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COMMENTARY

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# Summer 2011 Book and Media Recommendations

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**ABSTRACT:** This is a list of recommendations for books, including a graphic novel and fiction titles, and two DVDs for *Journal* readers to enjoy in the summer, either in preparation for fall teaching, or for sheer pleasure. Four contributors have assembled an eclectic list in this annual collection.




**KEYWORDS:** General Public, History/Philosophy, Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary, Public Understanding/Outreach

## CHERYL B. FRECH

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket.
—Chinese proverb

The author of this proverb certainly never dreamed of today's smart phones and electronic readers, but you can carry some of this year's summer reading and media recommendations in your electronic pocket. Read on for some suggestions for your summer education and entertainment.

### *Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void* by Mary Roach

Mary Roach is one of a very few authors of popular science books who is able to appeal to a mass market and cross over to make appearances on television shows such as *The Daily Show*.[1] Her success likely is due to the careful choice of subject matter that allows her engagingly wry writing to shine. *Journal* readers may be familiar with her other bestselling titles, including *Bonk—The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex*,[2] *Spook—Science Tackles the Afterlife*,[3] and *Stiff—The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*,[4] but this was my first Mary Roach book.

*Packing for Mars*[5] (Figure 1) begins with several chapters on the psychological aspects of space travel. Perhaps you have not thought about it before, but a long space voyage is not unlike getting locked in your car inside your garage for a couple of weeks, with perhaps a couple of other people in the vehicle to keep you company (or annoy you) and an external someone giving you voice commands. Roach investigates how astronauts are selected to best weather the stress created by confinement and companions.

Subsequent chapters address the zero gravity—motion sickness connection, physiological issues with takeoff, re-entry, and landing, and the history of animals as human substitutes in space. The remainder of Roach's book focuses on the human problems that emerge in space: the long-term effects of zero gravity on bone density, what happens when you do not bathe for weeks on end (showers are impossible), food choices and issues, and of course, bathroom basics. For the curious, there is a chapter on the challenges of sex in space. All of these issues have been encountered and endured in the relatively short space missions to-date, which pale in comparison to a three-year Mars mission. Participants in NASA think tanks brainstorm about edible clothing, urine recycled as drinking water, and astronaut waste recycled as vehicle-shielding tiles.

*Packing for Mars* is a great summer read and will provide plenty of conversational nuggets in this year in which we celebrate the 50th anniversary of manned space flight.

### *Much Ado about (Practically) Nothing: A History of the Noble Gases* by David E. Fisher

Visitors to my office immediately notice the collection of periodic tables lining the walls. Most of them I have acquired from vendors selling books or chemical instrumentation. I am fascinated by the variety of colors and formats used to convey the information. I also enjoy books about the elements, so I eagerly added *Much Ado about (Practically) Nothing*[6] to my collection.

Fisher's book is not truly a book about the history of the noble gases and their discoveries. Indeed, the book contains five chapters about helium, six about argon, and one each about xenon and radon. However, neon only merits three pages, and krypton does not even have an entry in the book's index. So what is this book about? In fact, the book is an eclectic documentary about David Fisher's 50-year research career in geochemistry and cosmochemistry that brought him into contact with many of the noble gases. Fisher does a good job narrating the history of these elements, but his writing sparkles in his depictions of his research lab triumphs and vexations in the late 1950s through the turbulent 1960s and beyond.

You will not want to read this book for a linear or organized history of the noble gases. The book is not for a lay reader because there is too much jargon, the figures are not clearly explained, and the chemical equations that would simplify some concepts are not included. Nonetheless, reading this book is akin to having a long afternoon coffee break with your research mentor who is regaling you with his best-loved stories of the

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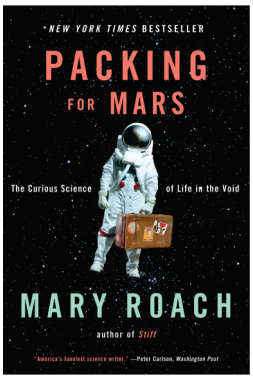



**Figure 1.** *Packing for Mars*[5] cover image provided by W. W. Norton and Company and reproduced with permission.

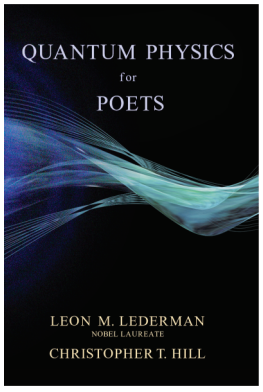



**Figure 2.** *Quantum Physics for Poets*[7] cover image provided by Prometheus Books and reproduced with permission.

good old days. Salty language? Check. Explosions and lab accidents? Check. Favorite colleagues and tyrannical administrators? Check. Sounds like the perfect summer reading book for many chemists I know.

