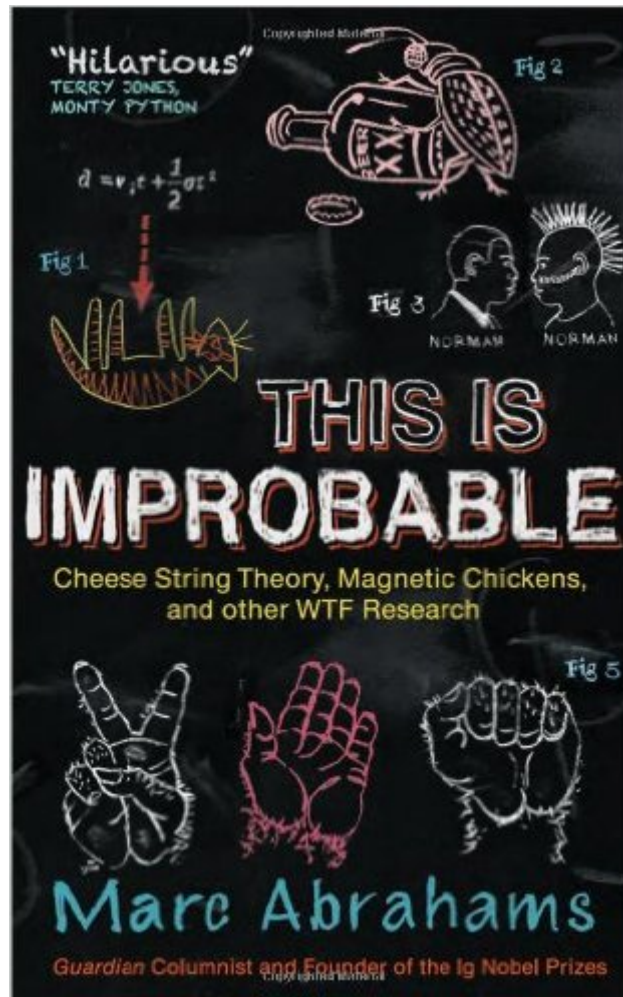


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This Is Improbable: Cheese String Theory, Magnetic Chickens, And Other WTF Research



Synopsis

Often, thinking seriously about outlandish problems is the only way to make progress in science. The rest of the time, it's hilarious. Marc Abrahams, the founder of the famous Ig Nobel prizes, offers an addictive, wryly funny exposé of the oddest, most imaginative, and just plain improbable research from around the world. He looks into why books on ethics are more likely to get stolen and how randomly promoting people (rather than doing it based on merit) improves their work. He also shares the findings of weird experiments, from whether Vegas lap dancers earn higher tips at a certain time of the month to how mice were once outfitted with parachutes to find a better way to murder tree snakes. Abrahams's tour through this strangest of strange science will first make you laugh, and then make you think about your world in a completely new way. Marc Abrahams, the founder of the Ig Nobel prize, offers an addictive, wryly funny exposé of the most improbable research from around the world, from why one psychologist insisted it was better to promote people randomly to whether Vegas lap dancers get higher tips at certain times of the month. As you travel from the bizarre to the profound, Abrahams will make you laugh, and then think about the world in a completely new way.

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Customer Reviews

To think that serious research was done (and most likely continues to be done) on the topics outlined in this book just boggles the mind. Fortunately, the author has such a way with words that reading about these works is an absolute pleasure, which would not likely be the case if one were to

read the original papers. On average, each work of research is described in just one to two pages. These are grouped into twelve chapters, each of which has its own particular topical slant. Once again, this book's most important feature, in my view, is the author's continuous tongue-in-cheek and often absolutely hilarious summaries of the research. His careful choice of words to suit each topic is absolutely priceless. Despite the fact that I found some of the research summaries to be rather uninteresting, in many of the other cases I laughed to the point of having tears in my eyes. And it's mainly for these many prize winners that I gave this book a perfect score. All in all, because the author has ensured that the book is devoid of specialized jargon (unless included for effect) anyone looking for laughs can enjoy this book tremendously, while, as a bonus, learn about how some hard-earned research money is being spent.

This is a very well written and rather fun little book about what might be described as "stranger but true 'research.'" If, like me, you've been struggling to get funded for research, and getting it published (for that necessary publish or perish mentality of academia), you'll be consoled. Despite your self-doubts about your research (yes, you have them!), criticisms from grant review and funding committees, journal editorial boards, and maybe even your colleagues, you'll get a chuckle out of the absolute CRAP that gets passed off as "important" research and actually gets published (usually in junk journals). If Senator McGovern and his Golden Fleece awards were still around, most of the stuff described in this little tome would top the list for their "Ignobility." Most of the "studies" were conducted either long ago or, more often, not in the US (at least not at major research centers), so you can take some solace (I surely hope) that your hard-earned taxpayer dollars didn't fund this garbage. The author frequently uses puns, and although they're often considered the lowest form of humor they really add to this book. To add to the readability of this book, the descriptions of so-called research are short and to the point (and include citations to the publication sources, just in case you think the author is making this ridiculous stuff up), so if you need a short break from work you can pick up the book, read just a few pages if you like, put it down, and then start reading again anywhere you want. The purchase price of the book is small in comparison with the chuckles you'll get, the head shakes of disbelief, and perhaps even the firm knowledge and consolation that there's a hell of a lot of research going on that's worse than your own.

If you, or someone you're buying a gift for, loves science, this is a great book. It's intelligent, interesting, funny, and enjoyable! My son loves science, physics, math, and all that is connected

with that. I got the book as a gift for him. There are few books that make those topics fun -- yet savvy for someone who thinks in that realm. It's a great read. I even liked it!

This is another "best of" collection, and if you're a subscriber to AIR (Annals of Improbable Research) and/or the JIR (Journal of Irreproducible Results) this will appeal to your sense of humor. The entries are written by those in the sciences, and range from tongue-in-cheek parodies, to listings of real, but absurd research projects and papers (in their terms, "WTF research"). It's got a very high nerd factor, but for those in the fields, or with reasonable scientific literacy, it's a gas! You can get an idea of the contents by checking out improbable.com or the IgNoble Prizes. For those with an ocd-like need to know (and my recollection may be fuzzy), the enterprise was a spinoff from the Worm Runners Digest of the 1960's which morphed into the JIR. There were some publishing/copyright hassles, and Mark Abrahams left JIR to found AIR. By some sort of magic, or whatever, it seems he's now editor of both. Huh? Highly recommended for a select audience. This is Improbable: Cheese String Theory, Magnetic Chickens and Other WTF Research

Filled with short re-written accounts of published research. The author fits some humor in, but each account was so short it left me wondering what I had just read about, and most of it I didn't enjoy.

Lots of strange items, but the descriptions were silly and boring. Could not find anything worth mentioning to anybody else.

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