (p. 30).

In 1870, after years of experimentation, A.J. Ellis finally settled on a system of digraphic spelling which he named "Glossic." Based on forty-three sounds, Ellis conceived of Glossic as a means to teach children to read. A more elaborate notation, "Euniversal Glossic," was designed as an international alphabet to reproduce dialects for phonetic discussion and is presented in the book The Alphabet of Nations (Scragg, 1974; Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 93).

The system can best be explained by a summary of its objects and means:

Objekts:

1. Too fasil'itait Lerning too Reed
2. Too maik Lerning too Spel unnes.eseri
3. Too asim.ilait Reeding and Reiting too heerring and Speeking
4. Too maik dhi Risee.vd Proanunsiai.shen ov Ingglish akses.ibl too awl Reederz, Proavin.shel and Foren

Meenz:

1. Leev dhi Oald Speling untuch.t
2. Introadeu.s along seid ov dhi Oald Speling a New Aurthog.rafi konsis.ting ov dhi Oald euzd invai.rriabli in dhair best noan sensez.
3. Employ dhi New Speling in Skoolz too.
4. Teech Reeding in boath Aurthog.rafiz.
5. Alou eni Reiter to reit in dhi New Speling oanli on aul okai.zhenz loozing kaast, proavei.ded he euzez a Risee/vd Proanunsia.shen; dhat is -- aknol'ej dhi New Speling konkur'entli widh dhi Oald (cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 94).

After a while Ellis realized that Glossic was too far removed from traditional spelling and therefore made some changes to produce a system of digraphic spelling called Dimid'ium Spel'ing "haaf ov whot is needed" (Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 94).

Dimid'ium appears little different from Glossic. His purpose in both cases was to provide a system of spelling that could be immediately used by any printing works which had a font of Roman characters.

If nomic reederz [Nomic: "dhe fonetic euzejez ov prezent customary speling] ar tou hav the sleitest dificulty in reeding the new speling, goud bey tou our haaf loaf! Ingglisch reederz wahnt goh tou scool agin, eh pourr cohz - a burnt cheild dredz the feir! Hens, if possible, every thing prizented tou thair eyz shoud bi whot thay aulredy understand. In uther wurdz the new speling must be bilt on thi leinz ov thi oald.

Revolewshun may bi the best soleushun, but ey doo not intend tou wurk in that direcshun eny longger. Mey paast expeeriens, whitch haz been boatth grait and painfoul, wornz me tou trey anuther road. It iz not without egzurting grait fors ohver miself thut ey - uv rinounst a purly fonetic alfabet. But Glosic woz mey furst step in the new direcshun,

and Dimidium or 'haafway speling' is mey secund.

It iz thi outcum ov thurty sevn yeerz ov consienshus wurk, cominst and carid on for edewcaishunal and filolodjecul purpusez (cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, pp. 94-95).

Although there is little information on the use of either Glossic or Dimidium, perhaps the real value of Glossic was that it pointed the way or opened the door to further experimentation and development of digraphic alphabets and new spelling systems.

Tauber summarizes Ellis' influence on spelling reform:

The work of Ellis was influential ideologically, his academic stature gave status to the spelling reform movement and attracted to it reputable philological scholars in England and America; his ideas became the foundation stones on which the structure of organized spelling reform in England was built and holds firm to this day. These principles have become the basis of the spelling reform movement in America today (Tauber, 1958, p. 33).

In his later years, Isaac J. Pitman, too, was convinced that the most practical course in promoting spelling reform was to stay within the limits of the Roman alphabet. After a series of experiments, Pitman postulated the following Three Rules of Spelling Reform:

RULE 1 — Reject q, c, x as redundant; use the other consonants for the sounds usually associated with them; and supply the defieciency of twelve other letters by these digraphs--

ch	'th	th	sh
cheap	thin	then	wish
zh	ng	aa	ai
vision	sing	palm	pale
ee	au	oa	oo
peel	pall	pole	pool

Write ay for the second vowel, and aw for the fourth, at the

end of a word; as pay, law.

RULE 2 -- A, e, o, u, ending a syllable (except at the end of a word; as sofa), represent a long vowel; as in fa-vour, fe-ver, ho-li, tru-li.

RULE 3 -- A, e, i, o, u, in close syllable (and a at the end of a word), represents the short sounds in pat, pet, pit, pot, put. Use u- for u when it is pronounced as in but.

Write the diphthongs thus: ei, by; ou, now; iu, new (yu initial); ai, Kaiser; oi, coy (cited in Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 95).

Isaac Pitman's monthly journal The Speler, first issued in January 1895, was for the most part printed according to these "First Stage rules and to the end of his life he advocated this more limited reform with the same energy and persistence as he had devoted to Fonotypy" (Pitman & St. John, 1969, p. 95).

