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The primary limitation is that the Ngram viewer only draws its data from the books that Google has digitized. Google estimates that there are about 130 million unique books in the world, but according to a story published by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, on March 9, 2012, Google has only digitized about 20 million books. While 20 million books is impressive, a significant number of those books are duplicates of the same work published in a different year or by a different company, so at best the Ngram data set only represents less than 15% of all books. Other obvious limitation of the Ngram data set is that it does not include magazines, newspapers or advertisements. Limitations aside, there are flaws spread throughout Google's digitization process that has incorrectly attributed authorship, and dates of publication. Given the scope of the project, some errors are to be expected but it is unclear how often these types of errors occur or how they affect the data.

One final complication, specifically related to searching for the incidence of whiskey and whisky in books, is the fact that along with being a word with an alternate spelling, whiskey is also a homograph, a word with the same sound and spelling but different meanings. Whiskey also means a light carriage though that definition was primarily used in the 18th century. I know for certain that Ngram was not able to exclude this homograph from the results so some of the early results for whiskey are tainted by this alternate meaning. All that being said I still think that the Ngrams are accurate enough to provide a picture of how often whiskey and whisky were used over the last three hundred years.