

Title: Russian translations of Euclid's Elements and the teaching of elementary geometry in Imperial Russia (1721-1917)

Abstract:

Most geometry textbooks produced in Russian in the early days of the Russian Empire (from 1721 onward) were practice-oriented. By and large, they followed the teaching model described by Jean Le Rond d'Alembert in his and Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (see vol. 7, 1757), as well as contemporary examples such as Alexis Clairaut's *Éléments de géométrie* (1741). In France, the new wave of mathematics textbooks composed according to this model competed with more traditional Euclid-style textbooks. In early eighteenth-century Russia, however, the d'Alembert-style, practice-oriented approach to teaching geometry was immediately accepted as the default model—first, because it arguably best served the military and commercial needs of the time, and second, because Russia at that point lacked an established tradition of mathematics education.

Nevertheless, by the mid-eighteenth century the Euclidean axiomatic model of teaching geometry found defenders and proponents in Russia, some of whom emphasised the importance of logical rigour, while others were motivated by historical interest. Thus, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Euclidean tradition in Russia became firmly established, and by the end of the nineteenth century it had resulted in six markedly different Russian translations of Euclid's *Elements*, which will be briefly surveyed in my proposed talk.