The Principles of '76 and the SRA

Nearly half a century following the publication of Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, interest in spelling reform in the United States was such that the American Philological Association (APA) formed a committee to study the notion. Much of this interest was generated by the efforts of Isaac and Benn Pitman and their associates, and supporters of spelling reform in the National Teachers Association, later renamed the National Education Association, including its first president, Zalmon Richards, Horace Mann, and President F.A.P. Barnard of Columbia (Dewey, 1971). Consisting of Professors Francis A. March of Lafayette College, William Dwight Whitney (who served as chairman) and J. Hammond Trumbull, both from

Yale, S.S. Haldeman of the University of Pennsylvania, and F.J. Child of Harvard, the committee reported in 1876 that the revision of spelling was urgent (Mencken, 1945). Their report, known as the "Principles of '76," presented at the annual meeting of the APA in July, 1876, read:

1. The true sole office of alphabetic writing is faithfully and intelligibly to present spoken speech. So-called "historical" orthography is only a concession to the weakness of prejudice.
2. The ideal of an alphabet is that every sound should have its own unvarying sign, and every sign its own unvarying sound.
3. The alphabet intended for use by a vast community need not attempt an exhaustive analysis of the elements of utterance and a representation of the nicest varieties of articulation; it may well leave room for the unavoidable play of individual and local pronunciation.
4. An ideal alphabet should seek to adopt for its characters forms which should suggest the sounds signified, and of which the resemblances should in sum measure represent the similarities of the sounds. But for general practical use there is no advantage in a system which aims to depict in detail the physical processes of utterance.
5. No language has ever had, or is likely to have, a perfect alphabet, and in changing and amending the mode of writing of a language already long written, regard must necessarily be had to what is practically possible quite as much as to what is inherently desirable.
6. To prepare the way for a change, the first step is to break down, by the combined influence of enlightened scholars and of practical educators, the immense and stubborn prejudice which regards the established modes of spelling almost as constituting the language, as having a sacred character, as in themselves preferable to others. All agitation and all definite proposals of reform are to be welcomed so far as they work in this direction.
7. An altered orthography will be avoidably offensive to those

called upon to use it; but any sensible and consistent new system will rapidly win the hearty preference of the mass of writers.

8. The Roman alphabet is so widely and firmly established in use among the leading civilized nations that it cannot be displaced; in adapting it to improved use in English, the efforts of scholars should be directed for its use with uniformity and in conformity with other nations (cited in March, 1893, p. 16).

This report was accepted by the APA, and the committee was asked to continue its labors for another year, with March as its chairman. The following year, 1877, in accordance with the Principles of '76, the APA created the Standard Phonetic Alphabet. "So soundly [was it] conceived that it served, a generation later, with insignificant alterations of fundamentals, as the basis for the Revised Scientific Alphabet, commonly known as the NEA Alphabet...and [was] used as Key 1 of the Funk & Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary" (Dewey, 1971, p. 21).

Shortly after the publication of the Principles of '76, from August 14-17, 1876, in conjunction with the United States Centennial Exposition, an International Convention for the Amendment of English Orthography was held at Philadelphia "to settle upon some satisfactory plan of labor for the prosecution of the work so happily begun by the American Philological Association and various other educational associations in this country and England" (March, 1893, pp. 16-17). Sponsors of the Convention were the London Philological Society, the British National Union of Elementary Teachers, the American Philological Association, the Pennsylvania State Teachers Association, the Connecticut Legislature, and the National Education Association.

S.S.Haldeman, president of the APA, was chairman of the convention, and Melvil Dewey served as secretary. Realizing that undirected, individual efforts were largely ineffective, on the fourth day of the convention, the group changed its name, and the Spelling Reform Association (SRA) came into being (March, 1893).

Francis A. March was elected president of the Spelling Reform Association, with Melvil Dewey as secretary. Commanding the support of a distinguished group of businessmen, legislators, and scholars, including many who were active in the APA, the SRA supported, supplemented, and encouraged the spelling reform efforts of the APA (Dewey, 1971). The SRA adopted the Principles of '76 as the ideological basis of its work, and went on to adopt these principles of its own:

1. A general standard of orthography, uniformly applied, was to be the goal.
2. The supervision and approval of the APA would be sought for any plan adopted.
3. Publishers were solicited to publish books in reform spelling.
4. All experiments having as their object the improvement of spelling were welcomed.
5. The letters b, d, e (as in met), f, g, h, i (as in pin), l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w, and z were considered satisfactory, and needed no change from their normal use.
6. The forms for capital and small letters should correspond, as far as practicable.
7. The names assigned to the letters of the alphabet should contain their accepted sounds.
8. The convention recognized the importance of providing a phonetic alphabet, composed solely of the present letters or

material contained in the ordinary printer's case, as a means of disseminating at once through the press and among people generally, a knowledge of phonetic spelling (cited in Tauber, 1958, pp. 94-95).

