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### Defining Words, Without the Arbiters

I think a service like Wordnik has great potential and will change how we discover and understand the meaning of words. Currently when I don't know a word I google it and usually run across a [dictonary.com](dictonary.com) entry. Wordnik has a leg up on traditional dictionaries since they can generate examples from real content for word usage.

While this method of understanding words is changing how we use them, I still see the need for human lexicographers to oversee the system. Without a human in the mix we might start using words out of context and completely distort their meaning.

### In 500 Billion Words, New Window on Culture

I think the use of a tool like this is vital to understanding trends in literature, culture, and humanities. It will be interesting to see what patterns emerge out of its use.

### Ngram Viewer

This tool is awesome! It seems that when I compare taco and burrito, tacos are much more popular in literature. There is a slight spike back around 1812 to around 1823 then very little activity until early 1900's followed by the steady increase in the 1930's-1940's. From this one might conclude that the words are used in a different way than they had been used previously. My speculation is that because of advertising, the two words show up more in written literature

[http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?](http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?)
[content=taco%2Cburrito&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3](content=taco%2Cburrito&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=3)

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