A-maze-ing History

Try It Out

Pick up the maze and see if you can get all three balls into the center circle. Harder than it looks, right?

What's the Story?

- Labyrinths were first designed in ancient Egypt, as spiritual journeys to guide the visitor along a single path.
- The Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur was about labyrinths with dead ends—more confusing than a single path.
- After the Roman Empire, labyrinths became popular on the floors and walls of religious structures.
- In the Middle Ages, kings built hedge mazes intended to confuse and amuse.
- Farmers in the United States begin to cut mazes into fields of corn.

Labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral, France

Women in Science

May-Britt Moser in 2014 (Image: Henrik Fjørtoft)

We owe our ability to navigate a maze to cells in the brain discovered in part by May-Britt Moser. In 2014, she won the Nobel Prize for work concerning the grid cells in the entorhinal cortex, as well as several additional space-representing cell types in the same circuit that make up the positioning system in the brain.

In theory, grid cells help us determine our location in space by keeping track of where we came from, and how we got to where we are. This is an approach used by many mammals; it's called path integration.

Moser's work also helped scientists gain new knowledge about the cognitive processes and spacial deficits associated with human neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

Wonder While You Walk...

How would life be better if you always knew exactly where you were? What would life be like if you *never* knew where you were?

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