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Preface

The present volume is an outgrowth of a Conference on Mathematical Tables held at Cambridge, Mass., on September 15-16, 1954, under the auspices of the National Science Foundation and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the need for mathematical tables in the light of the availability of large scale computing machines. It was the consensus of opinion that in spite of the increasing use of the new machines the basic need for tables would continue to exist.

Numerical tables of mathematical functions are in continual demand by scientists and engineers. A greater variety of functions and higher acciu-acy of tabulation are now required as a result of scientific advances and, especially, of the increasing use of automatic computers. In the latter connection, the tables serve mainly for preliminary sm-veys of problems before programming for machine operation.

For those without easy access to machines, such tables are, of course, indispensable. Consequently, the Conference recognized that there was a pressing need for a modernized version of the classical tables of functions of Jahnke-Emde. To implement the project, the National Science Foundation requested the National Bureau of Standards to prepare such a volume and established an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, with Professor Philip M. Morse of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as chairman, to advise the staff of the National Bureau of Standards during the course of its preparation. In addition to the Chairman, the Committee consisted of A. Erdelyi, M. C. Gray, N. Metropolis, J. B. Rosser, H. C. Thacher, Jr., John Todd, C. B. Tompkins, and J. W. Tukey.

The primary aim has been to include a maximum of useful information within the limits of a moderately large volume, with particular attention to the needs of scientists in all fields. An attempt has been made to cover the entire field of special functions. To carry out the goal set forth by the Ad Hoc Committee, it has been necessary to supplement the tables by including the mathematical properties that are important in computation work, as well as by providing numerical methods which demonstrate the use and extension of the tables.

The Handbook was prepared under the direction of the late Milton Abramowitz, and Irene A. Stegun. Its success has depended greatly upon the cooperation of many mathematicians. Their efforts together with the cooperation of the Ad Hoc Committee are greatly appreciated. The particular contributions of these and other individuals are acknowledged at appropriate places in the text. The sponsorship of the National Science Foundation for the preparation of the material is gratefully recognized.

It is hoped that this volume will not only meet the needs of all table users but will in many cases acquaint its users with new functions.
Allen V. Astin, Director.
Washington, D.C.

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