

What the address is to a letter the _title_ should be to a book--that is, its immediate aim should be to bring the book to that part of the public that will be interested in its contents. Therefore, the title should be effective, and since it is essentially short, it should be concise, laconic, pregnant, and if possible express the contents in a word. Therefore a title that is prolix, or means nothing at all, or that is indirect or ambiguous, is bad; so is one that is false and misleading: this last may prepare for the book the same fate as that which awaits a wrongly addressed letter. The worst titles are those that are stolen, such titles that is to say that other books already bear; for in the first place they are a plagiarism, and in the second a most convincing proof of an absolute want of originality. A man who has not enough originality to think out a new title for his book will be much less capable of giving it new contents. Akin to these are those titles which have been imitated, in other words, half stolen; for instance, a long time after I had written "On Will in Nature," Oersted wrote "On Mind in Nature."

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A book can never be anything more than the impression of its author's thoughts. The value of these thoughts lies either in the _matter_ about which_ he has thought, or in the _form_ in which he develops his matter--that is to say, _what_ he has thought about it.