

Hidden Systems is the book I'll use to teach my kids how the internet works

Growing up, I learned *The Way Things Work* from author David Macaulay's incredible illustrated books. This week, I was surprised to see Macaulay's endorsement in my inbox for a new illustrated explainer by a different author – but the surprise didn't last long.

Fifteen minutes after I began skimming through an advance copy of *Hidden Systems*, which just came out this week, I immediately ordered the book for my kids. It looks like a fantastic way to help them conceptualize the internet, the world's water supply, and our power grid – and get them thinking about the infrastructure of the world they'll someday inherit.

In 262 pages, author and cartoonist Dan Nott tackles each of these systems in comic panel form, piecing together the building blocks of how they work and the basics of how they were conceived, all without ignoring the societal challenges facing each one. "I began drawing about hidden systems because comics seem to have this superpower-like ability to compare how we think about something with how it works concretely," writes Nott in the book.

Much of it is stuff that took years for me to learn, distilled into an incredibly readable form. Even adults will probably find things they don't know, like the shapes and locations of secret buildings where telecom companies hide their networking gear.

I want to show you some of it, so I asked publisher Random House if I could share the first chapter about the metaphors we use to describe the internet – metaphors that are sometimes useful but are inherently wrong.

They happily obliged, so here you go!

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/3/17/23645204/hidden-systems-book-internet-water-power>