



Going potty

Coverage of the latest instalment of the Diagram Prize for Oddest Book Title of the Year has been plentiful once again, as Google News can inform you. Coverage included 15 BBC interviews in two early-morning hours for one member of the *Organ's* team (a lackey, I was far too busy) and, in a world first, an invite on to Arabic-language news network Al Jazeera. It will be the last time we ever appear on such a network, I can assure you. Chin-wagging with Omid Djalili in the Green Room was nice, of course it was, but the interviewer's question as to whether the point of the world-famous Diagram Prize for Oddest Book Title of the Year was simply to increase subscriptions* to this wonderful magazine was an outrage. The Diagram Prize, and winners such as *Crocheting Adventures with Hyperbolic Planes*, celebrates the incredible diversity of the publishing world today, of course.

The final word on this year's prize, however, deserves to go to the author of the winning work itself, Dr Daina Taimina, who has been in touch with *The Organ*: "Thanks for nominating my book title for the Diagram Prize and thanks to the thousands of voters who made it possible for me to have an award-winning title. I am very happy for this 'most prestigious literary award'. It is the very first prize I have ever received. Actually, now I can reveal a secret that the title was my husband's idea when he was doing the layout of the book and needed some name for it in order to save files. After we published a joint paper in 2001 for years he received e-mails in which he was credited with crocheting hyperbolic planes. Now I think the Diagram Prize makes us even. Thank you! Please visit my blog <http://hyperbolic-crochet.blogspot.com>". No, no, thank you Dr Taimina.

*PS To subscribe to my column (and the less interesting pages of *The Organ* that necessarily precede it) for just £3.58 per week, log on to www.thebookseller.com/subscribe.

Panic reigned supreme at the DK offices last week when, after overhearing a suspicious conversation, members of the editorial reference team became convinced their design colleagues were creating plans to build a nuclear bomb. On Penguin time! The cheek. After reference publisher Jonathan Metcalf spent 10 long minutes in the good ol' Protect and Survive position under his desk, calm was restored when the design team explained that they had been innocently discussing the logistics of making your own sustainable toilet—a key extract from Dick and James Strawbrige's *Practical Self Sufficiency* which is due out in September. Well, duh.

After finally finishing his debut kids' novel, *The Somethings*, on his umpteenth train journey into London, Edward Stove decided to celebrate its completion by kicking back with a change of project, to something that had its germination in his amateur film-making schooldays—a homage to Tarantino entitled "Reservoir Fiction". The wind-down ended up turning into something of a wind-up, with a short sketch culminating in the hiring of a 33-metre swimming pool, plus 20 extras. Five of the 20 turned up—three of them couldn't swim and the other two refused to even get in the shallow end. Suffice to say, Stove is currently working on his second novel.

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Literary agent Daisy Frost will be a very lucky lady indeed if she ever gets to go to Bologna again

Bolognightmare



One of the great things about Bologna is it isn't in Germany. I spent a glorious day last week wandering around the medieval city, imagining myself as **Audrey Hepburn** on a Vespa. It was only when

I received an email from my boss that I realised I wasn't on holiday but was there for the kiddies' book fair. What a culture shock. As I strode around the fair in Prada, shouting into my iPhone, I felt like Gordon Gekko trespassing in the kindergarten—so different from Frankfurt where it is: offence *not* to be hung over by Day Two. Children's publishers are a different breed altogether—they are just much more wholesome. And clean. And sober. And NICI

In need of adrenalin, I dodged a 6ft hamster in a wheeler (Richard Hammond launching a new young adult series?) and rushed to the Puffin stand to help celebrate its 75th birthday. Tom Weldon was dressed as Tom Kitten, Francesca Dow and Amanda Punter oozed a

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tude as Young Bond Girls and Jeremey Ettinghausen lived the Wimpy Kid. All this was topped by Dame Maryret Scardino as Angelina Ballerina, skirt tucked into her knickers, pirouetting around the room. We played projection games too—pinning the long tail on the BookScan donkey being my fave.

I swept through parties for vampires, pets, monster fairies, pirates until I approached a sort of literary sugar rush like Veruca Salt from *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*. I suddenly had a lightbulb moment—if I ever wanted to make some serious cash, I needed to write a series about princess vampire kitten and her friend Elvis the hamster gargoyle school. In 3-D. Kate Wilson of Noisy Cow would be beating a path to my door with this one—it couldn't fail.

I wheeled out of the fair and bumped into Überbook Ben Page, and before I knew it we were comparing hampers in the Pink Bar and drinking themed cocktails. I stayed up for an all-nighter but when the clock struck 9.45 p.m. the publishers stood up and said in unison: "We need to go to an early night—hard day at the fair tomorrow."

I left in disgust and headed back to the fair. My mission was clear—it was time to desanitise the world of children's publishing. Rummaging in my goody bags, I donned Alex Rider nightvision glasses, my invisibility cloak, grabbed some Wimpy Kid crayons. It all went a bit better after that, but when I turned up next morning I was surprised to see the whole area cordoned off by police, shocked publishers wrapped in blankets being given by hordes of nuns. Unable to get into the hall, I logged on to Twitter and saw @horacebent had tweeted some pictures. It all came flooding back to me—Where's Wally? seen to have acquired an unwanted sequel called *Oh for F's sake—HERE'S Wally. The Tiger Who Came To Tea* become *The Very Naughty Tiger Who Stayed For Breakfast*. OUP Classics appeared to have a YA crossover title called *The Princess and the Penis* and I cannot even begin to tell you what happened to the huge poster for *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*.

See you at Earls Court. If I am not banned.
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