

Dietzgen Catalog Matrix

by Bruce Babcock, Ph.D. As published in the Journal of the Oughtred Society, 1996, Vol 5, No 2.

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This matrix of Dietzgen slide rules, catalogs and price lists was compiled from a pool of 38 separate documents to provide a quick and simple reference regarding Dietzgen slide rules from 1887 to 1972. As you can see from the list, 154 different model numbers and variations were identified. A close look at the list will show that there are actually less than 154 different model numbers because some numbers were reused. For example No. 1764 was assigned to the five inch Mack Improved Slide rule from 1902 to 1911 and was assigned again to the ten inch Maniplex Mannheim rule from 1949 to 1952.

Some rules such as the first listing for number 1772A do not include a description because the rule was only located in a price list and not in a catalog. It was assumed that the description of the 1772A which appeared from 1919 to 1928 certainly did not apply to the rule offered in 1972.

In some instances model numbers continued to appear in price lists for several years after they last appeared in a catalog. Example of this are numbers 1768, 1768L, 1769 and 1770 all of which were listed in a catalog for

the last time in 1921. However they continued to be listed in the price lists for ten more years.

In many of the catalogs a slide rule would be given a suffix after the model number when it was supplied with a leather case. This matrix does not include these numbers. There is some room for confusion here. In many catalogs the letter L was used when the rule was supplied with a case. However, in the example of the 1768 and 1768L mentioned above the 1768 is a five inch rule and the 1768L is a eight inch rule, both of which are supplied in leather cases. When the information for the matrix was taken from a price list with no description available, as was the case with some of the rules in the 1972 price list it was difficult to know whether or not a new number indicated a new rule or a rule with a case or other accessory.

The information for 1905 did not come from a catalog but from an advertisement in the back of the book, *Mannheim and Multiplex Slide Rules* by L. W. Rosenthal. This book was copyrighted by Eugene Dietzgen Co. in 1905.

The Dietzgen company issued some spe-

cial catalogs that included only a few slide rules. Examples of this include the catalog 39A which was an *Essential Drawing Instruments and Materials* catalog published in 1939, catalog 30A which was a *Drawing Instruments and Materials* catalog published in 1930 and the *Surveying Equipment Catalog 77S* that was published in 1959. Consequently, the breaks in the lines of some rules at 1930, 1939 and 1959 do not necessarily mean that those slide rules were not offered that year.

The numbers across the bottom of the matrix indicate the number of slide rules in each catalog. These totals clearly show that the volume of rules in each catalog reached an all-time high in the years 1910 to 1912 and then abruptly dropped to only a third of that number and never reached even half of that volume again except in the 1928 price list which included 30 slide rules.

The numbers on the right hand side indicate how many listings were found for each model number. These numbers show that number 1794, the Fuller cylindrical slide rule had the most listings at 20 and that approximately 20 slide rules, or variations of slide rules, appeared in only one listing.

This list is not complete. The following are some of the omissions of which we are aware:

- We have not seen a copy of the third edition of the catalog which may or may not include slide rules.
- We were unable to locate a copy of the fifth edition of the Dietzgen catalog that was published sometime between 1898 and 1902.
- At least one slide rule was located in a collection that was not found in the catalogs that were available. This is a 1742 Maniphase Multiplex Style M Decimal Trig rule.

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