

Weird and wonderful book titles

Finding a good title for a book is both an art and a science. An art because the author often aims for something elegant and inviting, even intriguing, and indeed many of the best book titles have some element of humour or linguistic playfulness that sets them apart. But titling is also a science where the publisher usually wants a title that is concrete and descriptive, easy to find in a keyword search, short enough to fit on a book spine, devoid of special characters that might not reproduce on foreign websites –and many other technical requirements besides.

Marie Lenstrup

AND THEN THERE ARE THE MAVERICKS. Authors and publishers who insist on telling it exactly as it is, sometimes at great length and often with a touching honesty about the underlying monomania.

To celebrate these free spirits, the British trade magazine *The Bookseller* awards the annual Diagram Prize for Oddest Title of the Year. The award was created in 1978 to provide a bit of light relief during the Frankfurt Book Fair and has since become a firm favourite of the British book trade. Nominees are selected from submissions sent in by librarians, publishers, booksellers and readers of the magazine. Titles which are deliberately designed to be funny are normally rejected, and self-nominations are not allowed. The winner is voted for by members of the public via the Internet. Below is a full list of the happy winners of the honour and a bottle of fizz.

1978
Proceedings of the Second
International Workshop on
Nude Mice

1979
The Madam as Entrepreneur: Career
Management in House Prostitution

1980
**The Joy of
Chickens**

1981
Last Chance at Love –
Terminal Romances

1982
Population and Other Problems:
Family Planning, Housing 1,000 Million,
Labour Employment

1983
The Theory of Lengthwise Rolling

1984
**The Book of
Marmalade:
Its Antecedents,
Its History, and
Its Role in the
World Today**

1985
Natural Bust Enlargement with
Total Power: How to Increase the
other 90% of Your Mind to Increase
the Size of Your Breasts

1986
**Oral Sadism and
the Vegetarian
Personality**

1987
No award
(nothing was deemed odd enough)

1988
**Versailles:
The View From
Sweden**

1989
How to Shit in the Woods: An Environ-
mentally Sound Approach to a Lost Art

1990
Lesbian Sadomasochism Safety Manual

1991
No award
(nothing was deemed odd enough)

1992
**How to Avoid
Huge Ships**

1993
American Bottom Archaeology

1994
Highlights in the History of Concrete

1995
Reusing Old Graves: A Report on
Popular British Attitudes

1996
**Greek Rural
Postmen and
Their Cancellation
Numbers**

1997
The Joy of Sex, the Pocket Edition

1998
Developments in Dairy Cow Breeding:
New Opportunities to Widen the Use
of Straw

1999
**Weeds in a
Changing World**

2000
High Performance Stiffened
Structures

2001
Butterworth's Corporate
Manslaughter Service

2002
**Living with Crazy
Buttocks**

2003
The Big Book of Lesbian Horse Stories

2004
**Bombproof
Your Horse**

2005
People Who Don't Know They're
Dead: How They Attach Themselves
to Unsuspecting Bystanders and What
to Do About It

2006
**The Stray Shopping
Carts of Eastern
North America:
A Guide to Field
Identification**

2007
If You Want Closure in Your
Relationship, Start with Your Legs

2008
The 2009-2014 World Outlook
for 60-milligram Containers of
Fromage Frais

Source: Wikipedia

Marie Lenstrup
Asian Studies Book Services
The Netherlands
marie@asianstudiesbooks.com

Colophon

ICAS 6 Newsletter
A supplement to IIAS Newsletter 51
July 2009, 12 pages

Editorial office
IIAS
P.O. Box 9515
2300 RA Leiden
Netherlands
iiasnews@iias.nl
www.iias.nl

Subscriptions
Please contact iias.subscribe@iias.nl

Guest editor
Marie Lenstrup
Asian Studies Book Services
Elst
Utrecht
Netherlands

Illustrations
Alex Prinz
Trondheim
Norway

Design
Artmiks
Amsterdam
Netherlands

Printing
Wegener Grafische Groep
Apeldoorn
Netherlands

Circulation
24,000

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