

The Periodic Table in 1869: What D. I. Mendeleev Did and Did Not Do

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2019 has been named the International Year of the Periodic Table because it marks 150 years since Dmitrii Mendeleev (1834-1907), then a young chemistry professor in St. Petersburg, formulated his version of the system of elements. The choice of date is somewhat arbitrary. There were five other attempts at periodic tables postulated earlier in the 1860s, some of which resemble our present version slightly more than Mendeleev's in certain respects. Also, the main achievement of Mendeleev's table — its predictive capacity — was also a gradual process that began in 1869 but took many years to cement his international reputation. This talk will explore what Mendeleev did in 1869, how it related to what came before and after, and also discuss a few of the myths that have accumulated around his work.