### *Quantum Physics for Poets* by Leon Lederman and Christopher Hill

The array of titles that pops up when you start typing "quantum physics" in the Amazon.com search box is dizzying: quantum physics for dummies, ...for kids, ...for beginners, ...and theology, and so forth. Into this mix, renowned physicist Leon Lederman and his collaborator Christopher Hill submit their book, *Quantum Physics for Poets*.[7] (See Figure 2.) In Chapter 1, "If You're Not Shocked, You Haven't Understood" they state, "Our intent in this book is to convey both the unsettling creepiness of the quantum theory and its profound consequences for our understanding of nature" (p 38).

By and large, the authors succeed in their endeavor to communicate the ideas of quantum physics to poets and others who have not taken a graduate-level course in the subject. The first two-thirds of the book present an excellent explanation of the basics of quantum theory using simple drawings and creative analogies. When the authors, both physicists, venture into quantum chemistry, they attempt to do so without presenting a periodic table, which would simplify their discussion of atomic structure immensely. The final third of the book may zoom out of reach of most readers, for it is in these chapters that the authors attempt to explain the particularly mind-blowing areas of quantum physics (string theory, the Dirac sea, the holographic universe, and quantum gravity). The final chapter, "Quantum Physics for Millennium III", provides a summary of the 20th-century quantum science breakthroughs, suggests some novel possible applications, and leaves the reader with a list of the subject's many unanswered questions.

In a manner similar to the way quantum theory jarred the world of traditional physics, the authors insert poems throughout the text to jar the reader into thinking about the topics in a slightly different way. Any chemist who has worked to explain the quantum universe to students will enjoy this book's fresh approach and perspective.

### *Science Is Culture: Conversations at the New Intersection of Science and Society* Edited by Adam Bly

This book caught my eye in the small science section of my local bookstore. Adam Bly, the editor of *Seed* magazine, has assembled transcripts of 22 conversations. Sounds boring? It is not. Each conversation is an interchange between two people with different viewpoints on an issue that intersects both science and society. Each 15- to 20-page chapter includes brief biographies of the participants, full-page photographs of each person, and the conversation.

In Chapter 3 of *Science Is Culture*,[8] we have Alan Lightman, theoretical physicist and author of the book *Einstein's Dreams*, speaking with choreographer Richard Colton. The two have collaborated on a dance adaptation of Lightman's book. Their conversation is about time as manifested in art—sculpture, dance, literature. In the mood for something completely different? Chapter 18 presents astrobiologist Jill Tarter, and Will Wright, game developer, discussing models, the singularity, and the significance of scientific revolutions.

The value of this book lies in its ingenious pairings of individuals. Reading a conversation in *Science Is Culture* is like being a fly on the wall during the exchange of ideas between some fascinating people. Creative instructors will be able to assign students readings from this book and pair them with other media pieces, such as presentations found on TED, the Web site with the tagline, "Ideas Worth Sharing".[9]

## ■ BRIAN P. COPPOLA

### *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman

Is it possible that you are unaware of *Maus*?[10] I keep up with graphic novels and comics (how I hate that word), and when people find out, the curious and uninitiated sometimes ask me for a recommendation. My answer is always the same: Is it possible that you are unaware of *Maus*?

*Maus: A Survivor's Tale* is a graphic novel, a fact so confounding to the Pulitzer Board in 1992 that they ended up giving *Maus* its own Special Award in order to honor it. The story of *Maus* is a biography of Vladek Spiegelman, a Holocaust survivor, as told to, recorded, and ultimately presented to us by his son (author and artist, Art Spiegelman). The story speaks for itself, and I urge you to it. But if you are not prepared, or experienced, to take in serious work through sequential cartoon drawings and word balloons, you need to recalibrate.

