



MIT MUSEUM PRESS RELEASE

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Free Lunchtime Gallery Talk Wednesday, November 16

***Object Lessons* features MIT Museum Science and Technology, Curator Debbie Douglas, discussing a rare computational device**

Elizur Wright was the first American to invent a computing device used in actuarial calculations. Wright's arithmeter, patented in 1869, looks like a large drum with thousands of tiny numbers on it but it is actually a special kind of slide rule. Wright made thousands of calculations—250,000 in one year alone according to his biographer—because he wanted to stop unscrupulous life insurers from swindling customers. The MIT Museum has two arithmeters of the estimated 15-16 ever made. Deborah Douglas, curator of science and technology, tells the story of one of the first American slide rules and even shows how it operates.

Noon - 1:00pm

Free admission