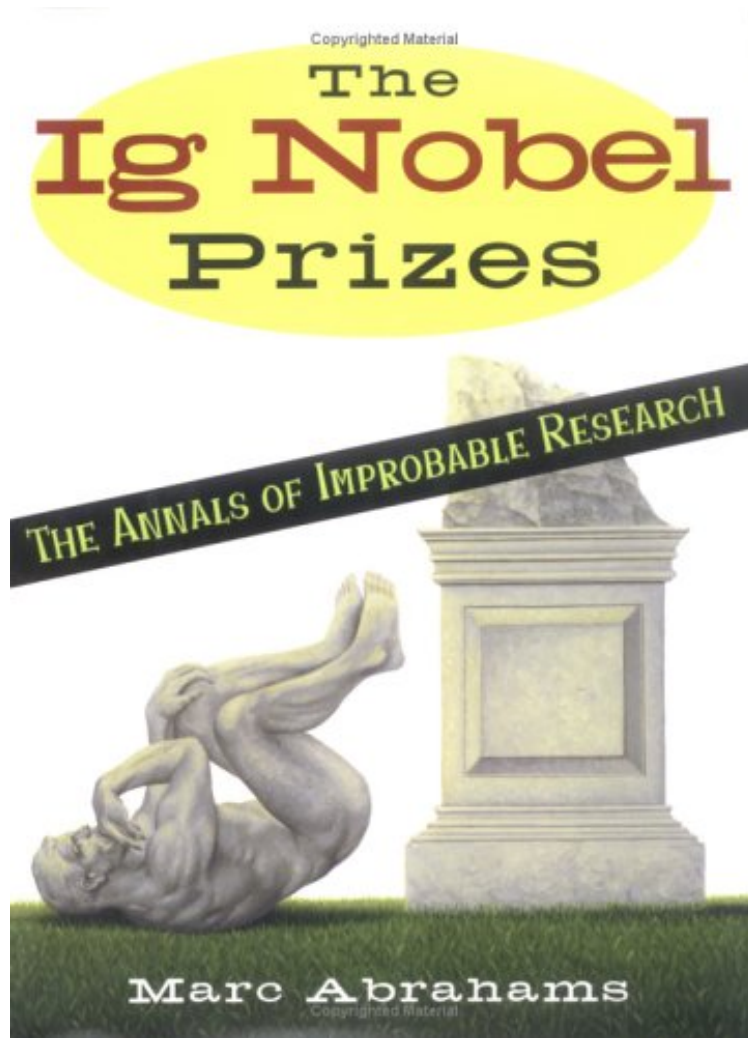


[Download] The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Annals of Improbable Research

The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Annals of Improbable Research

Marc Abrahams

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Marc Abrahams : The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Annals of Improbable Research before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Annals of Improbable Research:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Intelligence Of Single-Nostril Breathing By Robert I. Hedges The Ig Nobel prizes are awarded annually to scholars in extremely diverse and unusual fields. This book is a compendium of some of the best examples of extreme scholarship that you are likely to ever encounter. In this book you will find out how to rent the entire country of Liechtenstein, you will be totally unsurprised that politicians are extremely simple humans, and you will learn the cause and effect relationship of country music on suicide. Many even stranger pieces of research are likewise discussed from a discussion of poultry aerodynamics in "Chicken Plucking and Tornado Wind Speed," to brain efficiency manipulation in "The Intelligence of Single-Nostril Breathing." Without

