

A HUB OF LEXICOGRAPHICAL AND TEXTUAL RESOURCES ON THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

J.F. Féraud's new online *Dictionnaire de la langue française* on the CNRTL¹

It's my pleasure to show you today the result of a 15 year cooperative project chaired by Louise Dagenais (Université de Montréal, Canada) and myself Philippe Caron (Université de Poitiers, France).

Jean-François Féraud's *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* published in 1787-1788 is well known among scholars as an important landmark within the French lexicographical tradition. Not only does this Jesuit priest give a critical and up to date insight into post-classical French, he also presents it in a very innovative way, proving in doing so to be one of the most creative lexicographers of the French tradition.



Figure 1 : Féraud's *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*

¹ Centre National de Ressources Textuelles & Lexicales (<http://www.cnrtl.fr/>)

I cannot go too far in detail for now [see Caron 2008], as my paper is mainly oriented towards a demonstration of the new interface we launched last year on the site of the CNRTL. However I would like to list some of the most striking features of Féraud's lexicographical enterprise :

- This dictionary was at first a mere alphabetical collection of grammatical observations, published in 1761 under the title *Dictionnaire grammatical de la langue française*
- Later on, Féraud decided to enlarge it with a regular definitional component
- It consists of 3 Fol. volumes for a total of 2400 pages
- Its carefully critical point of view towards previous dictionaries (Richelet, Furetière, Trévoux, Académie française), grammars or other normative literature aims to provide foreigners and people from remote regions of France with good usage of the French language
- It promotes a new layout of the lexicographical page by introducing cabalistic signs such as :
 - dash and double dash
 - double set of numerical landmarks
 - Functional use of typography (upper and lower case, fonts ,sizes)
 - A new « Rem. » component , consisting of additional observations about specific (social, regional, technical, archaic) usage
 - Square brackets (enclosing phonographical information)
 - Asterisk, pointing to non-standard entries or distributions

On the whole, Féraud's *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* appears as a practical, easy-to-use and very innovative tool , carefully updated and tending to exhaustivity, especially in the following fields : phonetics and prosody, spelling and neologisms. Moreover, it makes substantial progress in describing the set of senses and distributions, usage labels, synonymy and cacography. It therefore appears, in many respects, as a clever foregoer of modern lexicography . However, Féraud does not feel obliged to follow his general encoding guidelines. Many entries still follow a very loose and irregular framework. That freedom is the main obstacle to the computerizing task

1. Computerizing and old dictionary

When we decided to test the opportunity of computerizing his dictionary, we were not sure what result we could possibly expect. As a matter of fact, the *Dictionnaire critique* was at first a mere collection of grammatical observations in an alphabetical order². As a consequence, its primitive structure was actually an important obstacle on our way towards any tagging system that would require a regular syntax. The best option, we finally thought, was to offer a first plain, but reliable version online which would at least provide an easy access to the lexicographical data. But even at that particular level, things were not so simple. In fact, the encoding and proofreading stage took a long time, as there was no OCR device skilful enough to turn a reliable scan of the original into a machine readable standard. We also spent a lot of time dealing with the encoding routines and writing down encoding guidelines for the typists who needed to know what to do in all situations.

² *Dictionnaire Grammatical de la langue française*. Marseille Mossy 1761

In 2003 however, nine years after the first steps of the program, we were able to display online that first H.T.M.L. electronic version, thanks to Mark Olsen's very practical text-retriever system called Philologic³.

Moreover, through that particular interface, Féraud appeared on a "virtual shelf" of eight historical dictionaries called 'Dictionnaires d'autrefois'⁴, ranging from the *Thresor de la langue françoise* of Jean Nicot (1606) to Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française*. This rich collection is hosted on two mirror-sites located both at the University of Chicago and at the university of Nancy.

2. The first full-text interface of 2003 powered by Philologic text retriever

I will show you, as a sample of searching operations, two particular queries which can enhance the functionalities of that first plain interface.

You can first browse the general macrostructure of those eight dictionaries together, searching for a particular word.

French dictionaries of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries

Use the search box below to simultaneously query Jean Nicot's *Thresor de la langue française* (1606), Jean-François Féraud's *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (1787-1788), Émile Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1872-1877) and the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française* 1st (1694), 4th (1762), 5th (1798), 6th (1835), and 8th (1932-5) editions. Enter one word, accents optional (eg., parlement or humanité).

