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Webster's "Arithmetick in Epitome" and other Eighteenth Century English Arithmetic Books.

Evidence suggests that the Thomas Dilworth's "Schoolmaster's Assistant" was by far the most widely read arithmetic book in 18th century America. For example, 24 editions of this book were printed in the United States before 1800. This dreadful "Pandora's box of disconnected rules" (as Florian Cajori put it) probably gave both the subject of mathematics and the mathematicians of England an undeservedly bad reputation. William Webster's 1711 book "Arithmetick in Epitome" is a good example of an adequately logical and coherent exposition of arithmetic. The merits of this volume and other 18th century English arithmetics will be considered. (Received September 16, 2008)