

1014-01-1600 **Duncan J. Melville*** (dmelville@stlawu.edu), Dept. of Mathematics, St. Lawrence University,
Canton, NY 13617. *'Practical' mathematics: the view from inside and outside.* Preliminary report.

Old Babylonian mathematics is well-known for displaying a fondness for problems chosen from the practical world of the trainee scribe and reflecting, with various degrees of accuracy, the kinds of tasks a scribe might perform. While historians of mathematics are concerned with the mathematical ideas embodied in the problems, the real-world content provides a valuable historical light on the wider context and so is of interest to other historians. In this talk, we present a case study showing how real-world problems can be re-shaped by pedagogical needs, and the difficulties this poses for historians trying to reconstruct the original source and interpret the role of the scribe. (Received September 28, 2005)