

Indexing *Networked*: Notes by Barry Wellman, January 2012

Preamble

I just made my fifth book index. It's for Lee Rainie & Barry Wellman, *Networked* (MIT Press), due out in May 2012.

I took running notes on Twitter about how I indexed, and I thought it useful to codify and post them. My thanks to my high school intern Isabella Chiu for compiling and de-tweeting these notes, although I have gone further with rewriting and reorganizing.

Procedure

MIT Press' instructions suggested that I use 3x5" "index cards" – so that's where the term comes from!—and then transcribe them.

No thanks. I used Word, with an alphabetical sort at the end. The aim was to get as much of the index as I could read onto a single screen of my 24" monitor.

I made each page into:

- Three columns
- Very narrow page margins
- Narrow column margins
- Single-spaced
- Frequently used index terms such as “**Networked Individualism**” were in Red font, so it was easier to spot them and go to them
- No extra spacing between paragraphs
- Calibri font, although Arial Narrow would have been even tighter
- 8-point font (the smallest I could read on my 24" monitor)
- View two pages on the same screen
- Thumb index the compressed columns as many print dictionaries do (such as Merriam-Webster 10th Collegiate), so that it is easier to find items: e.g., **CCCCC**—bold, centered, underlined, and italicized.

Indexing must be done in a short period of time, so that the indexer keeps track of the entire corpus of the index headings. Doing it my way, I was able to see all of the entries most of the way through, and even when the index grew, it only went to a third page (more importantly a second screen). Even near the end, when I had expanded the number of entries to 440, I had “absent presence” through “social network” all visible on a single screen, with the rest just one screen down—ending at “Zuckerberg”.

I didn't use Word's indexing routine, available under References, because I didn't trust it. I doubt that computer-generated indexes are as good as human-generated ones because they miss allusions, similes, etc. They're too literal.

MIT Press wants an en dash between page numbers (e.g., 16–17) and not a shorter hyphen (16-17). # -- # provides an en dash, where # stands for number in Word 2010. (BTW, #---# provides an em dash—for setting off phrases in text.) I made things even easier by making a keyboard shortcut so that Ctrl- becomes an en dash. I’ve kept this, and will use it in my future reference lists. You can make this shortcut by going to References/Symbols and then finding the en dash – near the bottom of the list: just hit “Shortcut Key” and tell Word what you want to use.

The Index is supposed to be in alphabetical order, but "Woods, Tiger" looked weird. Should it be "Tiger Woods"? I wondered, but ultimately I used the conventional "Woods, Tiger". On the other hand, Pope Benedict XVI became: "Benedict, Pope XVI" as I didn't think anyone would find him under "XVI" in the alphabetical index.

Indexing makes for strange bedfellows. "Benedict XVI, Pope" is followed by "Berners-Lee, Tim" and "Beyond Reality" Nothing implied except alphabetizing.

"Agents" follows "agency". Yet, "agency" means taking charge yourself. "Agents" means computer apps that take care of you. This is a contradiction that became clear only when I reviewed the Index.

I'm proud that I managed to work both "Socrates" and "Seldon, Hari" into the index. Alphabetically close, but many thousands of years apart.

Passes

I used the bound uncorrected proofs to create the index. Except for about 20 obvious pre-made entries (“networked individualism”, etc.), the first pass through the book took me one full day (about 10 hours) and yielded 404 entries.

Yet, as I developed new index terms as I went through the first pass, I realized that I ran the risk of not using the new terms for the pages I had already indexed.

So I did a second pass on the next day. It grew the index to 440 entries, and I added page numbers to some of the already-existing entries. It took four hours.

After 64 years of reading, indexing taught me a new thing about books: Our book, and all English language books—a quick scan of my library shows—has even numbered pages on the left and odd numbered pages on the right. This discovery saved me a lot of typing time.

At the end, I had 2½ compressed pages (see Appendix 1). I then converted into MIT Press’ requirements: Times New Roman, 12 point, no columns, and no thumb-indexing. Each entry became a double-spaced paragraph with hanging indents (for long entries). Voila, 2½ pages became 19, still in docx format (Appendix 2).

Post-Op

Indexing created an occupational injury. My fingers and palms have hundreds of tiny, painful paper cuts from flipping the bound proof pages back and forth. (Actually, the first cuts came from the prior proof reading step: That, too, is best done on paper because you miss too much when you proof on the screen.) It only hurts when I type. But, it did call forth a poem:

The Indexer's Lament by Barry Wellman, in the style of Henry Gibson of Laugh-In:

*He died like all good indexers:
From death by one million paper cuts*

*O bury me not strewn with 3x5 cards
But with my 24" screen clasped to my bosom*

For I am a semi-modern man

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