Haut du formulaire

ABERRATION

FIND

CLEAR

Bas du formulaire

Advanced Search Form
Full-Text Search Form

Figure 2 : Dictionnaires d'autrefois ' one look query form

Using the "one look" search form, just type in (in capitals) the word you are interested in. The text-retrieving system will research the whole data base and display those articles whose headword is that particular word, notwithstanding the variance of the spelling all along the French lexicographical tradition. This functionality hardly needs to be mentioned. But the result of such a query is of particular interest for students, colleagues and scholars working online or in certain regions of the world where library diachronic resources are poor and rare.

Yet each dictionary can also be searched separately in a full-text mode. As an example for Féraud's dictionary, a string like 'prov | proverbi.*' will be very helpful for a scholar interested in gathering the French familial and metaphorical phraseology of the time.

³ See the ARTFL project at the University of Chicago Library

⁴ See <http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17>

Féraud Search Form

Le *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* informatisé

de Jean-François Féraud, 1787-1788

Philippe Caron, Université de Poitiers & **Louise Dagenais**, Université de Montréal

Search the 14,970 headwords and full text in a structured database in the entire *Feraud* using accented characters and logical operators, described in the general **PhiloLogic** manual. The database has 1,928,000 words (types).

Haut du formulaire

feraud

\$Find Headword:

(e.g., TERTRE)

SEARCH

CLEAR

\$Full-Text Searching:

prov|proverbi.*

(e.g., *tradition*)

\$ Select a Search Option:



Single Term and Phrase Search (default)



Phrase separated by

2

words

or fewer



Proximity Searching in the same Sentence or



in the same Paragraph

\$ Select a Results Format:



Occurrences with Context (default)



Occurrences Line by Line (KWIC)



Frequency by Headword



Collocation Table Spanning

5



words. Turn Filter Off:



Filtered Words



Line by Line (KWIC) Sorted by keyword and word to its

Right



Display up to

500



occurrences.

SEARCH	CLEAR
--------	-------

Figure 3 : Féraud's full-text query form in *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*

By choosing the KWIC format (keyword in context), such a query normally receives this type of display on screen :

Jean-François FÉRAUD: *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*. Marseille, Mossy, 1787-1788, 3 vol. Fol.

To look up a word in a dictionary, select the word with your mouse and press 'd' on your keyboard.

Bibliographic criteria: **none**

Searching **Entire Database** for **prov|proverbi.***

Number of Unique Forms: 5

Search Terms: prov | proverbial | proverbiale | proverbialement | proverbiales

Your search found **1058** occurrences

Line by Line (KWIC) Report

Sorted by keyword and words to its right.

The complete report will take about: 6 seconds

Displaying first 500 of 1058 hits.

CONSTITUANT: ([p.a556a](#))tes du soufre. Aff. de **Prov.** _ On dit plus souvent, constitutives CONSTITUER,

FINIR: ([p.b251a](#))ctobre prochain. Affiches de **Prov.** _ On dit, d' imprimer, pour d'être imprimé. 3 .

PAYABLE: ([p.c110b](#))dans le st. fig. famil. et **prov.** _ Payer en même monnaie, rendre la pareille. Paye

CARÊME: ([p.a361b](#)) expressions du st. fam. ou **prov.** _ Face de Carême, visage pâle et défait. _ Don

BRÂS: ([p.a311a](#))rs phrases du style famil. ou **prov.** _ On dit à celui, qui étend la liberté, la per

ROND: ([p.c494a](#))assiète, comme une boule, st. **prov.** = Fig. en parlant des personnes, qui agit sans fa

MANGER: ([p.b601b](#))ange comme un chancre. (st. **prov.**) = 2 . Prendre ses repas."Il mange à l'auberge.

