

# THE EPONYMIC USE OF JORGE E. HIRSCH'S NAME



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In a recent Handbook chapter [Schubert & Schubert, 2019], we tried to follow up the early history of Hirsch's h-index and its later advancement. Among others, questions regarding the name of the index were also covered. As it is well known, Hirsch himself has always confuting the guess that the index would intentionally bear the initial of his family name. According to his explanation: "I decided to call it 'h' [...] because a high h-index suggests 'highly cited' and 'high achievement'." [Hirsch & Buela-Casal, 2014]

In spite of the creator's intention, we found that in about 5% of the h-index-related literature, the index is called Hirsch-index. Using the Web of Science as main source of literature, the first occurrence of the eponymic name of the index was found in the paper of Frangopol [2005] published in Romanian in December, 2005.

In a correspondence between Jorge Hirsch and Tibor Braun [Braun, 2019],

Hirsch affirmed that he first met the eponymous version of his name (in relation to the notorious index) in a paper of Braun et al. [2005] published on November 21, 2005. Indeed, this paper used Hirsch's name eponymously, and was published earlier than that of Frangopol, but didn't use the exact term "Hirsch-index".

Since the completion of the Handbook chapter manuscript (November, 2017) some more information on the topic had been collected and are shared hereby with the readers of the Newsletter.

To our present knowledge, the first printed occurrence of the term Hirsch-index is found in a German Editorial [Brähler & Decker, 2005] published on November 9, 2005. The authors hasten to explain that the origin of the term is the name of the inventor of the index, in order to dispel any possible false associations. Actually, in addition to its first meaning, "deer", the word Hirsch may have in German some pejora-

tive meaning, e.g., an abusive word for a male person, or even cuckold (although this sort of use of the word is nowadays somewhat outdated).

Presumably, this ambiguous nature of the word Hirsch lead the commenter “Tierbeobachter” to make the malicious remark to a blog post [R.U.GAY, 2005]: “Passend daß das ganze dann Hirsch-Index heißt. Und die Moral von der Geschicht: manch eine Name paßt, oder auch nicht.” (The whole thing is then suitably called Hirsch-index. And the moral of the story: a name sometimes fits, sometimes not.) What is the actual case, is left to the reader. The post and the comment was published on August 18, 2005, i.e., 15 days after Hirsch had uploaded the first version of his paper to the arXiv [Hirsch, 2005].

Disregarding self-eponymization, this seems to be a speed hard to match.

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