The Dickens Lexicon
and its Practical Use for Linguistic Research

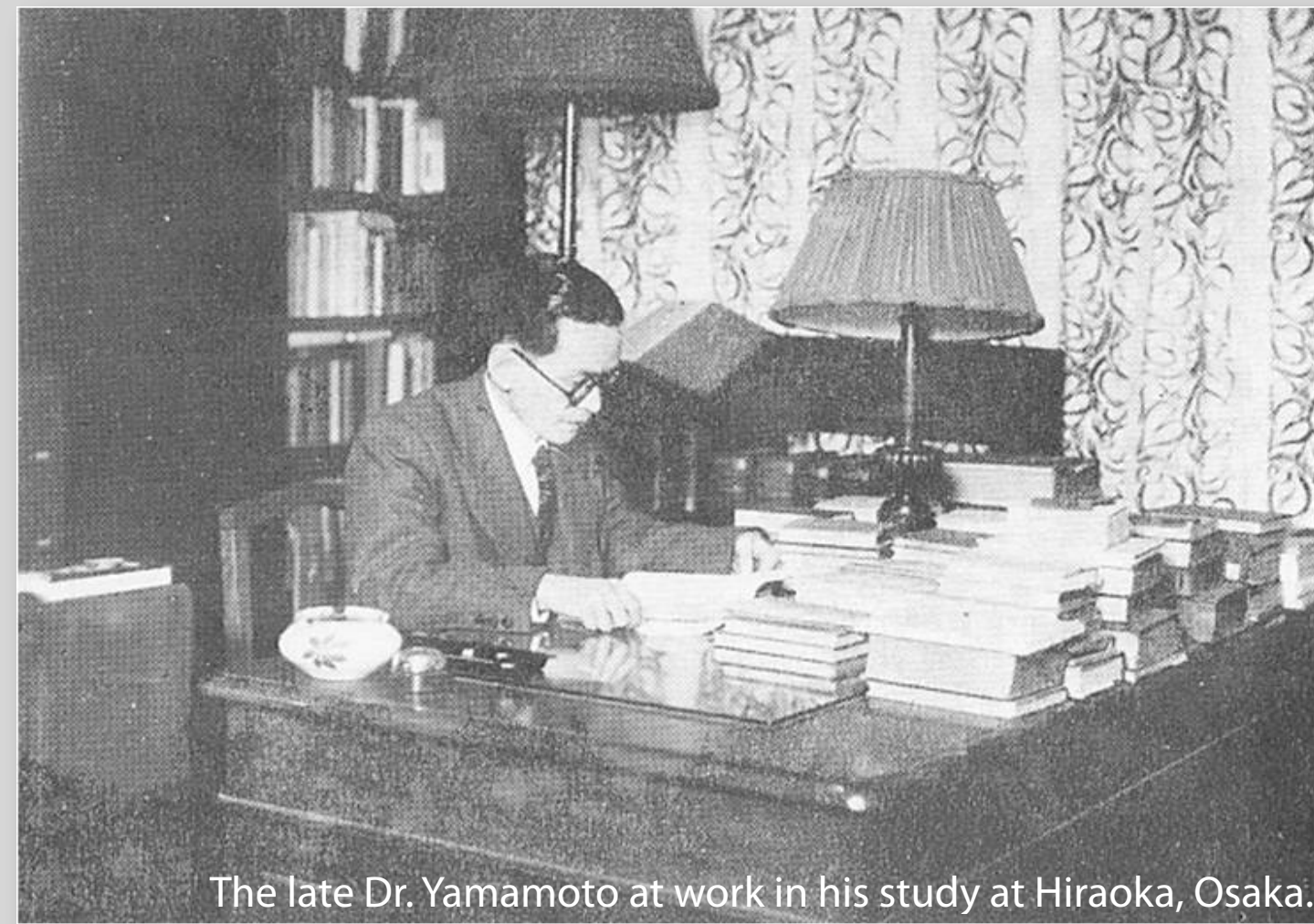Masahiro Hori*, Osamu Imahayashi†, Tomoji Tabata‡, and Miyuki Nishio§

