

Mathematics/Science 380 – History of Mathematics

TRENT UNIVERSITY, 2004–2005

Assignment #1

Due on Monday, 27 September, 2004

1. The Greek historian Herodotus asserted that the Egyptians invented geometry to deal with surveying problems. How likely is it that this assertion is correct? [5]
2. What is a number? (Keep in mind that everything from positive integers to things like quaternions and infinite cardinals are often taken to be numbers.) [5]
3. Determine how high the top of the Bata Library flagpole is above the visitors' parking lot (just west of Bata). Give a complete description of the method you employed. Aside from a calculator or computer to do your arithmetic, you may *not* use any other tools that would not have been available in, say, ancient Egypt, nor may you just ask for or look up the answer. Please observe all applicable laws and regulations in the course of your work ... [10]

Jargontalk

Twas unix and the C++
Did compile and load upon the vax:
All Ritchie was the Kernighan,
And Lisp ran in GNU EMACS
Beware the Jargontalk my son.
The mac that talks, the dull PC
Beware the Amiga, and shun
the voluminous PDP
He took his listed code in hand:
Long time the pointer bug he sought—
So rested he by the coke machine,
and stood a while in thought.
And as in nerdish thought he stood,
the Jargontalk, with awk and grep,
Came geeking through the Cobol wood,
and edlin as it schlepped.
One two! One two! and through
and through the line printer went clickity clack!
And with a meg of memory dump
He pulled an allnight hack.
And hast thou slain the Jargontalk?
telnet to me, my nerdish boy!
Copyleft Gnu! Callooh! Callay!
He derooffed in his joy.
Twas unix and the C++
Did compile and load upon the vax:
All Ritchie was the Kernighan,
And Lisp ran in GNU EMACS

Larry Colen (with apologies to Lewis Carroll)