Motions to open correspondence with English friends of spelling reform were adopted. The SRA convened often, and in October, 1876, the Deseret Alphabet was shared with the group by A.J. Pierce (the Deseret Alphabet is discussed at length in Chapter V). After 1882, the SRA met concurrently with the APA. Although an official organ of the SRA, entitled Spelling, was published on the initiative of Dewey, apathy slowed the activities of the SRA, and after 1886, the National Education Association became the leading light of the spelling reform movement (Tauber, 1958).

Three years after the formation of the Spelling Reform Association, the British Spelling Reform Association was organized in 1879 with A.H. Sayce, deputy professor of comparative philology at Oxford, as president, with members including W.W. Skeat, J.A.H. Murray, Sir Isaac Pitman, Charles Darwin, and Alfred Lord Tennyson. "In its constitution the aim was stated to be recommended simpler spelling of English words than those now in use, and to further the general use of such simpler spellings by every means in its power and to cooperate with the Spelling Reform Association of America" (Harrison, 1965, p. 52).

In the United States, a great deal of legislative activity was generated for spelling reform at this time. In 1875, the Connecticut Legislature approved a joint resolution to create a commission to

investigate the use of "amended orthography" in public documents. The legislature of Wisconsin followed suit and recommended that the Superintendent of Public Instruction supply dictionaries using an amended orthography. Iowa and Pennsylvania also considered the same moves (Tauber, 1958, p. 110). In 1889, a bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to use the APA joint rules for amended spelling. In 1890, two bills were introduced in the House to instruct the public printer to use the APA joint rules in printing public documents.

In 1892, a bill to provide funds for the creation of an experimental school in Chicago to determine the effectiveness of simplified spelling as an aid to reading, was introduced in Congress. Although this Bill to Test and Try the Science of Spelling, and to Provide for Establishing 100 Schools for that Purpose and to Establish a Spelling School in the Columbian Exposition to be Held in Chicago in 1893, and the two former bills never passed, they did attract attention to the spelling reform cause (Tauber, 1958, p. 111).

The years that followed 1880 brought disenchantment to members of SRA and the chief efforts at spelling reform shifted over to the National Education Association (NEA) due primarily to the efforts of E.O. Vaile of Chicago (Vaile, 1904).

The most notable achievement of the NEA at that time was their adoption in 1898 of a list of twelve words for simplification:

<u>Conventional Spelling</u>	<u>Simplified Spelling</u>
programme	program
though	tho
although	altho
thorough	thoro
thoroughfare	thorofare
through	thru
throughout	thruout
catalogue	catalog
prologue	prolog
decatalogue	decalog
demagogue	demagog
pedagogue	pedagog

(cited in Tauber, 1958, p. 137).

The adoption of the resolution to use the twelve words was only the beginning of the NEA participation in spelling reform. The twelve simplifications were thereafter used in all the publications of the NEA and in many educational journals, including the Educational Review, edited by Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia (Monroe, 1915). In 1898, a committee on spelling reform was appointed to consider the advisability of other spelling changes.

The committee recommended that besides "The Twelve Words" (as they came to be called) the option should be to include new spellings such as ar, giv, posibl, definit, geografy, fantasy, enuf, among others.

Although some of the spellings of The Twelve Words were eventually adopted for general use and most of the new spellings were met with indifference, the NEA continued to use many of the spellings for almost sixty years.

In 1921, the National Education Association withdrew its

endorsement of the reform movement, and during the next few years most of the magazines and newspapers that had adopted its Twelve New Words went back to orthodox forms (Mencken, 1945).

Tauber stated, "The campaign to promote spelling reform in the NEA expired not with a bang, but with a whimper" (1958, p. 162).

The Simplified Spelling Board

The chief event of early twentieth century spelling reform was the establishment in 1906 of the Simplified Spelling Board backed by wealthy philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who promised the Board \$10,000 a year for ten years (although the total amount of Carnegie's support was closer to \$250,000) (Mencken, 1945). The Simplified Spelling Board consisted primarily of members from the American Philological Association, the London Philological Society, the Spelling Reform Association, the Modern Language Association of America, the National Education Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and other interested linguists and educators (Iles, 1965). Among its original members were Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University; David Starr Jordan, President of Stanford University; Richard Watson Gilder, editor of the Century; Justice David J. Brewer, of the Supreme Court of the United States; Isaac K. Funk, editor of the Standard Dictionary; Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain); William T. Harris, U.S. Commissioner of Education; Henry Holt, the publisher; Thomas R. Lounsbury, Chaucer scholar and professor of English at Yale; Thomas Wentworth Higginson; William James,

psychologist and author; Melvil Dewey; and Brander Matthews (Dornbush, 1961; Mencken, 1948).

