

Delights of the Slide Rule, Clyde Clason, 1964

In the Foreword, the author states that his text , "...is designed to supplement, not supplant, existing manuals and textbooks. The manuals do a superb job on the 'how' but sometimes leave the 'why' unexplained. This book aims to give both instructions for settings and scale reading, and the mathematics that lies behind them." In addition to supplying needed theoretical background (in an always painless and accessible fashion), the author also uses these opportunities to provide historical or mathematical background in an enjoyable conversational manner reminiscent of Asimov. The book is suitable for anyone interested in learning to use the slide rule. Some knowledge of algebra and trigonometry is required at various points in the text, but is provided as it is needed. While the book could be used both for individual study and in the classroom, it probably is best used for the former. As is the case with most slide rule texts, it is suitable for people with a minimum of high school mathematics and seems to be focused on readers with technical interests or backgrounds. No commercial or finance applications or examples are included.

While the author seems to suggest in the Foreword that his text will focus on the 'why' of slide rules, I did not find this to be the case. Rather I found the book to be a very well balanced combination of theory and utility. While there are no end-of-chapter exercise sets in the book, there are plenty of examples. Almost all of them are numerical, rather than applied. There is no focus on any particular field of work.

One of the 'delights' of this book is its completeness. Again, from the Foreword, "Every scale that the author has been able to discover in the United States and Great Britain is described." While no specific rule or manufacturer is recommended, illustrations and/or specific instructions are provided for rules from Blundell, Dennert & Pape, Fuller, Gilson, K&E, Pickett & Eckel, Stanley, and Unique.

The text contains a one and one half page bibliography of perhaps 22 entries, and an abbreviated directory of slide rule manufacturers. There are no other addenda. The book's index is only slightly over two pages in length and does not serve the text well. There is a wealth of knowledge in this book that could much more easily be accessed with a decent index. Perhaps this should be a project for someone with a scanner, OCR capability, and plenty of free time on their hands.