* Kumamoto Gakuen University, † University of Hiroshima, ‡ University of Osaka, § Kinki University
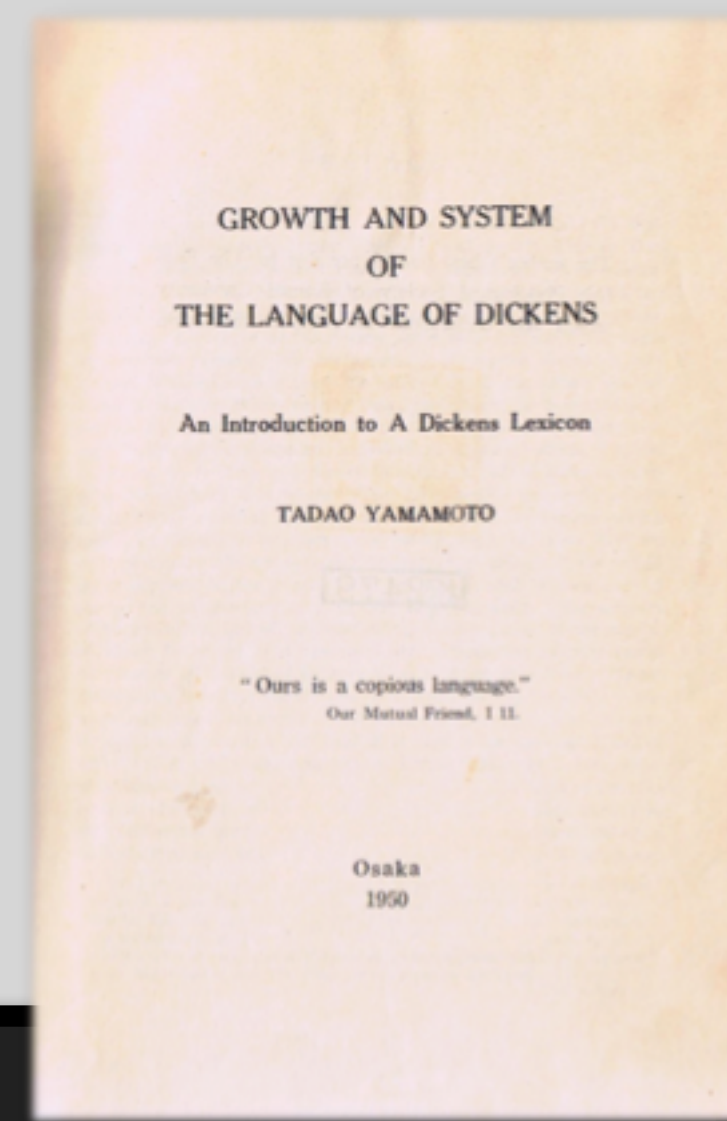
Dickens adopts an abundance of examples with various colloquial phrases and expression in his works. Storm and George Gissing also admit that **Dickens' language is very idiomatic**. In order to deeply understand Dickens' language as well as his works, one of the best ways is to study **idioms** which Dickens uses in his letters and novels. The late Dr. Tadao Yamamoto tried to compile a *Dickens Lexicon*, studying Dickens' language, and in particular idioms.

1. History

- It was not until the beginning of World War II that Dr. Tadao Yamamoto first established in his mind a plan for the compilation of the *Dickens Lexicon*; the earliest idea of which was suggested in *Studies in English Literature* (Vol. XIII, No. 3, 1943).

- As the war situation turned progressively worse, he decided to leave the completion of the *Lexicon* for a future date.

The late Dr. Yamamoto at work in his study at Hiraoka, Osaka.

- He did, however, write an "Introduction" to it in the early spring of 1944, and in the same year presented it as a doctoral thesis to the University of Tokyo under the title of *Growth and System of the Language of Dickens: An Introduction to A Dickens Lexicon*. * The third edition (2003: ISBN978-4-87440-775-2/ISBN4-87440-775) was published by Keisuisha, Japan.

- In 1948 Dr. Yamamoto organised the first joint research project for the compilation of *A Dickens Lexicon*, which was granted a Government Subsidy for Scientific Research by the Department of Education for 1948.

- Having realised the limitations and difficulties of this joint research, Yamamoto reorganised the project with a reduced team of researchers. However, this second joint project did not bear fruits either.

- Yamamoto died in 1991 without seeing the project completed.

