

Just what an author wants for Christmas

Published: January 12, 2026, 8:46 pm

I [have already mentioned](#) that I contributed to the [Times Higher Education selection of Books of the Year](#). I admit to being pleased that I was selected to do so in other ways as [The Joy of Tax](#) appeared twice:

Doreen Massey, emeritus professor of geography, the Open University
One of the crying needs at the moment is to challenge the prevailing “common sense” of neoliberalism, especially its economic nostrums. Many oft-repeated truisms about tax do not stand up to serious scrutiny. Challenging them would open up the field for debate on economic policy. Moreover, tax is much more than economic policy — it is an element in the construction of our collectivity and in decisions about what kind of society we want. In *The Joy of Tax: How a Fair Tax System Can Create a Better Society* (Bantam), Richard Murphy takes on all this with gusto, moving from forensic deconstruction of the current common sense to a proposal for a chancellor’s statement that might set us on the road to change.

Peter Goodhew, emeritus professor of engineering, University of Liverpool
We do not have enough engineers to deliver the future we want, or to overcome the challenges we know we face. A plethora of earnest reports tell us this and attempt to explain the unpopularity of engineering. In David Goldberg and Mark Somerville’s *A Whole New Engineer* (ThreeJoy Associates), we read about the foundation and success of Franklin W. Olin College in Massachusetts, which has broken the mould and is producing more and different engineers. Hurrah! For contrast (can I really mean relaxation?), I devoured *The Joy of Tax: How a Fair Tax System Can Create a Better Society* by Richard Murphy (Bantam). Now I have an inkling about government spending. Is it really true, as Murphy asserts, that nowhere in the UK university sector do we teach why we tax? Shame on us.

And yes, that is the sort of thing an author wants for Christmas.