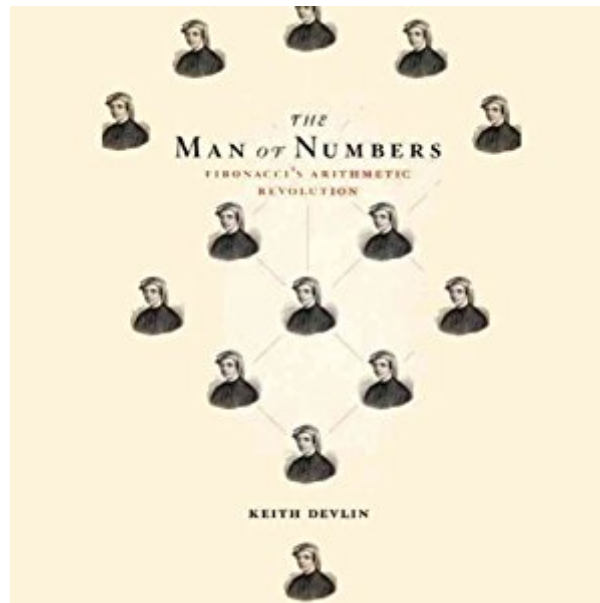


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The Man Of Numbers: Fibonacci's Arithmetic Revolution



Synopsis

In 1202, a 32-year-old Italian finished one of the most influential books of all time, which introduced modern arithmetic to Western Europe. Devised in India in the 7th and 8th centuries and brought to North Africa by Muslim traders, the Hindu-Arabic system helped transform the West into the dominant force in science, technology, and commerce, leaving behind Muslim cultures which had long known it but had failed to see its potential. The young Italian, Leonardo of Pisa (better known today as Fibonacci), had learned the Hindu number system when he traveled to North Africa with his father, a customs agent. The book he created was *Liber abbaci*, the "Book of Calculation", and the revolution that followed its publication was enormous. Arithmetic made it possible for ordinary people to buy and sell goods, convert currencies, and keep accurate records of possessions more readily than ever before. *Liber abbaci*'s publication led directly to large-scale international commerce and the scientific revolution of the Renaissance. Yet despite the ubiquity of his discoveries, Leonardo of Pisa remains an enigma. His name is best known today in association with an exercise in *Liber abbaci* whose solution gives rise to a sequence of numbers - the Fibonacci sequence - used by some to predict the rise and fall of financial markets, and evident in myriad biological structures. One of the great math popularizers of our time, Keith Devlin recreates the life and enduring legacy of an overlooked genius, and in the process makes clear how central numbers and mathematics are to our daily lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is an immensely enjoyable read, and nobody needs to be a mathematician to understand

it. There is some maths in it, but you don't miss the message if you skip those parts. It isn't so much a biography of Leonardo of Pisa, nicknamed Fibonacci, since very little is known about his life. But it is an engrossing and well-told story of how the numbers and arithmetic operations that have become such an essential part of our lives came to us, from India, via Muslim scholars and then Leonardo, to us. It is also part history of the teaching of maths. The most interesting part, for me, was not the Rabbit Problem which gave rise to the famous Fibonacci sequence (where Devlin takes the opportunity to bust some pop-culture myths), but rather, how humans first developed the concept of zero and how to do math with it. Highly recommended.

Great history lesson on the development of Hindu-Arabic arithmetic and how it slowly made its way to Europe.

This book is one of many recent works that labors to dispel the illusion that there was a wall between Muslim cultures and 'western' European culture. The two cultures were indeed in constant peaceful contact through the world of commerce, it was this contact that eventually allowed the west to advance technologically and intellectually. This book's focus is specifically on the mathematical knowledge transmitted from east to west. The book does a great job telling the story but the main complaint (for me) is that some of the examples the author delves into are slightly opaque. If you love numbers and are, more mathematical than I am you will probably not see fault!

This is a revealing story about the mathematician who first introduced the hindu-arabic numeral and its associated mathematics to the western world!The book is nicely balanced between rigorous historical sources and theoretical precision. Overall it remains very accessible.A wonderful immersion into the 13th century italian renaissance.I have really enjoyed this book for its successful attempt to remind us why the modern number system is so important in our everyday life. Leonardo Pisano has been a pilaster in the popularization of basic arithmetics. He has created the technology to deliver sheer power to everyone who needed it: the "Liber Abacci"!

Very often, an expert in his/her field is not also gifted with the ability to write in an interesting manner in order to share the special knowledge he/she has gained in their years of study, but Keith Devlin has written a very readable and informative book on the introduction, in 1202, of numbers to the Western world. Even though details of Fibonacci's life are sketchy, the story is how he brought math as we know it to Europe, and Devlin does a fine job in this exhaustively researched little book. I'm

an accountant, and it's hard to believe we didn't have numbers before 800 years ago! I wonder whether the Renaissance would have flowered if we hadn't had numbers?

I bought it for its history aspect, but the author spends a lot of time taking you through the math of the problems that Leonardo included in his book. It is interesting but not the best read in the world. But one thing for sure is that if you read this book, numbers are your friend.

The text combines history and mathematics in an easily understood fashion. I enjoyed reading about the Italian whom brought numbers to Europeans.

Both my mathematician husband and I both liked this book. Enough "math meat" for him and enough simplicity of explanation for me!

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