FORTUNE: ([p.b277a](#)) de mal et de fortune. St. **prov.** = 3 . Avancement et établissement favorable. Fai

LÂRRON: ([p.b537a](#))ouette, comme une pie. (st. **prov.**) = Lârron, fripon, filou, voleur (synon.) Le lâ

MUET: ([p.b701a](#))e."Muet comme un poisson, st. **prov.** = Fig. Qui ne parle point par malice, ou par hont

MERVEILLE: ([p.b644a](#)) promesses, est du style **prov.** = Les Anciens comptaient sept merveilles dans le

LEVANT: ([p.b549a](#))e."Le Soleil levant. En st. **prov.** adorer le Soleil levant, faire sa cour au nouveau

DÉPIT: (p.a722b)n, par dépit; au figuré (st. **prov.**,) agir par dépit contre ses intérêts. DÉPITEU
TRUELLE: (p.c754a) du plâtre blanc. = En st. **prov.** Aimer la truelle; aimer à bâtir. = Truellée, p
MAIGRE: (p.b584b)dre aux bouchers. _ On dit, **prov.:** aler du pied comme un chat maigre, fort vite. =

Figure 4 : Féraud's KWIC display on *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*

3/ Towards a comprehensive and XML -tagged version of the data base

Once that plain text version was comfortably working online from July 2003 onwards, we then thought we might go a little further ahead into the risky area of tagging at least some of the most discrete items within the article. Scholars used to the difficult art of digitizing old dictionaries (Wooldridge 1998b , Lancashire 1995) had first chosen a reduced mark-up language, i.e. limited to the typographical and tome/page/column properties. Yet a scrupulous analysis of the dictionary revealed there were enough regularities to rely on for a tagging operation.

Moreover, we were strongly attached to the idea of providing readers with the complete *Dictionnaire*, including the manuscript of the *Supplément* which consists in 700 pages of finely written manuscript (see figure 6 below). The advanced release should at least pursue both goals, we thought.

Besides, we had at least three precise and urgent prerequisites before undertaking the tagging:

- a network of tags should never be imposed on the text in such a way as to falsify it.
- It should be a flexible guide to intelligent and targeted queries
- Its (financial/human) cost should remain proportional to expected added value.

In that respect, we decided not to tag the sources of examples because of the lack of any specific typographical landmark. Moreover, we rejected the lemmatization of tokens (words and sources) as the diversity of spellings and abbreviations within the *Dictionnaire* was a maze that could not be reduced without an important human investment which we could not possibly afford in view of the modest added value.

Furthermore, while elaborating the DTD, which is THE key document for any XML encoding operation, we finally realized that the *Dictionnaire* was getting more and more regular as the letter A was completed. Moreover, it proved to be less resistant to the XML philosophy than we expected.

Using the first HTML version of the text, Jean-Yves Kerveillant (engineer at ATILF research team in Nancy, France) successfully worked out a series of 8 automata devoted to its transcription into ISO 8859 standard and tagging according to XML format. Those automata took into account all the typographical landmarks and syntactic properties we could possibly use to tag two levels of structure:

- general framework of the articles.

- detailed lexicographical indications we had been able to tag in an automatic or semi automatic way because they were discrete enough and identified by their typographic properties or by other means.

With such a challenge in front of us, we felt considerable relief when we realized at the output of the operation that most of the articles could successfully fit into the XML model. Of course the automata could fail or misplace the XML tags but only 0,001 % of the articles proved to be resistant to the DTD. Most of them were in fact additions annexed to the third volume of the D.C., the structure of which was completely different. In any case, a complete parsing of the articles is necessary after the automata's operations not only to reduce the cases they have been unable to solve by themselves but also to correct their mistakes.

On the whole, we believe that we found an interesting balance between two extreme positions: no tagging at all for ancient dictionaries or tagging all items, even if the result is scientifically clumsy.

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As a result, the new version is a much more sophisticated one, which offers multicriteria queries. Indeed, not all readers or users of an online dictionary have the same expectations. Some of them just want to look up and check a word. But a good many of the users have more specialized needs. The new version is designed for the latter. Among other facilities, strings of characters may thus be investigated within certain areas of the article only, including :

- headword or part of the headword (beginning /end of headword)
- phonographic component
- quotations, whether prose, verses or both

Roughly speaking, three different menus are available on screen, and correspond to various types of queries.

4/ Searching a general survey of the macrostructure

Using the vertical menu situated on the left side of the screen (see next figure below at "Choix du type d'article"), one can choose to display part of the lexicographical corpus : all articles, full articles , phonographical articles , cross-reference void articles, manuscript articles of the Supplément.

DICTIONNAIRE

CRITIQUE,

DE LA LANGUE

FRANÇAISE.

PAR M. l'abbé FÉRAUD, Auteur du Dictionnaire Grammatical.

