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The Best Of Annals Of Improbable Research



Synopsis

The "Annals of Improbable Research" (AIR) is often described as the "Mad Magazine of Science". It is a bi-monthly magazine and an Internet Website. It is best known for hosting the "Ig Nobel" ceremony, honouring real scientists who have conducted funded research, yet whose achievements "cannot and should not be reproduced". This book will cover the Ig Nobel Prizes, their history, some highlights, and the 1996 Awards. Additional material about "Big Science" will include contributions by actual Nobel Laureates and articles that treat real science with a wry spin. The volume closes with suggestions for education and teaching of science, underscoring the need for the educated person to understand some basic science and to nurture the natural curiosity of children when they encounter science. It is for anyone interested in science humour.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: W. H. Freeman (September 15, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0716730944

ISBN-13: 978-0716730941

Product Dimensions: 8.6 x 0.6 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,210,477 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Science & Scientists](#) #976 in [Books > Science & Math > Experiments, Instruments & Measurement > Methodology & Statistics](#) #3784 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Humor](#)

Customer Reviews

"Science is too human, too much fun, and too important not to laugh at it." The Annals of Improbable Research (and its predecessor, the Journal of Irreproducible Results) has been making fun of science and scientists for decades. This latest compendium includes a listing of the Ig Nobel prizes, annually awarded "for scientific achievements which cannot or should not be reproduced," and some of the prizewinning papers, such as "Failure of Electric Shock Treatment for Rattlesnake Envenomation" and "Of Mites and Man." There are also plenty of groundbreaking original studies from AIR: "How Dead Is a Doornail?" "Furniture Airbags," and "The Medical Effects of Kissing Boo-Boos." As the book's warning label states, the result is a highly reactive mix: "Contents are

unexpectedly educational and informative, especially in patients who suffer allergic reactions to science, technology, literature, or art. Can be highly addictive." Let the buyer beware. --Mary Ellen Curtin

"If you have any interest in modern scientific research you'll find yourself guffawing from the first page of this book to the last."--Martin Gardner

As a scientist and technical professional I couldn't put this book down. I have kept up with the the Annals of Improbable Research for many years and this truly reflects some of the best efforts of scientists the world over. In this volume we have works by legitimate Nobel prize winners, and lesser known works such as "Gummy Worm on a Sidewalk" by Kate and Jesse Eppers, ages 12 and 10, respectively. (In their conclusion they noted that: "We came to a conclusion that three out of five people will accidentally step on a gummy worm thrown on a sidewalk." Brilliant.) Highlights for me include: "The Laser Cheese Raclette", "The Effects of Peanut Butter on the Earth's Rotation," and, of course, "Internet Barbie and the Time Caplet." There are too many to go into, but almost all are delightful. I guess the only minor critique would be of the couple of pages of limericks, which I find a bit trying, particularly when the subject matter is "Mastodon, Mother, and Babe." Overall a wonderful, humorous look at scientists and science through a very different lens than most are used to.

The questionnaire attached to this review is very inappropriate. Because of the nature of this work, it thereby becomes fitting. Someone in really ought to open the cover of some of these works to find out what they are asking us to review. This work is a collection of articles done by people once attached to a periodical called the Journal of Irreproducible Results That was science at play.

Very entertaining!

At last, brave scientists have been able to publish the ground breaking work that most scientific journals fear to publish. Born from the ashes of the Journal of Irreproducible Results, the Annals of Improbable Research (AIR) sprang phoenix-like into life. This eclectic collection will keep the scientist and non-scientist entertained for hours. Not a book to be read straight through, the Best of AIR is something to pick up and peruse at random. Where else will you see such topics addressed as "How Dead is a Doornail", "The Taxonomy of Barney", "Apples and Oranges: A Comparison" or

"The Aerodynamics of Potato Chips". In addition to the core of this book's illuminating scientific discussions, there is a chapter about the infamous Ig Nobel awards, which are sponsored by AIR in an annual ceremony in Cambridge, MA. 'Nobel Thoughts' consists of short Q&As with 9 Nobel laureates including James Watson, Roald Hoffman and Linus Pauling. Other ancillary tidbits are scattered throughout like AIR Vents (readers' letters) and the 'May We Recommend' column of real scientific articles that look in fact surreal, and 'Scientific Gossip'. The Best of AIR will elevate any humdrum day and bring a smile to your face.

This book came home with my spouse about a year ago to be placed in my "reading" pile. I never could figure out what he was snickering at until I was looking for an article for math class. What a find! As a student teacher I've used "Aerodynamics of Potato Chips" and "Taxonomy of Barney" for evaluation of scientific study and an introduction to scientific inquiry. Most recently a classmate used "Aerodynamics of Potato Chips" with a group of middle school students who were interested in the distance of the standard toss as defined by the article (much to the horror of the custodial staff). From this initial investigation, the class moved into a more formal study of aerodynamics. This book is science educators dream! Fun and interesting articles that refocus attention, demonstrating that anything can be done scientifically, if one puts their mind to it. Its also an insight into the humor of science as who better to make fun of science than those who do it?

The Annals of Improbable Research is an institution by itself. A journal where Nobel Prize Winners amongst others write on the lighter side of science. Funny essays, stupid experiments, and completely non-sense conclusions, all of them scientifically backed up and explained. This Book collect some of the finest pearls that have appeared in the magazine and lets you wanting more. This book is the ultimate proof that your average Nobel Prize Winner can be a funny guy, and be able to laugh at himself and his work. Gives you a different (and funny) vision of science and scientists, by some of the best amongst them. A Definitive must buy if you are, even only remotly, linked to science, investigation, or technology. Your laughing source for when your experiment is going wrong at 3 a.m.

As a scientist, I really enjoyed reading about the many funny quirks of scientific experimentation. Perhaps without these eccentricities, there would be no innovation! Great book!! If you enjoy "behind-the-bench" humor, I would like to suggest yet another book filled with hilarious situations and lots of candid, satirical wit on the life of scientists and their managers in high-tech R&D industry,

from the point-of-view of the technical staff. This new, insightful American satire is entitled, "Management by Vice" by C.B. Don and is highly recommended as an entertaining, adjunct-read to the incredible "Annals of Improbable Research".

Journalistic disclaimer: I am the 'TFD' on page 67, under 'Sleep Research Update'. If you have any sense of humour whatsoever, this book is for you. Having just returned from Cambridge (our fair city), where I led the Historians for Feynman and Tanna Tuva as Queen of Gravitation at this years' Ig Nobels, I can promise you no end of Cosmic Giggles. Possibly the only book in history with blurbs from the Car Talk guys, a Nobel Prize winner, and the most glorious Martin Gardiner. Parents of small children: listen up! You cannot afford to miss the classic 'Taxonomy of Barney', much less 'The Aerodynamics of Potato(e) Chips'. Too funny for words.

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