

The price of everything: solving the mystery of why we pay what we do by Eduardo Porter.
Portfolio/Penguin, 2011. 296p index ISBN 9781591843627, \$27.95

In terms of genre, *The Price of Everything* fits comfortably under the heading of "economists just want to have fun," that is, books written for broader audiences, such as *Freakonomics* (CH, Nov'05, 43-1689) and its successor, *Superfreakonomics* (CH, Jul'10, 47-6377), by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner; *The Economic Naturalist* by Robert Frank (CH, Dec'07, 45-2142); *The Undercover Economist* by Tim Harford (2007); and *Discover Your Inner Economist* by Tyler Cowen (2007). But Porter (*The New York Times*) is a journalist (as is Dubner) not an economist, and stylistically and in terms of content that is how the book reads and rambles. The menu is vast: the role of prices--when they work and when they fail--in making choices at Starbucks or the mall; valuing a (human or animal) life; measuring happiness; deciding to marry one woman or more; confronting the Internet and intellectual property matters; thinking about culture and religion; and dealing with energy and climate change. There is something for everyone. The 35 pages of detailed endnotes are invaluable for those who want to get beyond what are often superficial treatments. *Summing Up: Recommended. All readership levels.* -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago