

American Name Society

Press Release 1/6/12

Arab Spring voted Name of the Year

The American Name Society voted “Arab Spring” Name of the Year for 2011 at its annual meeting in Portland, Oregon on January 6, 2012.

“**Arab Spring**” the common English name for the pro-democracy political movements which swept many Arabic countries including Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria in 2011, was cited for its historical importance and its evocative use of the word “Spring” to create a memorable positive name for this movement.

Iman Nick, second vice president of the American Name Society, said “Arab Spring is a great choice because it’s not only interesting linguistically but is a name that will become an important historical political marker of a movement that will change a significant portion of the world.”

The society also chose winners for Names of the Year in four separate categories.

“**Siri**” was voted Trade Name of the Year. The name for the digital assistant which is now part of Apple’s iPhone modified the name of SRI International, the company that developed it, to create a feminine-sounding name which fits the technology’s robotic female voice and leaders many users to think of Siri as if it were a real woman talking to them.

“**Fukushima**” was voted Place Name of the Year. The name of the site of the Japanese nuclear power plant crippled by last year’s earthquake and tsunami joins Three Mile Island and Chernobyl as a name which will be forever linked to our culture’s nuclear anxieties.

“**Qaddafi, Kathafi, Khadhafy, etc.**” was chosen as the Personal Name of the Year. The multiple spellings of the name of Libya’s late dictator are a great example of the difficulty of presenting names from languages with other writing systems in English.

“**Lisbeth Salander**” won as Fictional Name of the Year. The name of the heroine of the trilogy by Stieg Larsson and the films based on it has become recognizable to millions around the world.

The American Name Society, founded in 1951, is professional organization devoted to the study of names and their role in society. In 2010 “Eyafjallajökull” was the ANS Name of the Year. In 2009 it was “Salish Sea”, and in 2008 “Barack Hussein Obama” was chosen.

For more information on ANS or the Name of the Year vote, contact Cleveland Evans at Cleveland.evans@bellevue.edu, or 402-210-7458.