



Numbers: Computers, Philosophers, and the Search for Meaning (History of Mathematics (Facts on File))

John Tabak

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One of the most fundamental concepts influencing the development of human civilization is numbers. While societies today rely on their understanding of numbers for everything from mapping the universe to running word processing programs on computers to buying lunch, numbers are a human invention. Babylonian, Roman, and Arabic societies devised influential systems for representing numbers, yet the story of how numbers developed is far more complicated. Concepts such as zero, negative numbers, fractions, irrational numbers, and roots of numbers were often controversial in the past. Numbers deals with the development of numbers from fractions to algebraic numbers to transcendental numbers to complex numbers and their uses. The book also examines in detail the number pi, the evolution of the idea of infinity, and the representation of numbers in computers. The metric and American systems of measurement as well as the applications of some historical concepts of numbers in such modern forms as cryptography and hand calculators are also covered. Illustrations, thought-provoking text, and other supplemental material cover the key ideas, figures, and events in the historical development of numbers.

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