

A Good Index Turns a Book into a Library

By Matt Weilert for Small Publishers, Artists & Writer's Network

A well-constructed index is what transforms a book into an entire library, *a gateway to learning*. Those who think they are "published" when they have but jotted some words on paper and found a vendor to print them, do both themselves and their audience a grave disservice.

Kathleen, SPAWN Executive Director, invited me to write this article on indexing and I was eager to accept, having spent hour after hour wrangling with MS-Word to get it to produce a halfway decent index. While this is not the final word on the subject (pun intended), the points here should help you complete your book index much more smoothly.

We'll cover these topics:

Structuring your document

http://youtu.be/pgj7_DmgDqs?t=2m2s

Preparing your wordlist

http://youtu.be/pgj7_DmgDqs?t=2m28s

Generating the index

http://youtu.be/pgj7_DmgDqs?t=6m39s

Integrating your index and references

http://youtu.be/pgj7_DmgDqs?t=7m50s

Composing your table of contents

http://youtu.be/pgj7_DmgDqs?t=3m54s

Because my career is all about delivering cross-disciplinary insights, we will follow the path blazed by Aaron Copeland in his classic *Fanfare for the Common Man* in our journey to a well-constructed index.

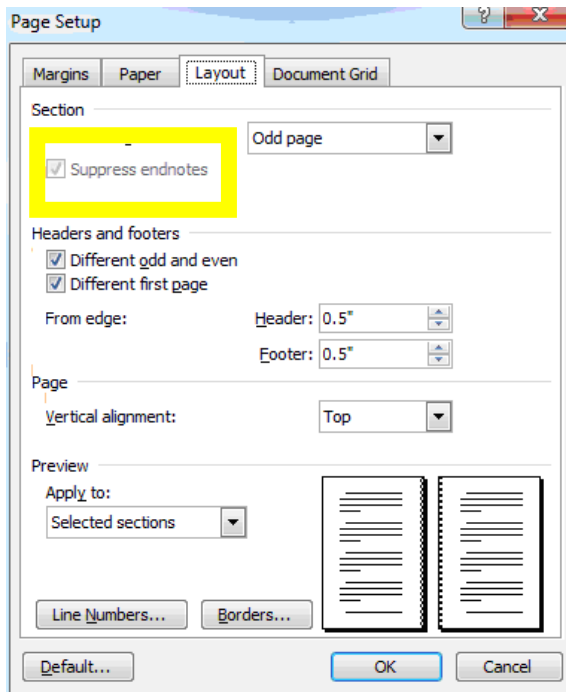
Structuring your document

http://youtu.be/pgj7_DmgDqs?t=2m2s

Working on the index begins well before you've written the last word. Like Copeland's symphony, the front and the back of the document must harmoniously meet, so structuring your document to automatically pull in the headings and subheads will save a great deal of time and effort in preparing your table of contents and *excluding the table of contents from your index!*. While footnotes may seem initially more convenient for the

reader, they distract from the flow of the narrative and radically disrupt the formatting if you ever have to scan a hardcopy to resurrect a lost file.

On rare occasions, detailed content in this reference comes from MS-Word documenta-



tion, but much more often from talented people who have shared their expertise on the web. If you have corrections or additions to share, please send them to books@stipress.com and someone from our team will get back with you!

ACTUALLY SENDING ENDNOTES TO THE END

To produce endnotes at the back of the book, each section (except the last) must be set to [suppress endnotes](#), which means that your references (endnotes and bibliography) must come *before* the index section. Otherwise pages will not be included in the index. The Scrivener word processor and professional indexing tools offer far more options. We'll focus on MS-Word solutions here because it's what so

many people are faced with using.

ALWAYS STARTING A CHAPTER ON THE RIGHT SIDE

John McGhie & Jeremy Saul describe [how to force an unblank even \(left-side\) page](#) at the end of a chapter as well as a host of other useful tools, tips & techniques at the Word MVP site..

