



Things that Count: the rise and fall of calculators

Jim Falk

things-that-count.com, 2014

Things that Count offers a succinct, well-written, carefully documented, and beautifully illustrated account of the role of counting and arithmetic in human cultural evolution over the last 35,000 years.

Things that Count pays particular attention to the often weird and interesting artefacts that were developed in the search to meet the growing social need to do simple calculations.

Things that Count is unusual in two ways:

- it is built around a personal collection of such technologies drawn from the last 4,000 years of human history (stretching from the civilisation of Old Babylon to the late twentieth century).
- it uses these intriguing artefacts not so much to address the minutiae of mechanical innovation as to address questions such as: Why were these things constructed? Why in that particular style and time? Who and what were they intended for? And what were the factors that led to success or failure?

This interesting and thought-provoking multi-disciplinary 'big history' of the social evolution of calculation is supported by a website (<http://things-that-count.com>). It is available by download from that site (free of charge as an e-book).

About the Author.



Professor Jim Falk, from the University of Melbourne, is known widely for his books and writing on the environment, global politics, and climate change. More broadly he is a professor of science, technology and society (STS), with interests in the broad questions of how social, scientific and technological change work together. It is the latter interest and expertise which, together with the enthusiasm of a collector, lie behind his new book on *“Things that Count”*.

Professor Falk, with Professor Joseph Camilleri, recently wrote a major and well received book: *Worlds in Transition: Evolving governance across a stressed planet*, London: Edward Elgar, 2009

Professor Falk’s other recent publications are listed at <http://metastudies.net>.