A great deal has been written about *Maus* and its lowbrow medium of "a comic book". Some critics worry about taking on the grave and somber issues surrounding Nazi genocide in a narrative form that is mainly associated, ever since Frederick Wertham, with "funny books" and male adolescent hero fantasy.

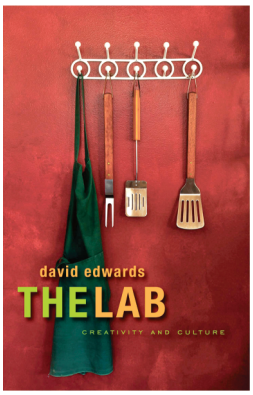



**Figure 3.** *The Lab: Creativity and Culture*[12] cover image provided by Harvard University Press and reproduced with permission.

Yet, the talented graphic novelist knows how to synthesize two things: "writing stories with pictures" and "drawing pictures with words", and in ways where neither, alone, can affect the reader—observer as strongly.

In Spiegelman's world, the characters are all animals, representing Jews (mice), Nazis (cats), Poles (pigs), and the rest. Orwell populated the world of *Animal Farm* with Marxist pigs, and it is probably a good thing he did not decide to draw them, too. There is something to be said about those who find dissonance in the choices Spiegelman made, given that the most juvenile forms of comics are called "funny animal books" (Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny), with cute, anthropomorphized characters providing light commentary on the human condition (Orwell notwithstanding). Yet, that dissonance provides enough of an allegorical distance for the reader to ultimately be completely drawn in (so to speak), and caught unaware, by the story of *Maus*.

### *The Englishman Who Posted Himself and Other Curious Objects* by John Tingey

*The Englishman*[11] is a lavish picture book about W. Reginald Bray, a London accountant who rose, in the early 20th century, to become the self-proclaimed Autograph King of the World. But, as the title implies, this unassuming gentleman had no less than a bit of the devil in him. In 1898, the 20-year-old Bray picked up a copy of the *Post Office Guide*, which, in some excruciating and fastidious detail, described the rules and regulations of the workings of the British postal service.

Bray, over the next decade, led a one-man crusade: just how far would the post office go in order to follow its own rules? The answer is told through Bray's imaginative exploits, captured with delight by Tingey, who also includes the tale of how he uncovered Bray in the first place. As it turns out... you can post anything between the size of a bee and an elephant. You can send, if properly addressed, turnips, onions, slippers, seaweed, hats, pipes, a rabbit's skull, and you can use stationary that includes shirt collars and a crocheted envelope. You can address a letter in rhyme, in code, in rebus, with mirror writing, and you can use a picture postcard and write "To The Resident Nearest This Rock". And you can send, as the title states, yourself, if properly posted and addressed.

In sending postcards to the famous and infamous, he eventually settled down—if one can possibly say that—to having the recipients return, postpaid, their autograph on the card he sent to them. An estimated minimum of 32,000 requests, which ended up as the postcard equivalent of a form letter, yielded about 15,000 autographs. This story is a lovely antidote to a world of UPS, FedEx, DHL, and the like, where people now send things that probably would have surprised even Bray, describing a time when mail carriers were the Internet that connected people with one another—and in this one case, literally so.

### *The Lab: Creativity and Culture* by David Edwards

At my home institution, I have always thought it was a smart move to have the Art and Design School housed with the College of Engineering. The faculty and students often cross-pollinate their ideas to create innovative solutions to problems that range from design to performance. More and more, the intersection of culturally aware creative arts with globally sensitive invention and innovation is being promoted. This is what underlies *The Lab*[12] (Figure 3), a manifesto from David Edwards, the youngest-ever member of the National Academy of Engineering.

Edwards, the Gordon McKay Professor of the Practice of Biomedical Engineering at Harvard University, is founding director of Le Laboratoire in Paris[13] and the Idea Translation Lab at Harvard.[14] Edwards promotes "artscience" laboratories, a sort of no-holds barred utopia where the dis-integrated academy is re-integrated around a sense of need and purpose. One thing that Edwards understands, I think, is that to get from here to there, wherever there might be, is a road filled with bends, blind alleys, surprises, and the sort of necessary failures on which you build success—and that universities, their faculty and their students, are still one of the great sources of cheap inventive resources. This might result in air-cleaners that use plant-based filters, it might result in a way to light remote African villages with microbiotic lamps, or it might result in a form of breathable chocolate, 0.8 calories to the whiff (called, famously, Le Whif,[15] and possibly proving that not every hit is a home run).