Choix du type d'article : Articles dans le Suppl. manuscrit ▼

VACHE - VENIMEÛSE ▼

- [VACHE](#) S (article plein)
- [VACHER](#) S (article plein)
- [VACHÈRE](#) S (article plein)
- [VACHERIE](#) S (article plein)
- [VADE](#) S
- [VADEMANQUE](#) S
- [VAGISSEMENT](#) S (article plein)
- [VAGUE](#) S (article plein)
- [VAGUE-MÈSTRE](#) S
- [VAGUEMENT](#) S (article plein)
- [VAGUER](#) S (article plein)
- [VAIDASSE](#) S
- [VAILLAMMENT](#) S (article plein)
- [VAILLANCE](#) S (article plein)
- [VAILLANT](#) S (article plein)
- [VAILLANTE](#) S (article plein)
- [VAILLANTISE](#) S (article plein)
- [VAIN](#) S (article plein)
- [VAINCRE](#) S (article plein)
- [VAINE](#) S (article plein)
- [VAINEMENT](#) S (article plein)

Avec le soutien du

W3C XHTML 1.0 ✓

W3C CSS ✓

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Figure 5 left hand side menu of Féraud's advanced search form on CNRTL

The capital S next to an entry means that the manuscript is of interest. Clicking on a particular entry will then display the beautiful scan of Féraud's manuscript at the right page :

