zbMATH Open
THE FIRST RESOURCE FOR MATHEMATICS

Adams, Colin

Do androids dream of symmetric sheaves? And other mathematically bent stories. (English)

Zbl 07746979

Cham: Birkhäuser (ISBN 978-3-031-31490-2/pbk; 978-3-031-31491-9/ebook). x, 253 p. (2023)

Colin Adams is the author of a humorous column *Mathematically Bent* in the *Mathematical Intelligencer*. After his bundle of 30 columns in [*C. Adams*, Riot at the calc exam and other mathematically bent stories. Providence, RI: American Mathematical Society (AMS) (2009; Zbl 1364.00011)], the current collection has another 45 of these short stories.

Some returning themes are teachers assistants that get an overload of grading to do, leaving no time for research, or dropping overly specialized, often meaningless abstract terminology, or the permanent anxiety that someone publishes your result first.

Inspiration is for example found in easily recognizable books, films, TV-series, etc. Some examples: *The adventures of Robin Caruso* (a mathematician stranded on a deserted island), *Silence of the Lemmas* (Dr. Lecture teaches while imprisoned), *A Pi day Carol* (Scrouge harassing poor Cratchitch), *CSI-MSRI* (Mangum is a P.I. (*principal* investigator) on an NSF grant)...

Examples that made me really laugh out loud: *The presidential address* (speech of an AMS president as if he were a well known US president), *The Lord of the Ring, part I: the NSF fellowship of the rings*, (algebraist Frodo obtains the definition of a very secret and powerful ring from Bilbo), *The referee's report* (a derailing discussion between referee, author, and editor), *GUI* (a T.A. is accused of Grading Under Influence... of coffee).

Some of the stories are hilarious, others a bit less so. One gets easily used to the pattern and the senseless mathematical terminology (like noncommutative abelian ring, nondifferentiable smooth manifold etc). My advise is to spread reading in time and consume a story in between other serious work like a snack.

Reviewer: Adhemar Bultheel (Leuven)

MSC:

00A09 Popularization of mathematics

Keywords:

popularization of mathematics; mathematical humor; mathematical fiction; recreational mathematics;

Full Text: DOI

© 2024 FIZ Karlsruhe GmbH