Above all that, Edwards reminds us why maintaining universities as physical spaces that bring imaginative people together can accomplish what no online learning scheme can ever hope to achieve: sparking the inventive drive of people into doing the work that is not yet done, and only imagined.

### *Rediscovery of the Elements* by Jim Marshall and Jenny Marshall

Let me confess, up front, my conflict of interest on this one: Jim and Jenny Marshall are friends of mine, and, as Grand Editor of *The Hexagon of Alpha Chi Sigma*, I have been publishing chapters from this story for nearly a decade. But, the project is terrific, you should know about it, and all the profits go to student scholarships and fellowships.

Jim Marshall, a chemistry professor at the University of North Texas, and his wife, Jenny, a retired middle school teacher, computer-whiz, and photographer, took a spectacular 12-year honeymoon. They systematically retraced the steps, and the history, of the elements. They are a living periodic table. Armed with cameras, GPS, intuition, a smattering of language skills, science, and persistence, they have researched the people, places, and times of the events surrounding the discovery of the elements. The DVD version of their expeditions (Figure 4), the *Rediscovery of the Elements*,[16] delivers an on-disk experience through your regular Internet browser.

One rarely finds such a combination of informative science and history, new scholarship, and a labor of love, all in one package. The DVD includes a set of heavily referenced articles containing over 6000 photographs, including the documentation of hundreds of historical sites (with exact directions for you to visit these and other interesting places), over 300 detailed maps


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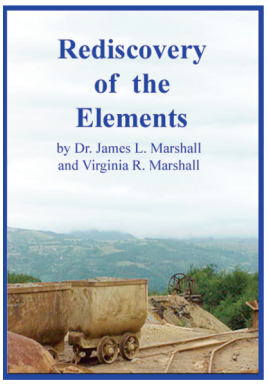



**Figure 4.** *Rediscovery of the Elements*[16] cover image provided by Jim and Jenny Marshall and reproduced with permission.

with GPS coordinates, and 270 biographies of scientists whose stories intersect in one way or another with the elements of the periodic table.

### *Unthinkable* Directed by Gregor Jordan

Never heard of it? That is a little surprising, given the star power and the basic plot.

*Cast:* Samuel L. Jackson, Carrie-Anne Moss, and Michael Sheen... check!

*Plot:* Soldier-turned-terrorist plants three nuclear bombs in three U.S. cities. It is Monday. They are scheduled to go off at noon on Friday. Genuine tension and thrills follow.... check!

*Publicity:* None... curious!

*Release:* Straight to DVD... curiouser!

Despite my plot summary, *Unthinkable*[17] is not another Tom Clancy novel turned into a movie: no Jack Ryan; low production values (they rented out a high school, not that it was a bad choice); no chases; no special effects. No *Air Force One* barreling down a runway as an ash cloud nips its tail; no press conferences; no somber news reports from the Oval Office.

In fact, the soldier-turned-terrorist is caught early in the first act, and he needs to be interrogated. And that is the movie. If you recall the scenes of information-extraction from (that great television show) *Alias* then you really have seen comparable information-extracting techniques. But in those scenes, of course, an evil man (often a foreign villain with a dentist's drill) was carrying on with our heroes. You can show that on television, because we (Americans) can and will overcome great evil!

But what if the guy with the drill is Samuel L. Jackson, family man, and the prisoner in the chair is a U.S. citizen? What are the rights... the morality... when nuking three U.S. cities is on the line? Apparently, asking this interesting question does not mix well with a super-tub of popcorn, a big blue drink, and a box of candy-coated chocolates at the Bijou. So the decision-makers by-passed the theatrical release and went straight to DVD. What a pity: making a movie about an idea.

