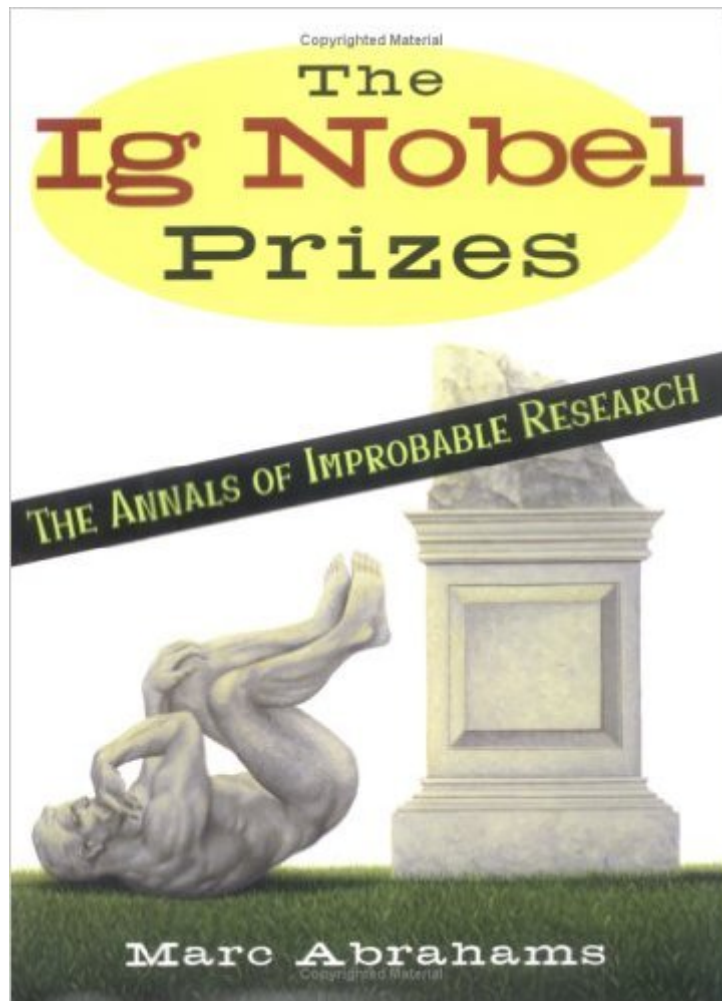


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# The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Annals Of Improbable Research



## Synopsis

A side-splitting compendium that pays tribute to those individuals whose 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 achievements in science, economics, and peace, *The Ig Nobel Prizes* demonstrates the extreme measures people will take in the quest for knowledge. Read about the professor who proved that toast falls buttered-side-down more often than not, and the Southern Baptist Church of Alabama, which devised a formula to determine how many Alabamans will go to Hell. 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 ideal for anyone who first wants to laugh and then wants to think.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book brings together two areas of human endeavor that don't normally go together: science and humor. The Ig Nobel Awards (actually held every year at Harvard University) honor those achievements which "cannot or should not be reproduced." Did you know that elevator music may

help prevent the common cold? Companies like Enron, Global Crossing, Tyco, Waste Management and WorldCom shared an award for adapting the mathematical concept of imaginary numbers for use in the business world. A man from Lithuania created an amusement park called Stalin World. To save money, the British Royal Navy has barred trainees at its top gunnery school from firing live shells and ordered them to shout "bang." It has been determined that, biochemically, romantic love may be indistinguishable from severe obsessive-compulsive disorder. A college professor from Pennsylvania fed prozac to clams (at the cellular level, clams and humans show remarkable nervous system similarities), resulting in a whole lot of reproducing going on. A man from France is the only winner of two Ig Nobels, for demonstrating that water has a memory, and that the information can be transmitted over the phone and the Internet. Then there are the "classics," like the scientific investigation of why toast often falls on the buttered side; an Australian man who patented the wheel, and the Australian Patent Office who granted it; a man from Arizona who invented software that detects when a cat is walking across your keyboard; the Southern Baptist Church of Alabama for their county-by-county estimate of how many Alabama citizens will go to hell if they don't repent; the sociology of Canadian donut shops, and the optimal way to dunk a biscuit.

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.

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