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Titolo	The travels and adventures of serendipity [[electronic resource] ] : a study in sociological semantics and the sociology of science / / Robert K. Merton, Elinor Barber
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Altri autori (Persone)	BarberElinor G
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Soggetti	Serendipity in science Science - Social aspects
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Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Preface -- Publisher's Note / Dougherty, Peter J. -- Introduction / Shulman, James L. -- Chapter 1. The Origins of Serendipity -- Chapter 2. Early Diffusion of Serendipity -- Chapter 3. Accidental Discovery in Science: Victorian Opinion -- Chapter 4. Stock Responses to Serendipity -- Chapter 5. The Qualities of Serendipity -- Chapter 6. Dictionaries and "Serendipity" -- Chapter 7. The Social History of Serendipity -- Chapter 8. Moral Implications of Serendipity -- Chapter 9. The Diverse Significance of Serendipity in Science -- Chapter 10. Serendipity as Ideology and Politics of Science -- A Note on Serendipity as a Political Metaphor -- A Note on Serendipity in the Humanities -- Afterword: Autobiographical Reflections on The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity / Merton, Robert K. -- Select References -- Name Index -- General Index
Sommario/riassunto	From the names of cruise lines and bookstores to an Australian ranch and a nudist camp outside of Atlanta, the word serendipity--that happy blend of wisdom and luck by which something is discovered not quite by accident--is today ubiquitous. This book traces the word's eventful history from its 1754 coinage into the twentieth century--chronicling along the way much of what we now call the natural and social

sciences. The book charts where the term went, with whom it resided, and how it fared. We cross oceans and academic specialties and meet those people, both famous and now obscure, who have used and abused serendipity. We encounter a linguistic sage, walk down the illustrious halls of the Harvard Medical School, attend the (serendipitous) birth of penicillin, and meet someone who "manages serendipity" for the U.S. Navy. The story of serendipity is fascinating; that of *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity*, equally so. Written in the 1950's by already-eminant sociologist Robert Merton and Elinor Barber, the book--though occasionally and most tantalizingly cited--was intentionally never published. This is all the more curious because it so remarkably anticipated subsequent battles over research and funding--many of which centered on the role of serendipity in science. Finally, shortly after his ninety-first birthday, following Barber's death and preceding his own by but a little, Merton agreed to expand and publish this major work. Beautifully written, the book is permeated by the prodigious intellectual curiosity and generosity that characterized Merton's influential *On the Shoulders of Giants*. Absolutely entertaining as the history of a word, the book is also tremendously important to all who value the miracle of intellectual discovery. It represents Merton's lifelong protest against that rhetoric of science that defines discovery as anything other than a messy blend of inspiration, perspiration, error, and happy chance--anything other than serendipity.

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