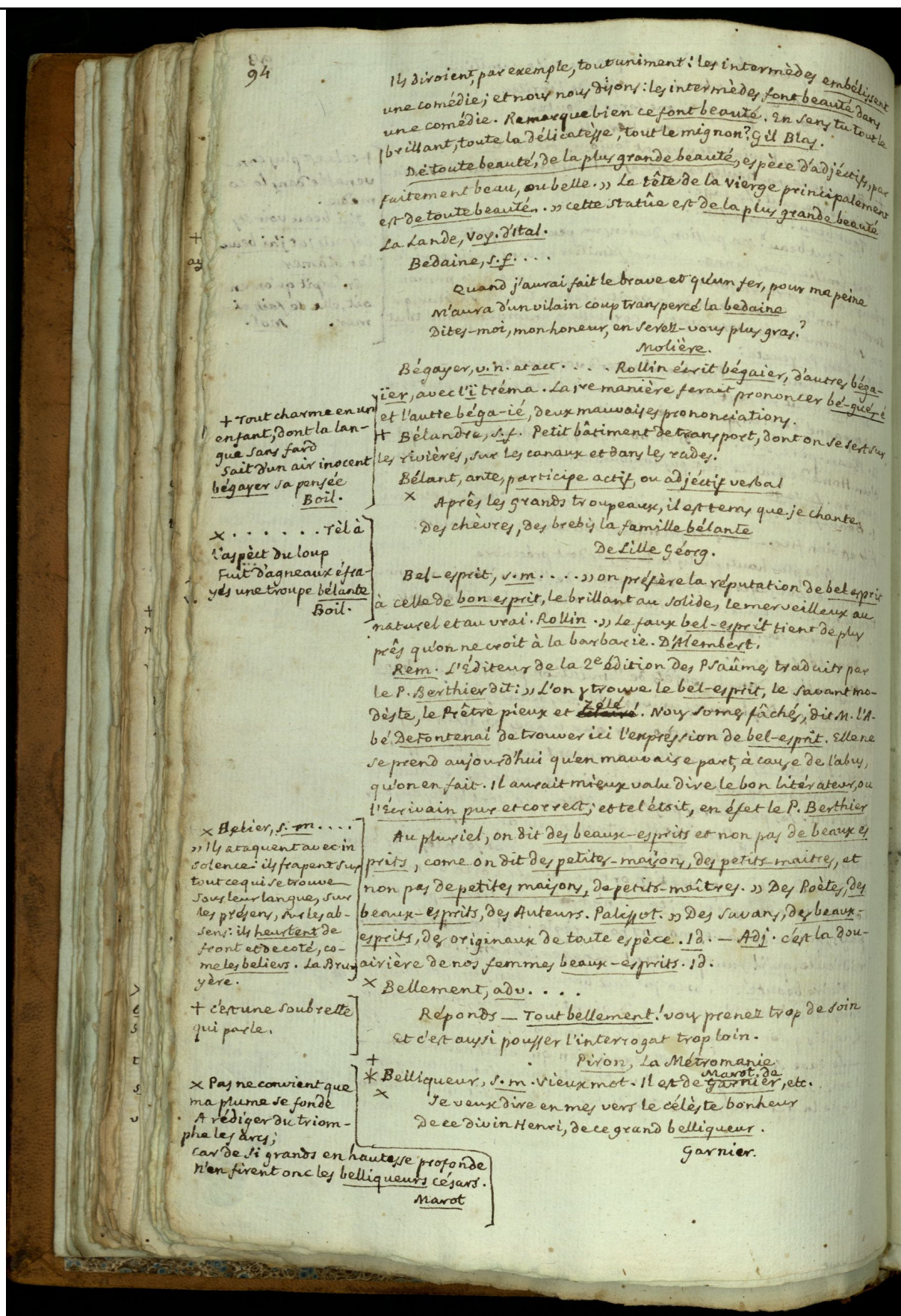


Figure 6 : manuscript of Féraud's Supplément on line

Such a general query is mainly designed for examining the main features of the dictionary in a meta-lexicographical perspective, whereas the horizontal menu situated at the top of the screen (see next figure below) is all about searching certain articles or strings of characters in a particular context. The tagging system actually offers a range of queries which is a real change for a better query.

5/ Searching a range of articles corresponding to detailed interests

As you can see on figure 7, five drop-down lists are displayed on the upper part on the horizontal menu, three of them enabling a separate and/or combined use. We'll be dealing with that particular use first.

If you are interested in displaying certain articles according to their type and/or their grammatical category and/or their normative status (the "Avec astérisque" roll-down menu), you can fill in the three drop-down lists with your particular choice. The machine will therefore list on the left side of the screen those articles that are concerned by your query. For example, you may be interested by a series of "full articles" labelled 'adjectives' with the asterisk of non-standard use on the headwords :

Figure 7 : filling three drop-down lists in the search form

The text retriever system will therefore fetch all articles concerned by your query and list them on the left hand side vertical menu as follows :

- [AMÉ](#) (article plein)
- [AMÉE](#) (article plein)
- [AMUSABLE](#) (article plein)
- [ANECDOTIQUE](#) (article plein)
- [ANTÉDILUVIEN](#) (article plein)
- [APPERCEVANT](#) (article plein)
- [ARATOÎRE](#) (article plein)
- [ARDU](#) (article plein)
- [ASINAIRE](#) (article plein)
- [ASSABLÉ](#) (article plein)
- [ASSIGNANT](#) (article plein)
- [ASTUCIEUX](#) § (article plein)
- [ASTUTIEUX](#) § (article plein)

Figure 8 : displaying a list of articles corresponding to 3 criteria

Clicking on one of those items will make it appear in the main data framework next to the list:

Entrée

Entrée

Supplément

Colonne

Page

Légendes de l'affichage :

- : césure en fin de ligne ambiguë (possible trait d'union ou de syllabation)
- : intervention de l'éditeur scientifique (le plus souvent coquille typographique)

* ACATIQUE, ou AQUATIQUE, adj. Suivant Richelet, l' un et l' autre se dit; mais le 1er. est plus doux et plus en usage. Il veut donc qu' on prononce akatike. Il a tort, et pour l' orthogr. et pour la prononciation Voy. AQUATIQUE.

Direction scientifique : Philippe Caron & Louise Dagenais

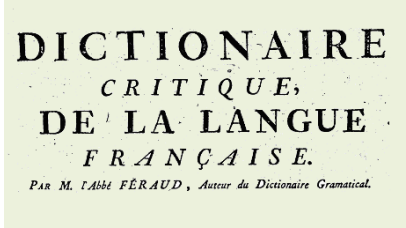
Those filters are meant to collect specialized glossaries of entries . The next one deals with searching words or strings of characters.

6/ Searching a string of characters under particular conditions

This is perhaps the utmost fulfilment of the project : using all the drop-down lists available, it is possible to collect data corresponding to such a complex query as

- Display all headwords
- ending in -ment
- provided that the words are described as
 - adverbs in the "categorie" drop-down list
 - article plein (full-article) in the 'type d'article' drop-down list
 - non-standard in the 'avec astérisque' drop-down list

Not only does the system list the adverbs, it also summarises your query (see abstract in red) as a feed back :



Choix du type d'article :

Votre recherche : l'expression "ment" en fin de vedettes, dans un contexte d'article plein, considérées par Féraud comme "fautives", ayant la catégorie grammaticale : 'Adverbe'