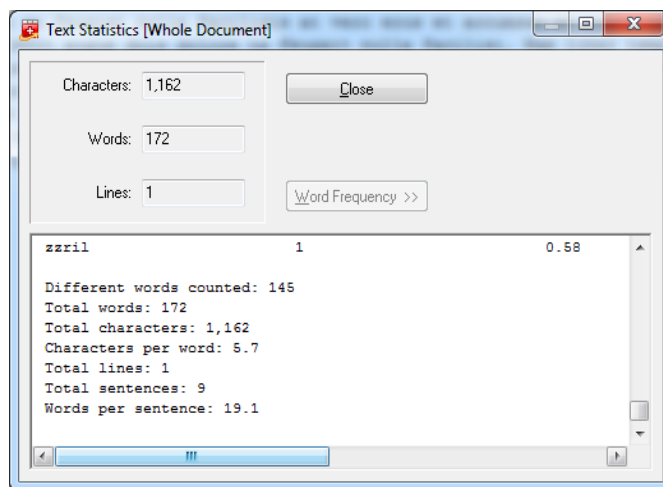
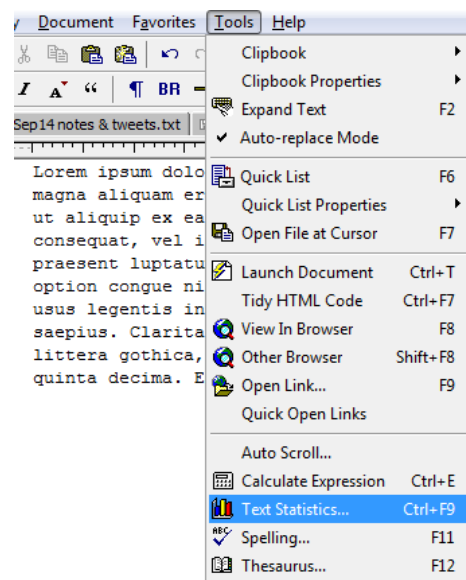
Preparing your wordlist

Just like a symphony integrates the specific sounds of strings and brass, we'll integrate the specific strengths of various programs and applications to overcome the weaknesses of Word index functions. For PC users, there is a fantastic program called [NoteTab](#) that has a light version for free that we'll use to generate our wordlist, the core of our index contents. There are index purists out there that will call me heretical when I say that in today's digital world, the index is more of a key to the book than the table of contents.

Having a comprehensive index allows anyone to customize the way they access the information in your work, not limited to what the indexer thought was relevant at the time when your work was initially popular. This feature, called **granularity**, describing how

finely divided your searchable subdivisions are, is a vital aspect of developing cross-disciplinary insights.

- 1) Save your Word document as text. Starting with a nonsense document composed of the classic 'lorem ipsum' text, we'll walk through the process of converting your word list to a 'concordance' that does the heavy lifting of marking the index entries in your document.
- 2) Open your text document in NoteTab. Using NoteTab's Text Stats function gives a word listing and frequency of each unique word. It also auto-sorts by alpha.
 - i) Tools|Text Statistics|More



- 3) Copy all (Control-a to select all, Control-c to copy)
- 4) Paste into Spreadsheet (such as Excel or OpenOffice)
 - i) Save incremental backup (Name scheme such as **[your-book-name]-index.fili#.xls**, etc. (where fi = your **first initial**, li = your last initial, # = the revision saved).
- 5) Sort to find common words/parts of speech to delete and similar words to form subentries.
 - i) Delete common words/parts of speech, punctuation
 - ii) Highlight or otherwise tag words you want to index as subentries; suggest tagging end with %% , because you want to paste your text in as unformatted, so that it takes the format of the manuscript.
- 6) Create concordance file in a separate Word doc for index auto-marking

