

than I would devote to most projects, but this book had a peculiar design workflow.

Of that time, I spent 50 minutes checking alphabetization, and found several inconsistencies in how characters like ampersands were treated. I mention these inconsistencies not as a criticism of the indexer but as a justification for this check.

The subheadings of a particular heading were not properly alphabetized at all, and when I looked into it, I discovered that the line breaks between subheadings were manual ones, so Microsoft Word's sort feature did not consider them separate paragraphs. This problem would not arise with indexing software.

I devoted 26 minutes to checking the locator order. In general, this aspect of the index was well done: I found only one error. But again, I would not have had to do as close a read for an index compiled with software.

I spent 10 minutes checking formatting of cross-references and confirming that the pointers matched the targets (and I found a couple of errors there). I also noticed that the commas in the document were not consistently formatted after italicized or bolded text, another problem that would not usually arise with an index creating using software.

I spent 30 minutes double-checking alphabetization and locator order during the proofreading stage, and found a few changes I had missed making.

So 117 of 417 minutes (a conservative estimate – because the workflow was unusual, I have not included the time it took me to implement the changes in the files) were spent on checking issues or fixing problems that software would have taken care of. If my editing fee had been hourly, the publisher would essentially be paying a 28 per cent premium

for my work. At that rate, the software would pay for itself in six to eight indexes. I have not even considered the time that indexing software would have saved the indexer – at least as much as it would have saved me – in which case the software would have been paid off after three or four indexes. (And I am still using the same version of the software I bought six years ago.)

This is just one data point, but I hope it shows the value of indexing software, even for small presses, if they do any indexing in house. In the indexing course I teach, students have a week to explore demo versions of three industry-standard programs and use them to build a simple index, so the learning curve is not that steep. In addition to saving editing time and cost, it also eliminates the frustration while editing of knowing that the process could have been a lot simpler.

Acknowledgment

This is an edited version of an article posted to www.ivacheung.com/blog/ on 26 June 2017.

Reference

Mulvany, N. 2005. *Indexing books*, 2nd edn. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

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Size *does* matter: fitting the index to the pages

Heather Ebbs

Ensuring that our index is the correct length for a print book is a basic quality standard. To gauge an appropriate depth of indexing given the space available, indexers need to know how to calculate the pages available in a book and how to measure the length of their final index. And to do that it doesn't hurt to know a bit about today's printing processes.

Why size matters

Ensuring that our index is the correct length for a print book is a basic quality standard. The reasons are fairly obvious: physical restrictions, client specifications, reader's needs, and index quality.

First, the index must meet the physical restrictions of the book – the number of pages available. That is the major restriction, so I will cover it in more detail below.

Second, the index must align with the client's specifications, and often a client will request a specific length, which may reflect the physical number of pages available but may also reflect other reasons of their own.

Third, the index must align with the reader's needs. In preparing for this article I talked with a few clients about their current production methods. One scholarly client said that although she rarely worries about index length any more in terms of the physical number of pages available, she did realize recently that she needed to give direction on length in terms of the likely readership of the book, as the company has started to publish what it is calling 'trade crossover' books. Those indexes should not have the same level of detail as for its scholarly books, as the audience won't necessarily be what she calls the 'standard university-educated reader'. Less detail means a shorter index.

