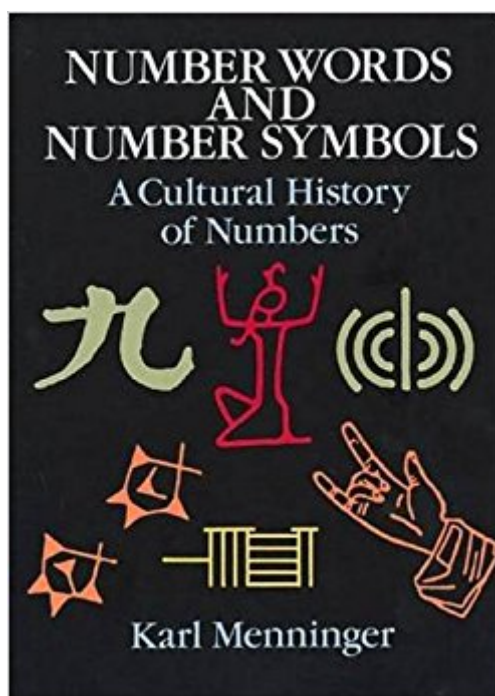




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Number Words And Number Symbols: A Cultural History Of Numbers



Synopsis

'The historian of mathematics will find much to interest him here . . . while the casual reader is likely to be intrigued by the author's superior narrative ability.' — Library Journal
This book is not only a fascinating introduction to the concept of number and to numbers themselves, hut a multifaceted linguistic and historical analysis of how numbers have developed and evolved in many different cultures. Drawing on evidence from history, literature, philosophy and ethnology, noted German scholar Karl Menninger. recounts the development of numbers both as they are spoken (and written as words) and as symbolic abstract numerals that can be readily manipulated and combined. Despite the immense erudition the author brings to the topic, he maintains a light tone throughout, presenting much of the information in anecdotal form. Moreover, almost 300 illustrations (photographs and drawings) and many comparative language tables serve to enhance the text. The author begins with a lucid treatment of number sequence and number language, including the formation of number words in both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages, hidden number words and the evolution of the number sequence. He then turns to written numerals and computations: finger counting, folk symbols for numbers, alphabetical numerals, the "German" Roman numerals, the abacus and more. The final section concerns the development of our modern decimal system, with its place notation and zero, based on the Indian number system, and its introduction to the West through the work of the Italian mathematician Fibonacci. The author concludes with a review of spoken numbers and number symbols in China and Japan. "The book is especially good on early counting and calculating devices: primitive tally sticks, the knotted cords of ancient Peru, the elaborate finger symbols once used for numbers, counting boards with movable counters, and of course the abacus." — Martin Gardner, Book World

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"It must have required many ages,' Bertrand Russell once wrote, 'to discover that a brace of pheasants and a couple of days were both instances of the number 2.' Number Words and Number Symbols, by the late Karl W. Menninger, is a magnificent history of how mankind discovered numbers, invented a bewildering variety of ways to name, symbolize and manipulate them, and how those ways altered over the millennia. "Menninger was a German mathematician of such panoramic interests and expository skill that he became one of his country's most widely read authors of nontechnical books on mathematics. This splendid translation of the revised 1958 edition of Menninger's most ambitious work is a beautiful volume. Its large pages are handsomely bound, carefully indexed, and enriched by 282 pictures, mostly photographs, that are as fascinating as the lively text itself. "Menninger's story is a colorful mix of mathematics, linguistics and cultural anthropology." —•Martin Gardner, BookWorld

"The book points out many fascinating but not obvious connections between the varied meanings of words used today (such as score and tally) and between words in different languages which have common roots. Although the philological and linguistic scholarship displayed in these explorations is awe-inspiring, the writing is so direct and colorful that one need be neither a philologist nor a mathematician to enjoy it." —•Scripta Mathematica --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English (translation) Original Language: German

This book is great for anyone interested in the human history of our counting numbers. Every aspect of global cultural numbers is covered in this awesome book. From the dawn of the human race to the brilliant Renaissance mathematicians and Asian use of spoken nuncupative numbers, this book explains every meaning behind the development of number language systems. There are excellent foreign phrases and words about numbers explained here. We're the only animated being on the planet that records, measures and quantifies units. This is the best tome on why and how all the ancient cultures developed their own unique number symbols and how they evolved, merged or became extinct. If you're a modern numerator who always wondered about the historical meanings and progress of numbers, this book has a jillion examples.

This is one of the most detailed books i have ever come across that has put the history of numbers together in so much detail. My great admiration for a job well done.

Because numbers have both a physical reference and a spiritual mystery, they are fascinating. This book helps me understand the meaning of number both historically and currently.

Number Words and Number Symbols is a translation of a work originally in German, and it shows. While the discussions of the origins of various cultures and languages' symbols and words for numbers is almost encyclopedic in its completion, it can be very stilted reading at times. If you don't mind sometimes long and verbose reading, then this is certainly one of the best works on the subject out there. I would quibble that Menninger gives the East less coverage than the West, but his comparisons of number words across Indo-European languages is simply fascinating. Also, too are his theories about how the displacement of one language by another in a region can often lead to weird anomalies in number counting.

If you have a serious interest the theories and cultural symbolism of numbers, this is a solid and still accurate resource. Though originally published in 1969, this book is a well-researched and clear overview of the ideas and concepts behind numerology and number symbolism. Unlike most stuff published today, this books isn't some "solve all your problems with numbers!" collection of nonsense, but an insightful outlook on the origins of number symbolism.

Perfect !!!!

Simply, the intellectual archaeology of our numerical universe

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