A short note about this book

This book is a rewriting of my PhD-thesis that I submitted in 1983 and it was published in 1987, now more than 25 years ago. I admit now freely that my approach back then was rather, if not explicitly naïve. I introduced the concept of **shemath** (the sheet mathematician) who had to do all calculations on an ordinary sheet of paper, equipped with pencils and erasers. (I was thinking in terms of mathematical subjects such as Brouwer's creative subject).

This really down-to-earth approach did allow me to prove informally that the number of different notation and quasi-notation systems must be finite if certain minimal and reasonable conditions are satisfied. The idea that, if you take strict finitism seriously, numerals come first and numbers (perhaps) later, is an idea that I still believe to be essential for any strict finitist proposal. Otherwise the argument that n can always be followed by $n + 1$ is hard, if not impossible to refute. This view was also nicely reflected in the idea that, if the integers are to be dealt with, the length of the formulas plays an essential role. And the limit on the length of the formulas does *not* have a straightforward relation with the largest natural number one can consider.

In short, notwithstanding a serious amount of pure intellectual naivety, I still believe that the model sketched here is on the right philosophical track. 25 years later I am happy to say that the formulation has definitely improved!