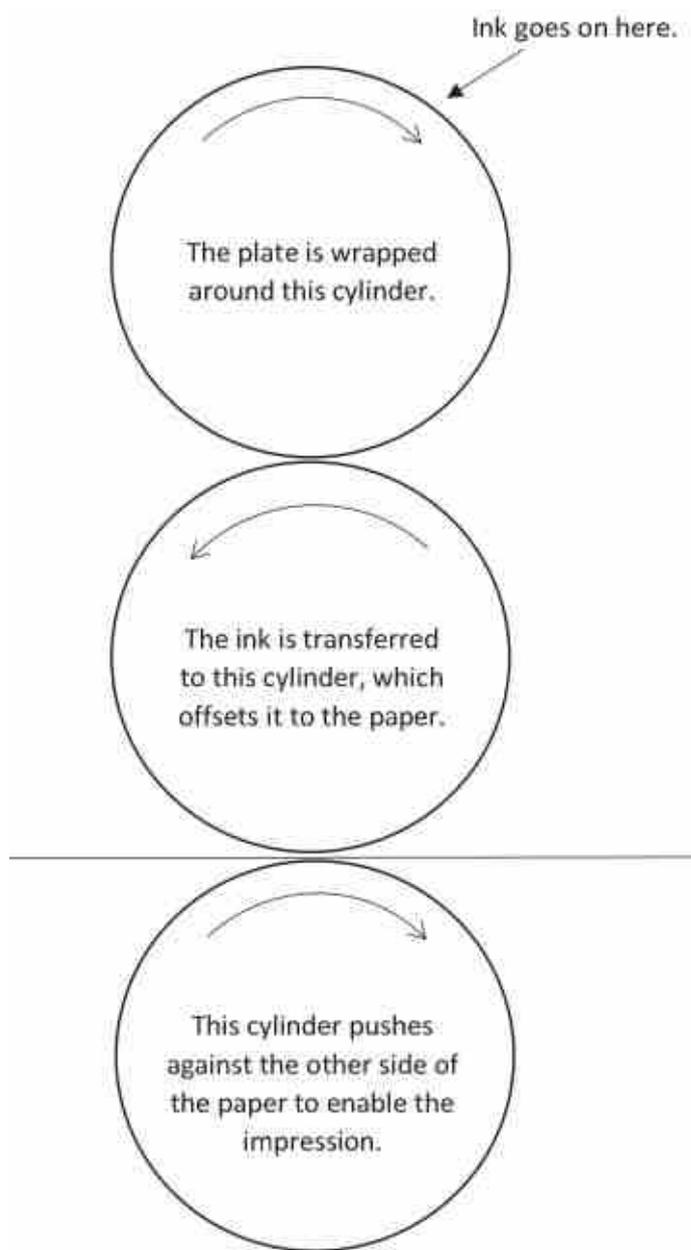


Figure 1 A simplified drawing of offset printing basics

Fourth, the index must retain internal integrity. If we supply an index that is significantly too long, someone will cut it, and if that someone is not the index creator, then important internal connections could be lost, as could some of the elegance and flow of the index. It would be akin to someone chopping chunks off a knit sweater to make it smaller: the whole thing is likely to unravel and no longer represent the lovely piece that we supplied. If my index needs to be trimmed, then I want to be the one trimming it to ensure it retains integrity.

Physical restrictions

The physical restrictions of indexing are in some cases less stringent than in past years because of digital printing, especially in Canada, where we often have smaller print runs. Nonetheless, restrictions still exist, and it is important to know why.

1	16	13	4
8	9	12	5
3	14	15	2
6	11	10	7

Figure 2 A possible imposition for the two sides of a 16-page signature. The 2 is on the back of the page 1, 15 on the back of 16, and so on.

The two main types of printing used for books today are offset and digital. Offset is more commonly used for larger print runs, and digital for smaller runs. The crossover point as of mid-2017 is probably at about 1,000 copies.

With offset, a book might be printed on a sheet press or a web press. If a book has a lot of colour, it is more likely to be on a sheet press (using large sheets of paper); a simple black and white text is more likely to be on a web press (using a giant roll of paper). The paper runs through a set of massive cylinders, the first of which has the image of a set of pages on it and is inked, the second of which picks up the ink and offsets it onto the paper, and the third of which holds the paper in place from beneath. (There's a bit more to it than that, but that is the gist. If you have never toured a physical plant and watched an offset press in action, go! It is a fascinating, noisy, wonderfully ink-scented tour.)

Ultimately, the paper that comes out the other end is folded in half multiple times to create what is called a signature. Multiple signatures are bound together and then trimmed to create the publication. How the paper is folded depends on how the pages are arranged (the imposition).

To understand signatures and impositions better, take a standard sheet of blank paper and fold it in half. As you can see, that creates 4 pages; fold it in half again, and you can see that you have 8 pages. Once more, and you have 16.