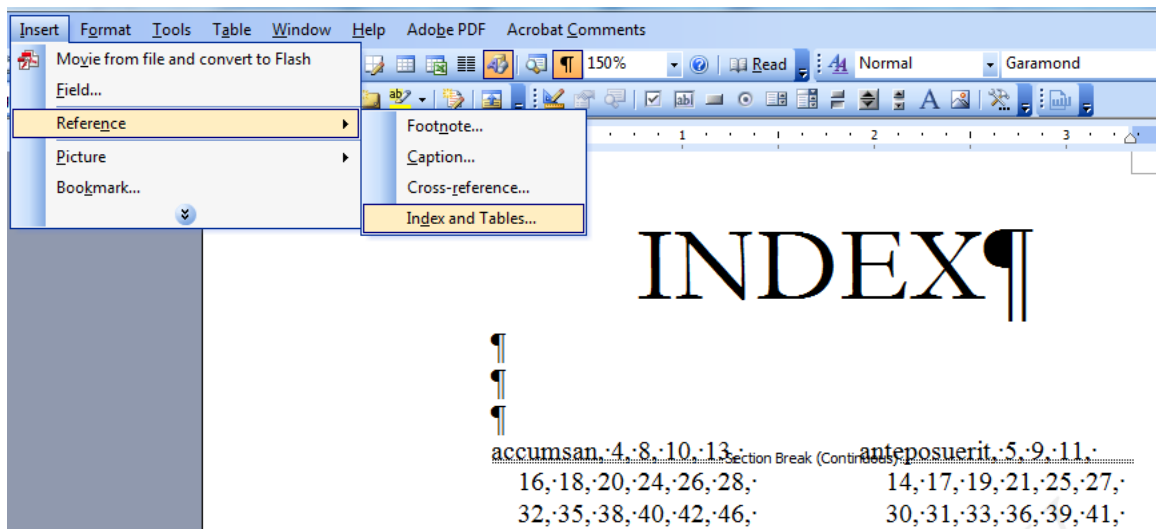
- i) Table|Insert (2 columns, use “Different words counted” from the NoteTab Text Statistics for row count, in this case 145 rows from above)

Here is where we account for capitalization, foreign spelling, etc. The left column is the ‘master list’ while the right column is what appears in the index itself.

- ii) Highlight left column
- iii) Edit|Paste Special (unformatted text)
- iv) Repeat b & c for right column
- v) Highlight right column, search (Ctl-F) for your tag (such as %) and create subentries with the form **index entry:subentry**, such as
 - (1) lunch: peanut butter
 - (2) meat: turkey
 - (3) soup: New England clam chowder
 - (4) soup: chicken, etc.

- 7) Back in Word, automark index entries from concordance file

- a) Place cursor where you want the index generated



- b) Insert|Reference|Index & Tables|Automark
 - i) Navigate to your concordance file, select and click “Open”
- c) Take a break while MS-Word does the heavy lifting for you!

8) If the process ends and you see nothing, incrementally save your doc (e.g. same name, new version number), and run 7b again, without choosing Automark, just hit OK. You see it churn through the cycle again and your index should appear.

Note: Can also perform many of these tasks entirely within your spreadsheet, highlight both columns @ the end of your prep and paste in. Experiment to find which method you like best.

Peeking ahead, a finished nonsense index would look something like this:
<http://screencast.com/t/gmaSvOthmm>

ASSIGNING TOKENS TO PROPERLY ALPHABETIZE YOUR SUBENTRIES

Result we want:

braid

Czech ladies teaching me to ~, 73
how do you represent half a ~, 76
fingers deftly trace... find tiny bit of twig, 79
The ~ number equals your beau's age, 98
T'pring never had a Peacock ~, 98
braided, 70, 75, 79
braiding, 79
braids, 75, 76, 98

How we get it:

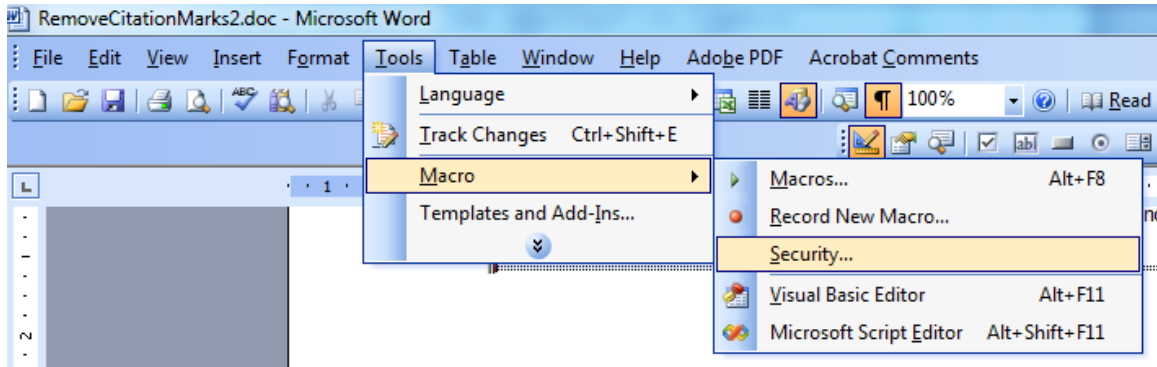
```
FELIX·¶  
'Member,·I·talked·about·the·Czech·  
ladies{·XE·"lady:ladies"·}·teaching·me·  
to·braid{·XE·"braid:Czech·ladies·  
teaching·me·to·~·;baa"·}?¶  
¶
```

Use “alphabet codes” to properly order subentries, for example, choose a 3 letter code starting with the letter b for “braid” as shown above.

MACRO TO DELETE INDEX ENTRIES

Part of developing fluency in all facets of our writing careers is knowing how to fix things when they don't go as planned. It's not news that MS-Word does a few things well and a lot of things poorly. Removing outdated or unneeded index entries is a PITA process without some help from our friends at Visual Basic, so let's pay them a visit:

First, make sure that macros are enabled

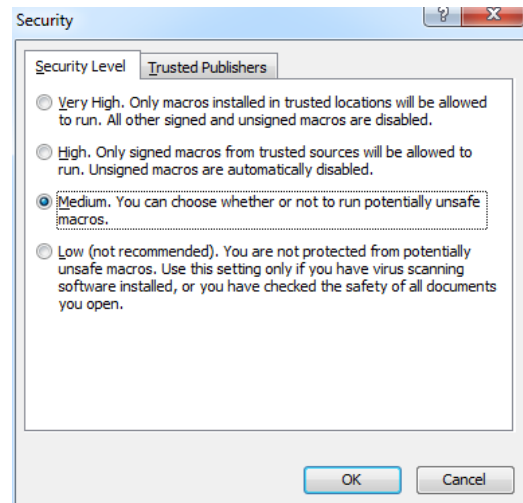


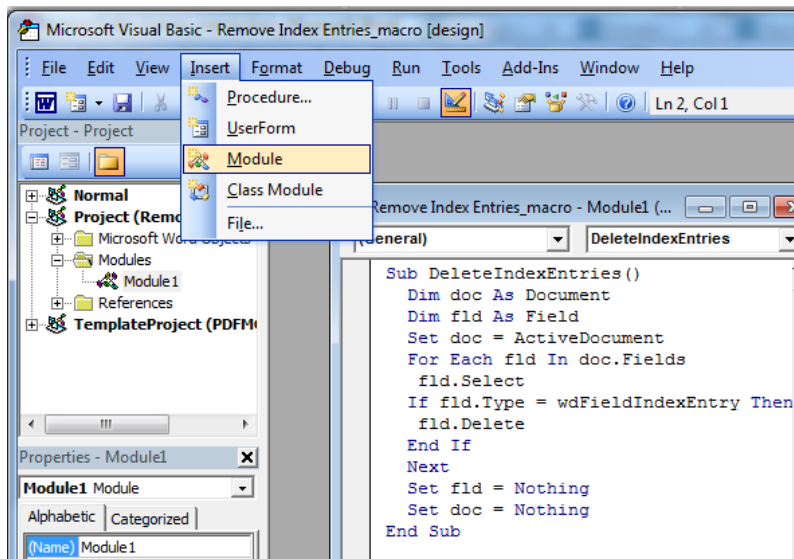
Then set security to 'medium' to have Word ask to run macros

Put several macros in an editor's tools document and that way they can be available, without adding the code to every document you work on.

