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Between the Lines: Authors have brains on their minds

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That brainy Sacramento science writer-professor Judith Horstman is at it again, this time with her third brain-centric book. "The Scientific American Book of Love, Sex and the Brain: The Neuroscience of How, When, Why and Who We Love" is due Dec. 27 (Jossey-Bass, \$25.95, 264 pages).

One of the book's revelations about love and the brain is that "it only takes a fraction of a second to tell if you're attracted to someone," Horstman said on the phone.

"We're hard-wired to love," she added. "Brain scans show different kinds of love work in specific brain areas, but all kinds of love – from romantic to maternal – activate the brain's reward areas. Love tends to make our brains bigger and better, and may help them stay healthier longer."

Her previous brain books are "A Day in the Life of Your Brain" and "Brave New Brain." The fourth, "Healthy Aging Brain: The Neuroscience of Making the Most of Your Mature Mind," will be published in May.

Visit Horstman at www.judithhorstman.com.

Meanwhile, two other brain-oriented titles are revealing in different ways:

"What Makes Your Brain Happy and Why You Should Do the Opposite" by David DiSalvo (Prometheus, \$19, 280 pages): Science writer-blogger DiSalvo (Neuronarrative and Neuropsych) points out that many of our actions that make our brains "happy" actually place roadblocks in our way. With input from "many of the top thinkers in psychology and neuroscience," he offers helpful strategies to avoid pitfalls.

"Sleights of Mind" by Stephen L. Macknik and Susana Martinez-Conde (Picador, \$16, 304 pages): For something lighter, this "marriage of professional magic and cognitive neuroscience" is an inside look at how professional magicians manipulate their audiences' perceptions to accomplish their illusions. One point of interest is an explanation of why the "efficiency" of multitasking is a myth.

Sheriff's K-9 calendar

Each year, the Sacramento Sheriff's K-9 Association must find ways to supplement its budget for the care and feeding of its dog partners. Which led to Deputy Shane Gregory's idea: How about creating a 2012 calendar as a fund-raiser?

Gregory and his German shepherd partner, Ronin, connected with XSIGHT Photography of Sacramento to produce it. It's described as "honoring the courage of our K9 partners through action shots that highlight the situations they enter to protect citizens."

It's \$20 at www.ssdkg.com/shopping.

California Northern No. 4

Issue No. 4 of Sacramento-based California Northern is available for \$6.95 at bookstores and newsstands, as well as at Whole Foods, Walmart, Costco and other locations.

The twice-yearly magazine specializes in examining Northern California's "new regionalism," said Casey Mills, publisher and editor-in-chief. "It explores the region's culture, environment, history and identity (via) essays, long-form journalism, literature, poetry and photography," he said.

Among the contents of the new issue is an update on the state's many communal-living experiments; a sociological look at methamphetamine abuse; and a prison inmate's reflection on her past and what it means to be behind bars.

For a subscription: www.calnorthern.net.

Stockett's next novel?

The success of Kathryn Stockett's debut novel "The Help" has become a publishing legend. As in: 60 rejection letters over three years, then more than two years on best-seller lists, Oscar buzz for the movie version, a worldwide reading-group favored choice, and so on.

Asked on CBS' "The Early Show" about her next novel, Stockett revealed she missed her deadline by a year, but she's "working on it."

And the plot? "It takes place during the Roaring '20s in Oxford, Mississippi," she said. "It's about a group of women who have absolutely no marketable skills. As women of the 2000s, we go to college and prepare ourselves for the world. But these women did not, and the men fall away, so they have to find a different way to earn a living."

Visit the author at www.kathrynstockett.com.

Websites for book lovers

Call them book clubs or reading groups, their popularity is greater than ever – thanks largely to a digital-oriented audience eager to share their favorite reads and to discover new ones.

With that in mind, we took a look at www.goodreads.com, "a free website for book-lovers" (registration required). The idea is for members to create their own "libraries" and share their contents within the goodreads community. You can post and read reviews, look up books by title and author, and form and/or join reading groups. Think of the site as a Facebook for the bookish.

Similarly, the "content-aggregating blog" Huffington Post will debut its book club Jan. 3. A posting explains, "We want to hear about how your reading intersects with your experiences, your memories, your everyday life and with current events. Using free online tools, the HuffPost Book Club will create a unique intersection between the digital and physical worlds."

Details are at www.huffingtonpost.com. Email questions to HPBookClub@huffingtonpost.com.

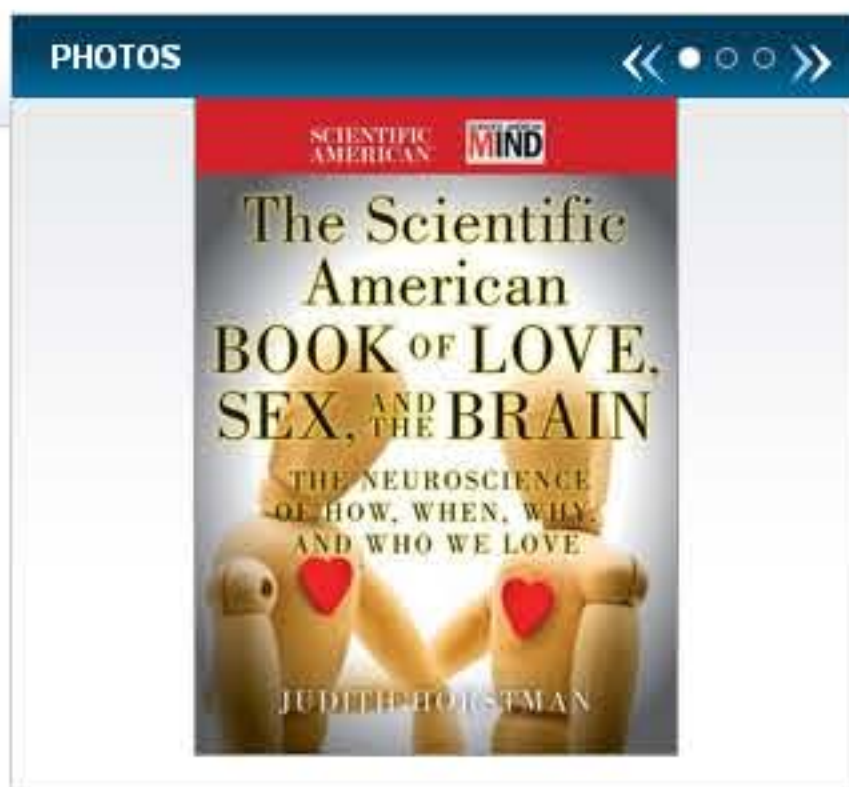
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If you have information on author appearances, book sales, writing seminars, writers club meetings or other book-related special events, email it to bookmarks@sacbee.com at least two weeks before the event. To read the online calendar, go to www.sacbee.com/books.

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