GROWTH AND SYSTEM
OF
THE LANGUAGE OF DICKENS

An Introduction to A Dickens Lexicon

TADAO YAMAMOTO

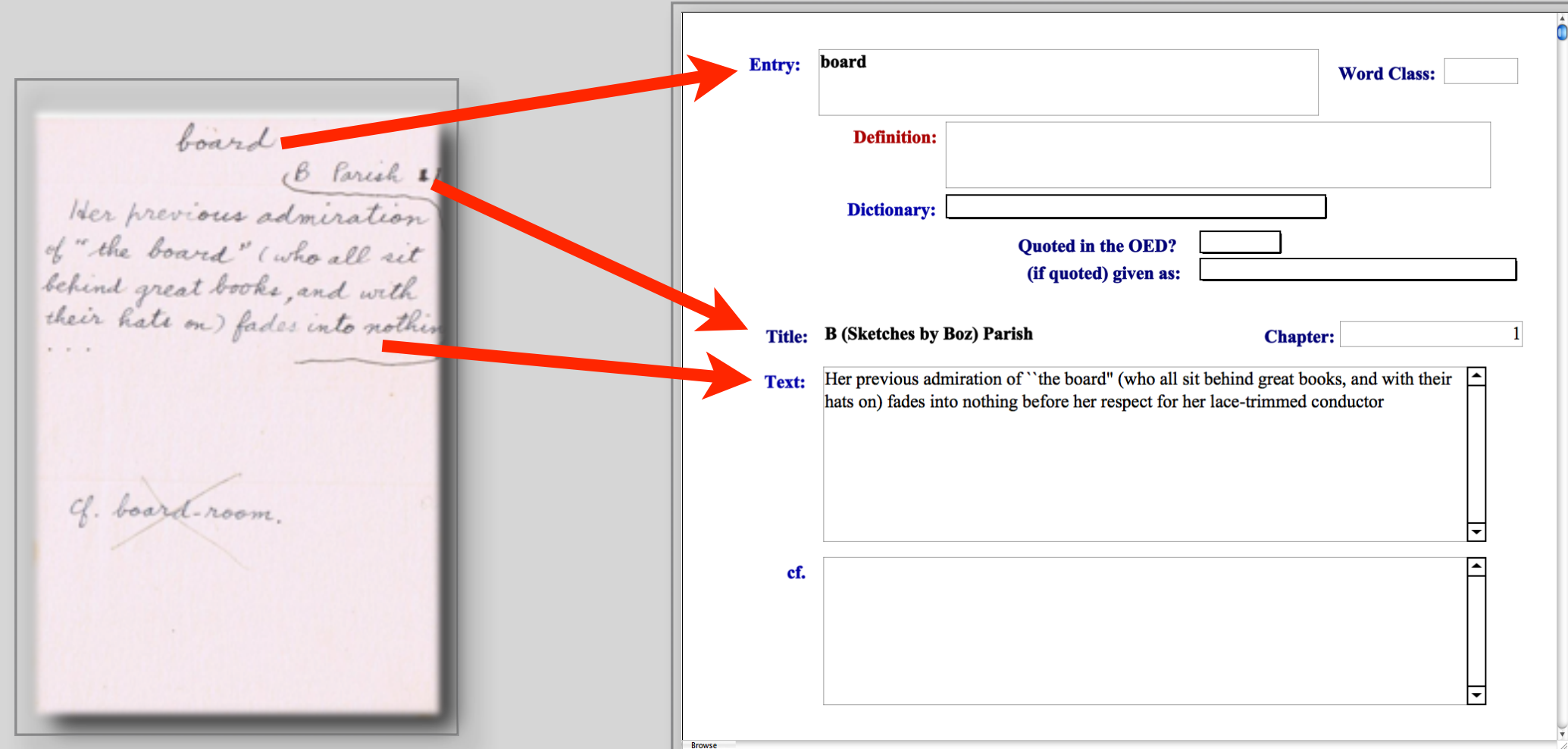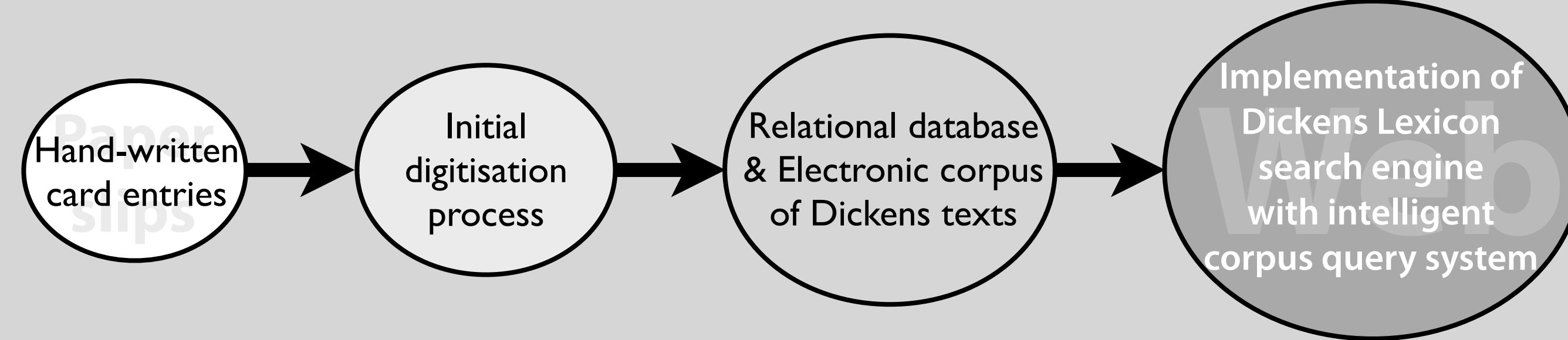"Ours is a copious language."
Our Mutual Friend, I.12.

