While writing our book, we had fun with the title. Should we call it “The Triple Revolution” of the turn to social networks, the personalized internet, and always-available mobile connectivity? Too complicated, we decided, although that became the title of part I, with a chapter devoted to each of the three revolutions.

Should we call our book “Networked Individualism”? This seemingly contradictory term would confuse browsers—better to explain it inside—and would downplay our interest in the internet and mobile connectivity. And so part II spends a lot of time looking at how the Triple Revolution plays out in relationships, families, work, creativity, and information.

Should we call our book “The Social Network”? Definitely not, for that term resonates too much with Facebook these days—in fact it’s the title of the 2010 Oscar-winning movie about the start of Facebook—and we spend a lot of time in this book showing how social networks are much more than Facebook.

So we’ve called the book Networked: The New Social Operating System, emphasizing how networks among people have profoundly transformed how we connect, in person and electronically.

Along the way, we made a decision: Although we take the internet and mobile revolutions very seriously, this is not a book about the wonders of the internet and smartphones. Despite all the attention paid to new gadgets, technology does not determine human behavior; humans determine how technologies are used. Moreover, we would be instantly out of date if we took gadgets as our focal point. We are writing this in September 2011, but the book won’t be published until 2012, and we are sure that many things will have changed by then and soon thereafter. At the same time, we are confident that one thing holds true: The internet and mobile phones have facilitated the reshaping of people’s social networks, enabling them to be larger and more diverse. And they have reconfigured the way
people use their networks to learn, solve problems, make decisions, and provide support to each other.

Who knows? By the time you read this, Facebook or tablet computers might have overtaken laptops and desktops, elevating mobile “apps” to digital supremacy over the web. But we have tried to get right the basic social processes associated with the Triple Revolution. Although we focus on the societies we know best, the United States and Canada—“North America”—the discussion should be more widely useful.

Finally, we note that all revolutions are lumpy. For example, despite all of our revolutionary talk, this book is still a traditional book—whether on paper or as ebook. We dearly hope that the next edition will have hyperlinks to all of the articles we cite and the movies we discuss. But there is still a place for a good read. We’ve tried to avoid jargon and write for intelligent general readers but still keep the specialists happy. We think we’ve succeeded, and we hope you like it even more than we’ve loved writing it. Please send us comments on our blog, http://www.networkedindividuals.com. Thanks.