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

X

Y

Z

Haut du formulaire

Bas du formulaire

--- 31 vedettes correspondent à votre recherche ---

- [ABSTRAITEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [AFFABLEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [AIMABLEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [ANONYMENT](#) (article plein)
- [ATROCEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [AUCUNEMENT](#) § (article plein)
- [AUGUSTEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [BRÈVEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [BRILLAMMENT](#) (article plein)
- [BRUYAMMENT](#) (article plein)
- [CAPABLEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [CAÛTELEÛSEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [CONSIDÉRÉMENT](#) (article plein)
- [COURTEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [CRÉDULEMENT](#) § (article plein)
- [CRITIQUEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [DÉCIDÉMENT](#) § (article plein)
- [DÉCONTENANCEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [DÉSASTREÛSEMENT](#) § (article plein)
- [ÉBAUCHÉMENT](#) (article plein)
- [EMPIRIQUEMENT](#) (article plein)
- [ÉVASIVEMENT](#) (article plein)

Figure 9 : Multicriteria queries and answers

Whereas the main data framework to the right will display any article you might select in the list:

Haut du formulaire

[Aide](#)

Bas du formulaire




Entrée
Supplément
Colonne
Page

Légendes de l'affichage :

- : césure en fin de ligne ambiguë (possible trait d'union ou de syllabation)
- : intervention de l'éditeur scientifique (le plus souvent coquille typographique)

* AUCUNEMENT, adv. Même avec la négation, il est peu en usage: on dit à sa place, nullement. "Il ne faut aucunement, ou plutôt, nullement avoir commerce avec les méchants. ==L' Acad. le met avec la négative sans remarque. – Sans négation, il est tout-à-fait hors d'usage. On le disait autrefois pour, en quelque sorte. "L' Académie s' est aucunement consolée, voyant que la violence qu' on lui faisoit, s' acordoit avec l' utilité publique. Sentimens sur le Cid. – On le dit encôre au Palais. "Ayant aucunement égard à la demande, etc. Ferrière. On s' en sert aussi dans le style marotique.

Je ne sais bête au monde pire
Que l' Écolier, si ce n' est le Pédant.
Le meilleur de ces deux, pour voisin, à vrai dire,
Ne me plairoit aucunement.
Là il est avec la négative, et signifie nullement. Dans la Fable suivante, il est employé sans négation.

Tout homme ment, dit le Sage:
S' il n' y mettoit seulement
Que les gens de bas étage,
On pourroit aucunement
Souffrir ce défaut aux hommes, etc.
Corneille l' a employé dans une Tragédie.
L' heureux moment aproche où votre destinée
Semble être aucunement à la nôtre enchaînée.
Rodogune.

AUCUNEMENT était comode pour les Poètes. Ils ont fait une perte dans la décadence de ce mot. Ils n' ont guère d' espoir de le voir se relever.

Direction scientifique : Philippe Caron & Louise Dagenais

From that framework you can change the display by pressing the yellow 'page' or 'colonne' (column) or 'Supplément' buttons, to get an insight of a larger context, whereas using the left and right arrows will display the previous or the next article of the list.

7/ A rich hyperlink lexicographical gathering

Moreover, this lexicographical enterprise is not isolated. It figures among a cluster of closely linked ancient or modern historical dictionaries that increases tremendously the added value of each of them: selecting and clicking on any word of any article of Féraud's Dictionary will first give you access to the important and sophisticated TLFi (Trésor de la langue française informatisé) devoted to contemporary French (XIXth and XXth century) and to the 4th edition of the French Academy's dictionary (1762) which is the one Féraud had constantly on his desk. But one can continue further with the investigation from the new screen towards Academy's 1st, 6th and 7th editions, the DMF (Dictionary of Middle French) and other linguistic materials. The CNRTL turns to be, so to speak, a hub of lexicographical, lexicological and textual resources.

8/ Conclusion

With the CNRTL site, substantial progress has been made in linking francophone lexicographical, computational and textual resources to provide scholars with a wide range of data which has changed our approach to the diachronic and synchronic study of the French language. All those resources are free of charge, supported by the French C.N.R.S. (National Centre for Scientific Research). They are offered to all scholars, readers and lovers of the French language.

Philippe Caron
University of Poitiers
France
Philippe.Caron@univ-poitiers.fr

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