Osaka
1950

The New *Dickens Lexicon* project was launched in 1998 by a research group of twenty scholars whose ultimate aim has been to compile the *Dickens Lexicon* from the approximately 60,000 cards Dr. Tadao Yamamoto (1904-91) elaborately drew up and left to us. The *Dickens Lexicon* is expected to be released as the "Dickens Lexicon Online" on an Internet website with a multifunctional search engine. This poster provides an introduction to the *Dickens Lexicon* project, including its practical use for research.

Dickens Lexicon Web

DICKENS LEXICON ONLINE

Standard Query Options:

Text search: Word(s)/phrase(s)

<p>``**Look sharp** below there, gents,'' exclaims the dresser, a red-headed and red-whiskered Jew, calling through the trap, ``they're a-going to ring up.

Lexicon entry: look sharp

Definition: orig, 'to look sharply after something'; in later use, 'to bestir oneself briskly, to lose no time.'

Idioms are expressions which are **delimitable units** of a language, which may happen to be single sounds, single words, phrases, or sentences. Delimitation takes place according to the linguistic sense of those who use the language as their mother tongue, this sense being at once psychological, social and historical. These three elements are unified in the sense of peculiar familiarity, which may or may not be strange to those who do not use it as their native language.
(*Growth and System of the Language of Dickens*: 394)

2. Development

Hand-written card entries → Initial digitisation process → Relational database & Electronic corpus of Dickens texts → Implementation of Dickens Lexicon search engine with intelligent corpus query system

Yamamoto's original hand-writing: "board"

An initial digitisation phase: Data entry into a FileMaker database

3. *The Dickens Lexicon* Online

The Dickens Lexicon is designed as a web-based reference resource. Users will be able to search and retrieve lexical data (an idiom, its word class, definition, source, and quotation), stored in the original card database of the approximately 60,000 indexed entries without installing extra software (apart from a web browser) on their computers. The lexicon will also be implemented with a multifunctional information retrieval system.

The Dickens Lexicon will be accessible from smart phones and iPads as well as from computers!

In addition to the indexed entries, the lexicon will make it possible to retrieve frequency information on lexical items (from single words to phrases, including multi-word units) drawing upon the full corpus of Dickens' texts and an additional set of major 18th and 19th century fictional texts. A range of functions such as concordance display, sort capability, and distribution chart will be available in a user-friendly interface. Therefore, a close scrutiny of idioms appearing in the Dickens Lexicon with a multifunctional information retrieval system will not only make us aware of the ways idioms provided an important characteristic in Dickens' usage of English, compared with those in other major 18th and 19th century fictional texts, but will also provide insights into the characteristic structure of idiomaticity in the English language as well.