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American Statistical Association Offers Holiday Gift Suggestions for Statisticians and Mathematicians

ALEXANDRIA VA (PRWEB) DECEMBER 1, 2007 – Wondering what to get those statisticians and mathematicians on your list for the holidays? The American Statistical Association's Media Experts have suggested the following list of holiday gift possibilities to help make your shopping easier.

From Jimmy Efird, the director, Biostatistics and Data Management Facility, at the John A. Burns School of Medicine in Hawaii:

- ***The Six Sigma Handbook: The Complete Guide for Greenbelts, Blackbelts, and Managers at all Levels.*** Thomas Pyzdek, McGraw-Hill, 2003.
- ***The Complete Idiot's Guide to Statistics.*** Robert A. Donnelly, Alpha Books, 2004.

David Banks, professor of statistics at Duke University, offers a variety of suggestions:

- Neal Stephenson's ***Cryptonomicon***, historical fiction about Alan Turing and WWII for and by a math geek.
- Dungeons & Dragons dice: Everyone needs a 4-sided, 8-sided, 10-sided, 20-sided, and 100-sided die when extra randomness is needed.
- Children's Book (to slightly extend the period of time during which young children might think that you are cool): ***Sideways Arithmetic from Wayside School***, by Louis Sachar.
- A laminated card with 3.141592653589793238462643383279... written on it, for emergencies. (We might also suggest a Pi tee shirt, available at http://www.scienceteacher.com/pi_shirt.htm)
- Two small, discreet adhesive notes with "Do not look at shoes" written on them, to be placed on the dorsal surface of ones shoes.

Brad Carlin, biostatistics professor at the University of Minnesota, suggests these items:

- How about the complete first (or second) season of "Numb3rs" on DVD: <http://www.amazon.com/Numb3rs-Complete-Season-Rob-Morrow/dp/B000ERVJKE>
This critically acclaimed show makes being a numbers nerd look cool!
- For that Carl Morris-like baseball nerd on your shopping list, Carlin suggests the re-release of ***Strat-o-Matic*** baseball, the classic stats-based baseball game from the 70s: <http://www.strat-o-matic.com/>
- Everyone needs a gambling-related item: how about a Texas Hold'em odds chart (Actual money to bet in Atlantic City not included):

http://www.texasholdem-poker.com/odds_chart

From the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, biostatistics professor Susan Ellenberg sends the following suggestions:

- ***Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences and A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper*** by John Allen Paulos.
- ***Godel, Escher Bach*** [an Eternal Golden Braid] by Douglas Hofstadter, which her mathematician son recommends (as he points out, the only math-related book to ever win a Pulitzer Prize).
- He also offers Malcolm Gladwell's ***The Tipping Point***, which is "stealth math;" the underlying principles relate to nonlinear differential equations and random graphs, but it doesn't look like math.
- And of course, one could always give a subscription to **CHANCE**, an ASA magazine that focuses on the use of statistics in everyday life and is for everyone with an interest in the analysis of data. **To subscribe:**
http://www.amstat.org/publications/pubs_individual.pdf

Phil Hanser of The Brattle Group in Cambridge, MA, provided the following contributions:

- ***The Tiger That Isn't*** by Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot. "Absolutely the best book on statistics at the popular level that I have read recently, it is published in Great Britain by Profile Books Ltd. Blastland and Dilnot run a radio show on BBC Radio4 called '4 More or Less' that focuses on the misuse of statistics. Although the book has a British flavor, American readers should be able glean more than enough insights from the book. I got my copy from Amazon.co.uk. It's a little pricey when the shipping is included but well worth it."
- ***A Beautiful Math*** by Tom Siegfried (published by Joseph Henry Press). "A numbers book that isn't statistics, although it does have a reasonable share of probability, it should be of interest to the mathematically (and economically) inclined. As you might guess it is focused on game theory and, more than that, the attempt by scientists to be analytical in a (sometimes mathematically) rigorous way about people's collective behavior. Essentially no equations, but lots of very clear and able writing."
- For those who aren't afraid to tackle an occasional equation, there is Julian Havil's ***Nonplussed: Mathematical Proof of Implausible Idea*** published by Princeton University Press. "Lots of fascinating paradoxes, some of which involve counterintuitive probability insights such as those that result from analyzing the birthday problem properly."

Michele Connolly, the president of Sweetgrass Consulting in Columbia, MD, says that he likes:

- ***How to Lie With Statistics*** by Darrell Huff and Irving Geis. "Depending on how serious this gift is, you may also wish to consider some graph paper and a pocket protector."

Karen Kafadar, statistics professor at the University of Colorado in Denver, offers "an easy read for a non-statistician:"

- ***The Lady Tasting Tea: How Statistics Revolutionized Science in the Twentieth Century*** by David Salsburg

Shane Reese, statistics professor at Brigham Young University, offers the following “Great reads for geeks:”

- ***Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*** by Michael Lewis, which examines how the 2002 Oakland Athletics achieved a spectacular winning record in spite of having the smallest player payroll of any major league baseball team.
- ***Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*** by Stephen Jay Gould.
- ***Fooled by Randomness: The Hidden Role of Chance in Life and in the Markets*** by Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Finally, we have some clothing items that may be of interest:

- “Approximately Normal” tee shirt from ASA Marketplace
http://www.amstat.org/ASAStore/Approximately_Normal_Adult_T-s_P109.cfm
- “The Evolution of Statistics” tee
http://www.amstat.org/ASAStore/The_Evolution_of_Statistics_Ad_P122.cfm
- ...or a bunch of other clothing items for mathematicians:
http://www.scienceteacher.com/math_shirt.htm

About the American Statistical Association

The American Statistical Association (ASA), a scientific and educational society founded in Boston in 1839, is the second oldest professional society in the United States. For more than 160 years, ASA has been providing its 18,000 members serving in academia, government, and industry and the public with up-to-date, useful information about statistics. The ASA has a proud tradition of service to statisticians, quantitative scientists, and users of statistics across a wealth of academic areas and applications. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the association’s web site at <http://www.amstat.org> or call 703.684.1221.

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