As the story goes, the U.S. box office did not like two fabulous, high-production value movies about terrorism, the search for WMDs, and the war that accompanied them (2008's *Hurt Locker*[18] and 2010's *Green Zone*,[19] which, by the way, make a great triple feature with *Unthinkable*), so the powers-that-be did not think audiences would even go see *Unthinkable* when the moral ambiguity was so high. We just don't like knowing these things, or seeing them at the cinema. Don't ask, don't tell... and for pity's sake, don't make a movie about it.

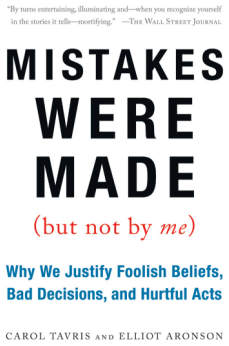



**Figure 5.** *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by* Me)[20] cover image provided by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and reproduced with permission.

And just to make matters that much more interesting, the DVD has the "original version" (the one planned for U.S. release) and the "extended version" (the one planned for the rest of the world). The difference is 90 s, and it's how you end the story.

## HAL HARRIS

### *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by* Me*): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts* by Carol Tavris and Elliott Aronson

I bought *Mistakes Were Made*[20] (Figure 5) for a long plane ride, thinking that it would be a light, entertaining read. It did turn out to be very entertaining, but it also has affected the way I think about politics, law, ethics, and the teaching of science. One of the steps in the constructivist approach to science education is to create cognitive dissonance in the learner, such as by presenting a demonstration of a discrepant event. The objective is to force the learner to consider a more correct alternative to the explanation that already existed in his or her mind. Research shows that this is very difficult to do because the mind is very resistant to ideas that contradict previous positions. Look at the classic Annenberg video *Minds of Our Own*[21] for examples from science education. While the possibility of changing of one's mind in light of new evidence is essential to the scientific process, it is not easy for any of us to admit errors or to change previous positions, especially if they have been made publicly. In *Mistakes Were Made*, Carol Tavris and Elliott Aronson illuminate the ways in which the resistance to resolution of cognitive dissonance is manifest in prosecutors who refuse to consider evidence that might exonerate suspects they have decided are guilty, spouses who carry grudges, followers of doomsday predictors (after "doomsday" has passed), and many other examples, including the current polarized political environment. See if you cannot find examples in today's news of what the authors call "[The] powerful ... need for consonance. When people are forced to look at disconfirming evidence, they will find a way to criticize, distort, or dismiss it so that they can maintain or even strengthen their existing belief."

### *Boyle: Between God and Science* by Michael Hunter

Robert Boyle is known to most chemists solely for his law relating the pressure and volume of a gas, but this privileged son of the Earl of Cork was not as interested in discovering an equation as he was in finding what his experiments could tell him about his relationship to God. Both Boyle and his contemporary, Isaac Newton, had strong spiritual inclinations, including both Christianity and alchemy. Newton was more willing to work through mathematics in search of eternal truths. For Boyle, his

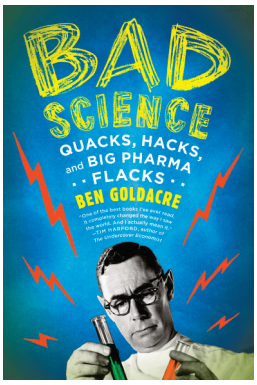



**Figure 6.** *Bad Science*[24] cover image provided by Faber and Faber (Macmillan) and reproduced with permission.

Christian faith permeates almost all of his writing (except for most of The Skeptical Chemist) and led to his endowment of an Oxford lectureship to preserve and defend the faith against the onslaught of "notorious infidels" such as "Jews and Mohametans". Born in a world in which the Earth-centered universe and Aristotle's theory of humors were taught in schools, his own experimental prowess led him increasingly toward an understanding of the world as mechanical. This was wrenching to a man so devout that he paused after every mention of God, and lived celibate. Boyle even funded the translation of the New Testament into Irish and Algonquin. Michael Hunter is the world's expert on Boyle, and he has distilled seemingly every available historical artifact into this impressive book. Reading *Boyle: Between God and Science*[22] makes you feel as if you have met Boyle himself.