In 1906, a Simplified Spelling Society was organized in Great Britain, with Walter William Skeat of Oxford as president. The British Society, too, received Carnegie funds of approximately 1,000 pounds annually (Monroe, 1915). The Society's most visible contribution to the cause of orthographic reform for years was the publication of its monthly magazine, Pioneer of Simplified Spelling (Iles, 1965). In 1911, an international conference on spelling reform, sponsored by the British and American groups, was held, with another planned for 1914. Political tensions leading to World War I, however, prevented its convening. The Society was later responsible for the creation of New Spelling, which is examined later in this chapter.

Of the work and relationship between the two spelling reform societies, Dr. Paul Monroe has written in the Cyclopedia of Education:

The Simplified Spelling Society and the Simplified Spelling Board are independent organizations working in accord for the same end. They are both animated by the desire of making our noble tongue fitter for its future service as a world-language, of lifting a heavy weight from the backs of our children, and of making English easier for the foreigners within our borders whom we are assimilating by countless thousands and also for the foreigners outside our borders, in our colonies or in other parts of the globe (Monroe, 1915, p. 395).

Mindful of the long history of failure to simplify the spelling of English, the Board stayed away from what might be considered radical or revolutionary schemes for spelling reform, or any sudden or violent changes. "It desires in respect to the spelling of some words, and to

restore former usage when that is better and more reasonable than modern usage. It desires to do this gradually, in keeping with the genius of the language, and progressively, in accordance with the spirit of the race" (Paine, 1920, pp. 17-18).

According to the principle of gradual and/or natural change, the Simplified Spelling Board recommended the adoption of the following four principles.

1. When current usage offers a choice of spelling, to adopt the shortest and simplest. Examples: blest, not blessed (1 syl.); catalog, not catalogue; center, not centre; check, not checque; gage, not gauge; gram, not gramme; honor, not honour; license, not licence; maneuver, not manoeuver; mold, not mould; plow, not plough; quartet, not quartette; rime, not rhyme; tho, not though; traveler, not traveller.

2. Whenever practical, omit silent letters. Examples: activ, not active; anser, not answer; bluf, not bluff; definit, not definite; det, not debt; eg, not egg; engin, not engine; frend, not friend; hart, not heart, helth, not health; promis, not promise; scool, not school; shal, not shall; suffraget, not suffragette; thru, not through; trolly, not trolley; yu, not you.

3. To follow the simpler rather than the more complex of existing analogues. Examples: aker, not acre; buro, not bureau; deciet, not deceit; enuf, not enough; maskerade, not masquerade; spritely, not sprightly; telefone, not telephone; tung, not tongue; wize, not wise.

4. Keeping in view that the logical goal of the movement is the eventual restoration of English spelling to the fonetic basis from which in the course of centuries and thru various causes it has widely departed, to propose no change that is inconsistent with that ideal (Paine, 1920, p. 18).

Immediately after its organization, the Simplified Spelling Board began an active campaign to get organizations and individuals to take initial steps toward spelling simplification by adopting a list of 300

common words of which alternative spellings were listed in leading dictionaries and used at times by popular and/or eminent writers. All those who approved the aims of the Board were asked to carry a card which stated that they agreed to use/write the simpler alternative forms as far as it was practical to do so.

The response to the initial campaign was beyond the expectation of the Board itself. H.G. Paine, in the Handbook of Simplified Spelling (1920) wrote, "Within a few months, many of the leading filogists, educators, scientists, and men of letters announced their adhesion and thousands of teachers, fasicians, lawyers, clergymen, and other professional men; businessmen, firms and corporations; educators and publishers signed the agreement" (p. 21).

This response was due in large measure to the proselytizing efforts of men such as the humorist Mark Twain. In a speech delivered September 18, 1906, at the annual dinner of the Associated Press, Twain urged the group to accept the SSB's proposed changes, saying, "If the Associated Press will adopt and use our simplified forms, and thus spread them to the ends of the earth...our difficulties are at an end." He continued:

...And so I beg you, I beseech you--oh, I implore you to spell them in our simplified forms. Do this daily, constantly, persistently for three months - only three months - it is all I ask. The infallible results? - victory, victory all down the line. For by that time all eyes here and above will have become adjusted to the change and in love with it, and the present clumsy and ragged forms will be grotesque to the eye and revolting to the soul. And we shall be rid of phthisis and phthisic, and pneumonia and pneumatics, and diphtheria and pterodactyl and all those