Here is the actual macro code (just copy & paste into the macro editor as shown in the screenshot below the code:

```
Sub DeleteIndexEntries ()
    Dim doc As Document
    Dim fld As Field
    Set doc = ActiveDocument
    For Each fld In doc.Fields
        fld.Select
        If fld.Type = wdFieldIndexEntry Then
            fld.Delete
        End If
    Next
    Set fld = Nothing
    Set doc = Nothing
End Sub
```





then to run the macro, removing unwanted index entries, either use:

- keystroke commands: Alt+F8 or
- or the mouse: Tools | Macros | Macro

and then choose “Run.”

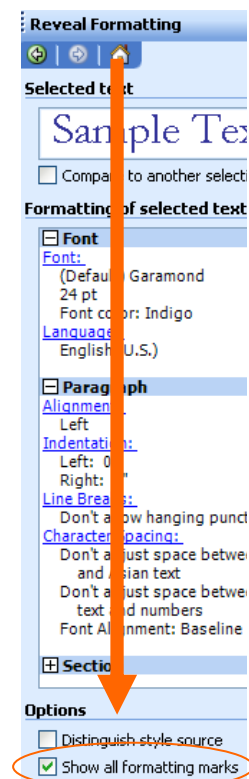
Lickety-split, all your prior index entries are gone and you have a fresh slate! You can reimport your marked-up concordance word list then mark additional entries by hand if you choose.

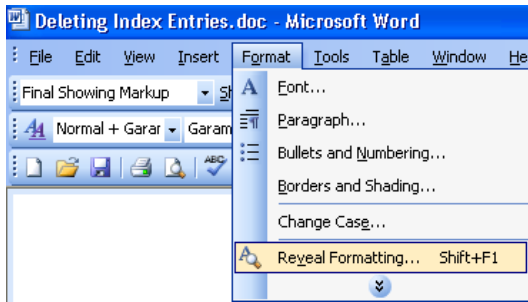
DELETING INDEX ENTRIES BY HAND

To get rid of an individual or just a few index entries, the macro is overkill – it's all or nothing. To prepare your document to search for index entries, you must make hidden text visible.

- Keystroke: Shift+F1
- Mouse: Format | Reveal Formatting

then select “Show all formatting marks” to reveal the bracketed ‘XE’ index entries.



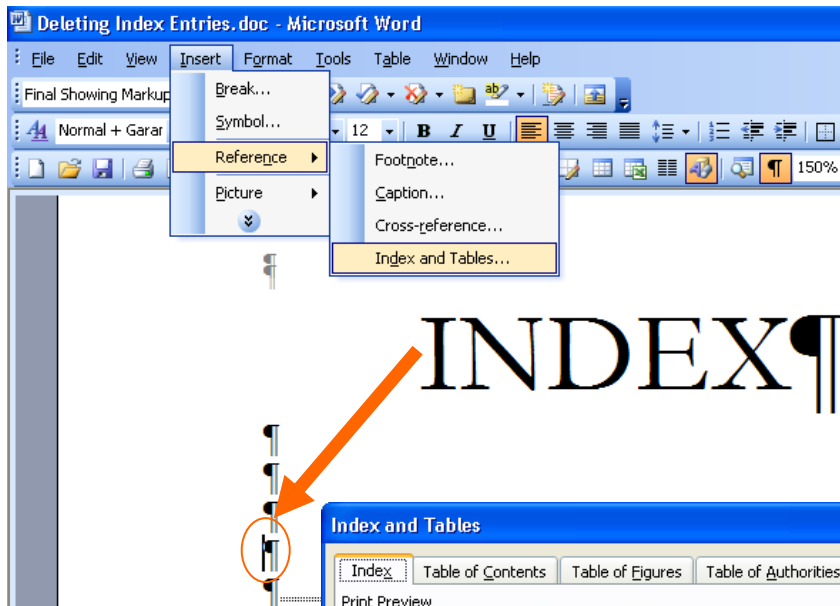


The special search codes required to get Word to find and replace (or delete) index entries are covered in 2 blog posts:

[Solving Hard Problems: Software, Part I](#)
[Solving Hard Problems: Software, Part III](#)

Word is very persnickety, so follow the instructions explicitly to get meaningful results.

