

When size matters!!

Based on a revelation by Colin Tombeur.

Collectors of slide rules are a chatty and sociable bunch – after all we share a common interest and an anorak-like passion. We often chinwag about some scale or layout but inevitably the conversation at some point turns to: “*well, just how big is your collection?*” This innocent sounding question can be embarrassing. Modesty or organisational failures may mean (like me) you have lost track what you have. So how should any collector succinctly reply to such a question?

Traditionally “units” have been a favourite – either as the number of items in a collection or the number of a particular type, say Fuller’s. But this seems a “drab” measure lacking panache. So instead the proposed new official measure is: **how long it would take you walk past your collection if all the stocks were aligned end-to-end** (or the diameter of circular rules).

An example using rounded numbers shows how the new measure works. For a collection of say **500** slide rules we may assume, on average, 90% are 30 cm/12 inch models and 10% are pocket 15 cm/6 inch models. Oversized and Lilliput models cancelling each other out. So when placed end-to-end:

$$(450 \times 30) + (50 \times 15) \approx \mathbf{142\frac{1}{2} \text{ metres}} \text{ or } \mathbf{158 \text{ yards and 1 foot}}$$

A typical walking speed is around 5 km/h or 3.1 mph. This means the proud owner of 500 slide rules could justifiably claim it was a:



1 minute 43 second collection

Moral to this tale ...

Adoption of this proposed new official definitive measure for the size of a slide rule collection is vital. Once universally accepted we will finally have an answer for those family members who foolishly believe a slide rule collection should be measured by the accumulated cost to buy all the individual items!