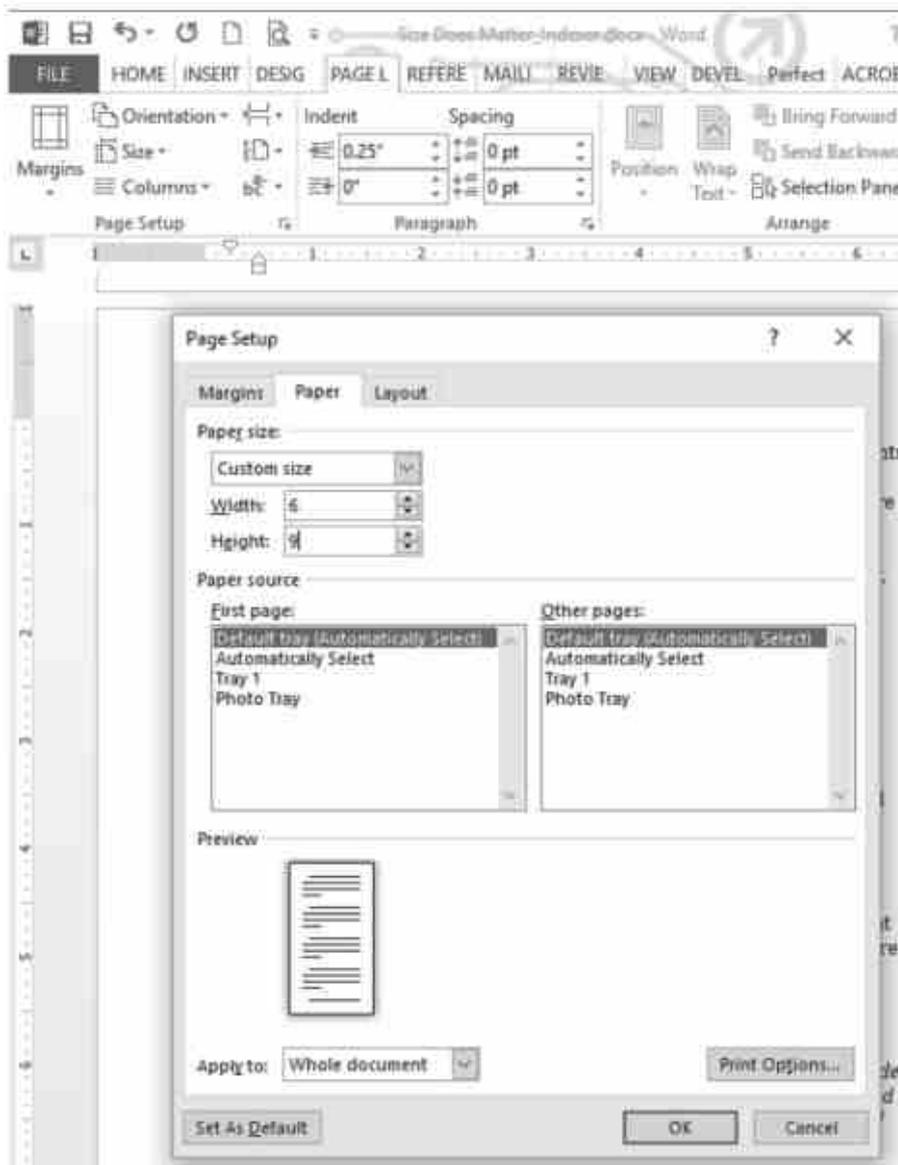


Figure 3 Screen shot of the PAGE LAYOUT, Size, Custom Size feature in Word, showing the page width and size set to 6 × 9 inches.

Thus, a signature is always a multiple of four. It is at least 4 pages but could be up to up to 64 pages (for instance, for a standard trade book format of 6 × 9 inches). Often for large-run trade books it is a 32-page signature, but it depends on the press (that is, the physical machine).

Once you have folded your paper into 16 pages, write a page number on each page as if it were a book. Then unfold the paper. Notice how the numbering is on both sides of the sheet of paper, with some of the numbers right-side up and others upside down. That shows you the imposition for your homemade signature.

Imagine that you have two of these homemade signatures making up a book of 32 pages. You have text and front matter on 28 pages, which means you have saved 4 pages for your index. If you write an index that will take up 6 pages, you would have to add another full signature of paper – 16 pages' worth – to accommodate just those 2 pages.

That is why, if your client says they can give you 12 pages for the index, you need to write an index that takes up no more space than that. The book designer has saved only

12 blank pages, beginning on a recto (right-hand) page, at the end of the final signature for your index to fit into. If you write an index that takes 14 pages, the client needs either to add another signature, which they are not about to do, or to cut your index, which you do not want them to do.

That all being said, if your book is being printed on a digital press, 4-page signatures can be added, so your client may not be concerned about index length in terms of physical restrictions. In mid 2017, I asked three different types of Canadian clients about their usual signature sizes these days: a publisher that usually does cookbooks (various formats), a trade publisher, and a scholarly publisher. Both the cookbook publisher and the trade publisher said they usually use 16-page signatures now, and the former is quite strict about adding extra pages. The scholarly publisher now usually uses 8-page signatures but can easily add 4 and so does not worry about index length except, as I mentioned earlier, in terms of the appropriate depth for the audience. Those are all for short-run books.