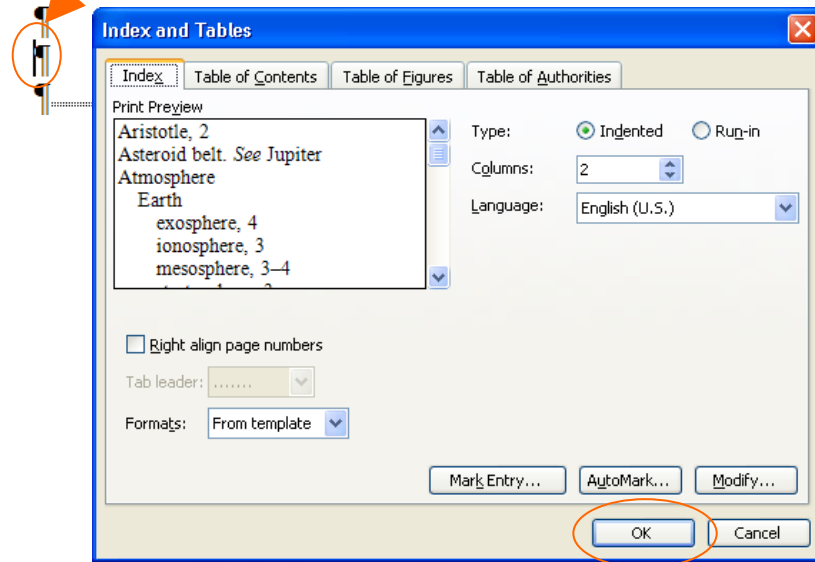
[Generating the index](#)



Just like Copeland's musical expression grows more complex, more nuanced and more mature, so does our index.

Preparing a highly granular index, designed to maximize the opportunity for cross-disciplinary insights is a recursive exercise: clean up,

tweak,
update
and
repeat.



PREPARE TO RE-INDEX

Save your cleaned-up doc with a revised file name (incrementing the version number).
Insert Cursor where you want index generated:

- Insert | Reference | Index and Tables

Hit OK (no need to Automark again unless you removed ALL index entries).

On further edits/removals just click to the left side of the index and hit F9.

[Integrating your index and references](#)

Without professional indexing tools, integrating your references properly into your index calls for some truly out-of-the-box thinking. Oh happy day! Like the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, I routinely think of ten impossible things before breakfast.

To generate the appropriate index entries for Word to properly sequence your references (endnotes, bibliography, etc.) into your index, we'll demonstrate combining fields in a spreadsheet so that the majority of the detail is automatic and thus much less prone to error than if we tried it by hand.

The \$3 grandma word “concatenate” is your new best friend in generating these index entries. By breaking the task into finely divided steps, we keep the whole process understandable so we don't get lost.

The index brackets themselves must be generated within Word, yet our concordance word list can do that all-at-once. Then we go back to the index entries (*show hidden text*) and insert the custom code to properly sequence when (& how) the integrated entries appear in the final index.

We will be combining several items like finely tuned voices in a barbershop quartet, to get just the right result: one that evokes delight from your audience, because your index is helping them find what they need easily and quickly!

```
XE " \t " n ,
```

Inside the nested brackets of the Index Entry is the index tag XE with a space, then open double quotes to start the modified entry (which integrates your references into your index), the switch \t" with the close quote, which [specify function], the text “n” [representing “endnote number”] and the humble comma which will separate the text of the index entry, the page number and the integrated reference entry.

Anderson	86		XE "Anderson" \t "292n86"	« single index endnote ref
	292			
Arinze	36	95	XE "Arinze" \t "287n36, 292n95"	« double index endnote ref
	287	292		

These two examples show us that author Anderson has endnote 86 appearing on page 292 while author Arinze has note 36 appearing on page 287 and note 95 appearing also on page 292.