### *Bad Science: Quacks, Hacks, and Big Pharma Flacks* by Ben Goldacre

I am a fan of Ben Goldacre's Bad Science column in *The Guardian*. Several hundred of his weekly articles are available free online.[23] His pieces are always well researched and well reasoned, and he writes with flair and wit. *Bad Science: Quacks, Hacks, and Big Pharma Flacks*[24] (Figure 6), a slightly edited collection of his essays, has recently been released in paperback in the United States, after having been on the market in the U.K. since 2008. While some of the targets of "bad science" are easy ones like homeopathy (which ignores the lessons of introductory chemistry), he does a public service by pointing out how simple science experiments can show any consumer that toxin-removal patches are bogus. This is just one example where he uses examples from popular culture to explain how science works, and how science-based medicine and pharmacy should work. His arguments are persuasive because he clearly explains how control experiments are essential, how randomized, double-blind clinical trials work, and the amazing power of placebos. Ben has criticized many powerful institutions, but it was his remarks about Matthias Rath, a German vitamin pill entrepreneur, that cost *The Guardian* several hundred thousand dollars for a successful libel suit defense. Rath had convinced South African barrister Anthony Brink and subsequently South African President Mbeki that AIDS is caused not by HIV, but by antiretroviral drugs such as AZT. A chapter in the new edition that did not appear in the British one is "The Doctor Will Sue You Now", which describes the circumstances of the suit, which was facilitated by Britain's lax libel laws. Goldacre is a valuable voice for science and reason in a society that does not effectively monitor herbal remedies or police medical scams, where pseudoscience about nutrition is rampant, and far more is spent on direct-to-the consumer advertising than on drug research.

### *Sleights of Mind: What the Neuroscience of Magic Reveals about Our Everyday Deceptions* by Stephen L. Macknic, Susana Martinez-Conde, and Sandra Blakeslee

Magic shows do not "work" on children if they are not old enough to have developed an expectation that causes have predictable effects. They accept what their senses tell them, without constructing models that make the surprising result unexpected. On the other hand, most scientists I know find "magic" to be irresistible; they are uncomfortable until they have figured out how they have been fooled. The same curiosity that dominates their professional lives also tickles their imaginations, as hypotheses are mentally proposed and rejected. Science educators also use the "magic" of science to stimulate the interest of our students. Usually, the magic that we do is explained to our audiences, but professional magicians pride themselves on keeping the secrets behind their tricks permanently obscured. *Sleights of Mind*[25] goes behind the scenes with many of the best professional magicians, who cooperated with the authors to bring to light how the senses can be blinded and the mind can be made to misinterpret what the senses perceive. The science behind many of the tricks is explained in this book (and that is a lot of fun in itself), but the science teacher may be able to improve demonstrations, laboratories, videos, and animations with a more fundamental understanding of how the human mind processes input from our surroundings.

## ■ C. M. WOODBRIDGE

### *Deadly Professors and The Missing Professor* by Thomas B. Jones

The recent trend of adding filler to the end of books, in particular, discussion questions for book clubs, has been a source of irritation since it began. Dr. Thomas B. Jones, however, is an exception to this observation. He has done an excellent job incorporating discussion questions into his books. The questions he has written are thoughtful, discussion provoking, and really add a new dimension to his books. His "study questions" are in stark contrast to those usually provided, which make me feel I am back in grade school.

So far, Jones has written two academic mysteries[26,27] that double as faculty development exercises. The first in the series is *The Missing Professor*,[26] which is about new professor Nicole Adams' first semester at Higher State University in Normal City, Iowa. The second in the series is *Deadly Professors*,[27] which is about the murder of Roland Norris, a professor at Välkommen University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Both books are a two-for-one where the first part is the mystery and then you turn the book over and begin the second part—the faculty development part.

At first, I did not enjoy either book. But when I went back and re-read them, I started to think of the stories as parodies of mysteries and actually read (the majority of) the discussion questions and I really enjoyed both the mystery and the discussion questions. I wish these stories were parodies of academic life—I am not sure any one of us has had *all* the experiences that Jack Ramble and Nicole Adams had and I do not think any of my colleagues have offices with secret trapdoors in them. However, the descriptions of faculty life are eerily accurate. Frighteningly

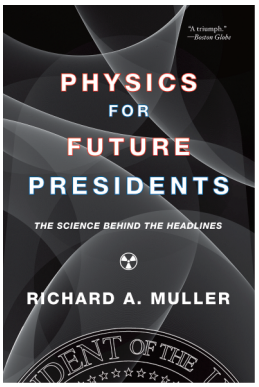



**Figure 7.** *Physics for Future Presidents*[28] cover image provided by W. W. Norton and Company and reproduced with permission.

