Alain Rey

Alain Rey is the emblematic figure and Editor-in-chief of Le Robert publishing house. His importance in the field of French language and dictionary making has been compared to that of Alan Turing in the field of computers. His progressive and inclusive editorial vision combines rigorous expertise and the inclusion of new, regional, and slang words into mainstream dictionaries. A linguist, lexicographer, and language philosopher, Alain Rey has published many books on language, semiotics, and literature. In 2005, the French Minister of Culture and Communication awarded him the title of Commander in the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Order of Arts and Literature). He is also a popular columnist.

In 1952, after studying political science, humanities and art history, Rey replied to an advertisement placed by Paul Robert who was looking for linguists to compile a new dictionary. He was hired after brilliantly passing a competitive exam and, at age 25, quickly became Robert's first collaborator on the Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique (1953). Robert's network of lexicographers grew and in 1964 the very first Le Robert dictionary was published.

Rey went on to supervise the publication of many more dictionaries under the Le Robert trademark: Le Petit Robert (1967); Le Petit Robert des noms propres (1974), an illustrated encyclopedia of proper names; Le Dictionnaire des expressions et locutions (1979), a dictionary of phrases and expressions; Le Grand Robert de la langue française (1985), a nine-volume dictionary with the widest nomenclature on the market; Le Nouveau Petit Robert de la langue française (1993), the “authoritative single-volume dictionary of the French language” (Wikipedia); Le Dictionnaire historique de la langue française (1992). Alain Rey’s crowning achievement is his Dictionnaire culturel en langue française (2005) which explores the cultural resonance of words.

Rey is also a well-known and well-liked French media personality. In the period 1993-2006, he appeared daily on France Inter's Sept neuf trente morning radio show in a three-minute closing segment showcasing an entertaining analysis of the French vocabulary. Rey often garnished these segments with political commentary of a libertarian stripe. In 2004-2005 he appeared daily after the 8pm TV newscast on France 2, in a segment entitled Démo des Mots in which he explained the history of the French financial jargon.

Le Robert dictionaries tell an amazing story of scholarship and success and have taken center stage in the French cultural landscape, and around the world with a series of bilingual dictionaries and other e-products. See http://www.lerobert.com/