doubt, though, my absolutely favorite piece of scholarship begins on page 212, and is a piece originally published as "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," which originally appeared in "Social Text" (Spring/Summer 1996.) The author, Professor Alan Sokol, believes that academics use enormously complex language to describe the simplest of things, and as such decided to write a paper that was completely and utterly incoherent, that meant nothing, but that was cloaked in obscure jargon. Of course, the editors of "Social Text" didn't know this and found it brilliant and insightful. The joke was on them and they ran it and became the academic laughingstocks they so richly deserved to be. The book excerpts the article, which I have read in full elsewhere. (I highly recommend that you do the same.) Readers of bigheaded nonsense will adore this work, a random excerpt of which follows: "Lacan's 'topologie du sujet' has been applied fruitfully to cinema criticism and to the psychoanalysis of AIDS. In mathematical terms, Lacan is here pointing out that the first homology group of the sphere is trivial, while those of the other surfaces are profound...." Utterly brilliant, and highly recommended. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Is Science Funny? You Bet! By Robert I. Hedges I have kept up with the 'Annals of Improbable Research' for several years, and must say that this book reflects the best of the highbrow, yet offbeat sense of humor found in 'AIR'. For those unfamiliar, the Ig Nobel prizes are awarded every year for "achievements that cannot or should not be reproduced" in an elaborate spectacle of a ceremony at Harvard University. Among the participants are many genuine Nobel Prize winners, proving beyond doubt that scientists do have a sense of humor. There is something for everyone in this book, even for those who hate science; in fact especially for those who hate science. The subjects coast gracefully from the bizarre ("Elevator Music Prevents the Common Cold") to the absolute fringe of science ("The Effects of Ale, Garlic, and Soured Cream on the Appetites of Leeches"; the sour cream was the biggest appetite stimulant, by the way). There are subjects you would have never thought of (unless you are a scientist with way too much time and Federal grant money on your hands) from levitating frogs to "Chicken Plucking as Measure of Tornado Wind Speed". The subject matter is dizzying and amusing. I eventually settled on a four star rating for a couple of reasons. First, in a majority of cases, these studies are supported through tax dollars, and I generally resent the glorification of wasted money, which this book surely is in great, if unintentional, part (only a small percentage of these studies have genuine follow on benefits; most were clearly done for square-filling publication in the 'publish or perish' world of academia). Second, the politically motivated selection of some recipients, notably Edward Teller, is an undeserved slap at scientists who did and do work on defense projects (where a huge number of genuine scientific advances actually occur) by what is an obviously smug class of academics, who clearly seek to advance their own political agenda. I find that to have tarnished what would have otherwise been a superior work of science reporting and humor. Despite my reservations, I overall recommend the book, as it does generally meet its stated goals of making a person laugh and think. 17 of 17 people found the following review helpful. The wise wizards of wacky but sometimes wonderful ideas By Theodore A. Rushton Back at the height of the Dot-Com boom, just before George Bush became president, billions of dollars were spent to attract viewers to specific web sites. Since everyone was encouraged to stampede to specific sites, Larry and Sergey decided to do just the opposite; they invented a web site to make it easier for people to look elsewhere. Thus Google was born. It's what this book is all about: People who think different. Granted, Google isn't mentioned. Instead, it's a fun romp through the delightful imaginations of people who didn't come close to inventing Google, or much of anything else that might be of use to someone, somewhere, sometime for some unimaginable reason. Like Google, Ig Noble Prizes are based on a simple criteria; they must make people THINK (that used to be the one-word slogan of IBM). Unlike Google, it must also make people laugh. In other words, Ig Noble honors apparently impractical new ideas on the basis that curiosity, originality and investigation are truly the basis of the human spirit. Consider, for example, the virtually spiceless NuMex Primavera jalapeno chile pepper, developed by Professor Paul Bosland at the Chile Pepper Institute of New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. New Mexico is famous for its Hatch chiles, which are flaming hot; so a "cool chile" may strike some as tasteless. Not true; the Primavera has lots of taste, just none of the usual hot spice. The goal is to gradually introduce people to chiles until they become addicted (it's a health food, after all) and everafter eat lots of New Mexico chiles. This "wacky" idea may improve livelihoods for thousands of New Mexicans in the agricultural business, which is one of the goals of a land grant state college. But what of the study showing the more radio stations broadcast country music, the greater the white suicide rate? The original study listed Nashville, Tenn., with the highest white suicide rate. It prompted ongoing studies about suicide, including a 2002 report, ". . . opera fans are 2.37 times more accepting of suicide because of dishonour than nonfans." There is a sneakily serious side to the Ig Noble awards. My favourite, though, is the scientific study of the 'Five Second Rule' about whether it's safe to eat food that's been dropped on the floor. Sixteen-year-old Jillian Clarke did the research using environmental scanning electron microscopy to examine floor tiles, cookies and gummy bears. She came up with the perfect answer: It depends. As the youngest recipient, she was the center of attention at Harvard when, "For courageously, meticulously, and scientifically playing with food, Jillian Clarke was awarded the 2004 Ig Noble Public Health Prize." Anyone who cannot understand the fuss over Clarke need not buy this book; it's way above their understanding, intelligence and sense of humour. For the rest of us, it's a delightful reminder of the endless vistas of imagination, curiosity and originality. Abrahams has again come up with a gem to tickle the imagination of the curious everywhere.

A sidesplitting compendium that pays tribute to those individuals whose scientific achievements cannot or should not be reproduced. Everyone knows about the Nobel Prizes, those prestigious awards that recognize the world's most talented and innovative minds. Unfortunately, not all of the hopeful thinkers and academics around the globe can become Nobel Laureates, but some are lucky enough to win the esteemed Ig Nobel Prize instead. Their unbelievable accomplishments are now documented in glorious detail in *The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Annals of Improbable Research*. Drawn from the world's wackiest actual scientific research, *The Ig Nobel Prizes* demonstrates the extreme measures people will take in the quest for knowledge. Recent Ig Nobel honorees include: * The professor who won the Ig Nobel Prize in Physics for a study proving that toast falls buttered side down more often. * The Southern Baptist Church of Alabama, which won the Ig Nobel Prize in Mathematics for devising a formula to determine how many Alabamans will go to Hell. * The Australian man who successfully patented the wheel, and the Australian Patent Office that granted it. For this act, they were jointly awarded the Ig Nobel Prize in Technology. This hilarious book features these endeavors and many more, along with photographs from the annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremonies at Harvard University. An entertaining exhibition of brains and determination, *The Ig Nobel Prizes* is the ideal gift for anyone who first wants to laugh and then wants to think.