

**Profile of the  
Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE) Program  
College of Letters and Science, UW-Madison  
2011 Regents Academic Staff Excellence Award Recipient**

**Program Facts, Activities, and Resources**

- The *Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)* is a multi-volume reference tool that records the thousands of words, phrases, and pronunciations that vary from one part of our country to another. Based both on extensive fieldwork in 1,002 communities across the country between 1965 and 1970 and on a comprehensive collection of written materials, *DARE* traces the history of each word as it has been used in America.
- Professor Frederic G. Cassidy (Department of English, UW-Madison) first envisioned *DARE* nearly 50 years ago. The project that he expected to complete by himself in a decade with the assistance of two editors has required an editorial staff ranging from two to 10 Academic Staff members over the last four decades.
- Cassidy remained involved in *DARE* following his retirement in 1978, and gradually entrusted leadership of the project to Senior Scientist Joan Houston Hall, who became Associate Editor in 1979 and Chief Editor following Cassidy's death in 2000. Hall has supervised the editorial and production work; obtained steady funding through noteworthy collaborations among federal agencies, private foundations, the UW, and generous individuals; and publicized the project widely, through nationwide radio programs, presentations in cities across the state and around the country, and many scholarly publications.
- *DARE* staff members (in the Scientist, Researcher, and Special Librarian categories) have done the background research and written the text for the more than 50,000 entries in the four volumes published to date (by Harvard University Press in 1985, 1991, 1996, and 2002). Volume V, which will complete the alphabet, is to be published in fall 2011. An electronic edition will follow.
- Volume I was honored as "Best Book in the Humanities for 1985" by the Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers.
- *DARE*'s success in the professional and public realms has contributed to UW-Madison being held in high regard by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

**In the words of reviewers**

- "The most exciting linguistic project going on in the United States." – William Safire, "On Language" columnist for *The New York Times*
- "It is a work to consult, and a work to savor—a work to last a lifetime." – Henry Kisor, book review in the *Chicago Sun-Times*
- "This survey of spoken English is...unprecedented. It's also scholarly, endlessly fascinating and enlightening. You can hear America talking from its pages." – Howard S. Shapiro, book review in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*

### **In the words of the program's Associate Deans**

- “DARE...is a jewel among the UW-Madison humanities projects. Its importance to numerous academic fields cannot be over-emphasized. Linguistics, English language, literature and culture, folklore, history, geography, anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines draw on it. So do medical doctors and police investigators, among others.”

Magdalena Hauner, Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, College of Letters and Science, Graduate School, UW-Madison

- “*DARE* ranks among the on-going initiatives of which the Graduate School is especially proud for how beautifully it embodies our combined mission of education and research...*DARE* has been a project marked by the highest of scholarly performance standards. The project has an international reputation for excellence and is regularly used and cited by scholars, students and language enthusiasts of all kinds. It is the gold standard for dictionaries of its kind and the model by which any similar projects are judged. *DARE* consistently receives the highest accolades from external granting sources, and its overall excellence has added greatly to the reputation of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the entire UW System.”

Susan C. Cook, Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, College of Letters and Science, Graduate School, UW-Madison