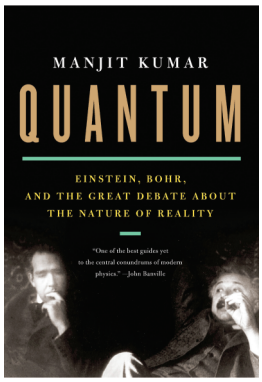



**Figure 8.** *Quantum*[35] cover image provided by W. W. Norton and Company and reproduced with permission.

accurate. I am starting to wonder which of my (former) friends talked.

Any orientation program for new faculty or program wishing to do more faculty development would benefit from adopting these books in their entirety or in part for discussion. The ensuing discussions would be lively and far more interesting than filling out reams of forms, getting packets of maps, and all the other activities that customarily go on in new orientation workshops. It would be fun to get together as a department or a small group of colleagues and work through some of the exercises. Two of my favorite sets of questions were associated with Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 in *Deadly Professors*: they dealt with liberal education and the first class session. I hope there are more books in the series.

P.S. Whoever "told" on me is off my Christmas list.

### *Physics for Future Presidents* by Richard A. Muller

The premise of Richard Muller's book *Physics for Future Presidents*[28] (Figure 7) is that no one is ready to be a world leader if they are not up to speed on the physics behind issues like dirty bombs or global warming. He has written a short overview of the physics behind several issues: terrorism, energy, nukes, space, and global warming. Each section starts with a hypothetical scenario to address why a world leader should know as much as they can about the topic and ends with a presidential summary of what we (should have) just learned. His style is conversational and filled with practical examples. If I were a student, I think I would enjoy taking one of his science for nonmajors courses. If I were an aspiring world leader, this educational book would (hopefully) inspire me to learn more about the physics, chemistry, and biology behind key issues and not be the stereotypical world leader[29] who knows very little about science. For those who are not planning to be world leaders, this is still a great book of case studies about timely, relevant problems. Whether students read this as part of a course or just for fun at the beach this summer, this is a very enjoyable book.

### *The Paleo Diet* by Loren Cordain

I picked up Dr. Loren Cordain's *The Paleo Diet*[30] by mistake; what was actually on my list of books to read was *The Paleo Solution*.[31] However, I really enjoyed *The Paleo Diet*. Cordain outlines the science behind his approach—and backs it up with peer-reviewed publications. The basic premise is this: if people eat what their genetic code is programmed to metabolize, they will be healthier and thinner. Processed foods, grains, dairy, and sugar (refined sugar) are not on that list. My synopsis of *The Paleo Diet* would be this—if it comes with a label, don't eat it.

The first two parts of the book describe the heart of the diet—part one describes what the diet is and part two describes how, if you follow the diet, your health will improve and you will lose weight. Part three starts with a list of what to eat and moves on to exercises and recipes. In the Resources section, you can find Cordain's Web site address[32] as well as other sites devoted to the principles behind *The Paleo Diet*.[33,34] Both of these sites as well as the bibliography have given me quite a few additions to my reading list.

### *Quantum* by Manjit Kumar

This was an easy pick for me because I am a sucker for any book about the early history of quantum mechanics. The front flap says that Kumar's *Quantum*[35] (Figure 8) is "a riveting account of the golden age of physics, the brilliant young minds at its core, and an idea that ignited the greatest intellectual debate of the twentieth century". Although I enjoyed reading *Quantum*, I missed the debate. I have reviewed Part III, Titans Clash over Reality, which would seem to be the logical place to describe the clash of the titans, twice now and I am still missing the promised clash.

The issue of the debate aside, *Quantum* is an enjoyable book. Despite the fact that I have several dozen books on my shelf about the development of quantum mechanics and have read dozens more, *Quantum* was a fresh approach to the topic. I was not tempted to put the book down because it seemed like I had read something very like it before. Even though much of the material is familiar history to me, the author crafted a well-told narrative retelling a familiar story and made it seem new again. For me, despite the missing debate, this was a great Sunday afternoon read and I look forward to reading it again.

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