The ultimate lesson is, talk to your client. Ask how many pages you have for your index. If it sounds as if it will not be enough, talk to your client about their flexibility.

If a client does not tell me an index length up front, I generally do the arithmetic when I get the pdf before I contact them about the length. For example, there might be 10 pages of front matter, 280 numbered pages of text, and 10 pages of references. I divide the total by 16,

because that is a likely signature size.

$$10 + 280 + 10 = 300 \text{ pages}$$

$$300 \div 16 = 18.75$$

Therefore there are at least 19 signatures in the book. If that is all they have, then only four pages remain for the index, because

$$19 \times 16 = 304$$

That clearly is not going to be enough pages for any sort of reasonable index, so I assume that they are allowing another 16-page signature or that they are using 32-page signatures, so I have 20 pages for the index:

$$20 \times 16 = 320 \text{ or } 10 \times 32 = 320$$

Then I check with the client that 20 pages is what they had in mind. They may say yes, or they may say that no, I have

only 14 pages available because there is other back matter they had not included in the pdf given to me.

Fitting ... close enough

You have a pdf and you have either figured out or been told how many pages you have for the index. Now what?

The good news is that we do not have to copyfit. Copyfitting is making sure that x amount of copy precisely fits into y amount of space. For that, we would need to know the typeface and size and how many characters per inch there are, the exact line length and leading, the number of columns per page and the outside margins. But that is the typesetter's or designer's job. They can adjust type size, kerning or tracking, leading and so on to make the index fit as long as it is close to the right length. All we have to do as indexers is make sure our index is close enough.

There are two quick and easy ways to tell if your final index is close enough to the right size for the number of pages available. Obviously, if you know that spacing is tight, you are going to be indexing at a higher level – with less granularity – and if it is really tight, you are going to do some spacing checks as you go along. I am going to discuss just that final check that yes, it will fit into the space available.

Method one: full format

All you need to know is the page size and margins, which you have because you have the final pages from the client. You do need to know the number of columns, but if it is a standard 6×9 inch book, it is going to be a two-column index. If it is an unusual size or format of book, you can ask the editor or you can just play around with likely layouts. Here are the steps:

- 1 Output into a Word file, using either set-out or run-in depending on what the client requested.
- 2 Set to an appropriate font (a normal serif font, usually) and size (8 or 9 point).
- 3 Set up the Word file so that the margins are the same as in the book. Under PAGE LAYOUT, Size, click on Custom Size and set it to 6×9 (of course, I am assuming here that you are using imperial measurements; adapt as necessary if you work in metric). Apply to whole document.
- 4 Select all text and, still under PAGE LAYOUT, set it into two columns with about a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch alley; allow extra white space at the start.
- 5 Check how many pages it comes to. If it is a bit too long, try reducing the font size, playing around with the turnover indentation, adjusting the alley and so on. If none of these work, or you have to make it crazily small, your index is too long. Start trimming.

If you can make your index fit at a readable size into the given number of pages using Word's basic functions and fonts, then the book's typesetter can certainly make it fit attractively.

Method two: line count

Sometimes a client may tell you the number of lines available, instead of the number of pages. In that case they will probably tell you the number of characters per line too. For example, for the University of California – Berkeley Extension course Indexing: Theory and Application, we ask students to submit an index that will end up being 300 lines, with a line length of 36 characters per line. If you get this sort of instruction from the client, here are the steps to check your final length:

- 1 Output into a Word file, using set-out or run-in as per client's request.
- 2 Set to a monospaced font such as *Courier New*.
- 3 Select all (CTRL-A) and drag the right margin over to the edge of the 36th character.
- 4 Set PAGE LAYOUT, Line Numbers, to Continuous. Voila! Your line count appears. If you are within a few lines either way of the requested line count, then again, the book's typesetter will be able to make it work.

Software tools

All three primary indexing software programs offer ways to count lines and measure your depth of indexing. The three programs use different terminology for their statistics, records, lines, and entries. Know your program; do some tests with indexes you have already done to see how the numbers the software offers relate to the output index. I find these statistics most helpful for keeping an eye on my ongoing depth of indexing: that is, how many entries, on average, I am inputting per typeset page. For a final index length, however, I just use one of the simple methods I describe above.

Conclusion

I have heard even experienced indexers say, 'I don't worry about the length; I just write the index that the book deserves.' I disagree. The book does not deserve an index; the reader does. We do not write indexes for books; we write indexes for book users. And writing for the user includes making sure the index fits the pages.

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