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histories of mathematics and which describe the origins of the most important concepts and journal articles which do the same in more detail for more specialised topics. David Joyce has lists of general books, of specialised books and of journals. Of the journals Archive for the History of Exact Sciences and Historia Mathematica are probably the most useful. The entries on EIGENVALUE and ST. PETERSBURG PARADOX illustrate the use of journal articles. Of the general histories Smith's (especially volume II) pays most attention to language although it treats only elementary mathematics. Biographies of the creators of terms and of the people after whom terms are named often have useful information: see for instance the use of Dauben's biography of Cantor in the entry for SET. Besides works on individuals there are collective works such as the Dictionary of Scientific Biography and the biographies in The MacTutor History of Mathematics archive. Histories, treatises and biographies tend to document the original innovation regardless of the language in which it was first expressed and so they complement the English dictionaries with their emphasis on English usage. Histories generally only attend to the englishing of terms when it is associated with important mathematical developments. Thus most of the translation activity of the C14 to C17 goes unnoticed in the general histories. Up to Sources To Contents Personal communications Many of the entries on the Earliest Uses pages are based on personal communications by which individuals share their expert knowledge. (See Invitation) Questions about origins are regularly raised in internet discussion groups such as Discussion: math-history-list and Philomathes Discussion Group. The very useful Historia-Matematica seems to be inactive, although its archive is preserved. Up to Sources To Contents Researching bootstrap, determinant and point To illustrate the use of these resources in researching words consider three examples from different periods. BOOTSTRAP an English mathematical word for 30 years We saw this word above. Sources of information on the history of bootstrap It is a very recent word and many people alive today know its history because they have lived it. The word is too new to be covered in histories or in the OED although of course the original sense is given there. There are already treatises and encyclopedia articles on bootstrapping and these usually discuss the origin of the term. There is an entry in "First (?) Occurrence". The original article is reviewed in Mathematical Reviews. A JSTOR search will find the first use, i.e. the earliest appearance on JSTOR is the first use. JSTOR is so useful in researching some words and so useless for others that it deserves some comment. (There are several JSTOR packages and the specific comments apply to the combined collections Arts & Sciences I and Arts & Sciences II). JSTOR's coverage of statistics is very good—it has complete runs of around 20 of the most important journals. Its mathematics category (disjoint) has around 40 journals! JSTOR contains only material in the English language but as much of the modern international statistical vocabulary was created in English (from the late C19 onwards) the limitation is not catastrophic. In the neighbouring field of probability it is catastrophic for English only became an important language after the Second World War. JSTOR contains only material published in journals. The limitation is not so bad for recent terms (coined in the last 50 years, say) because they are likely to have first appeared in journal articles. In earlier days terms were often introduced in books. For instance, R. A. Fisher's book Statistical Methods for Research Workers (1925) has an important place in the history of statistical terminology: see e.g. STUDENT'S t DISTRIBUTION and LATIN SQUARE. Most of the mathematical words in use are not new creations and have to be researched in other ways. Researching a modern—but not new—term like HOMEOMORPHISM or EIGENVALUE is more like researching the old words discussed below. DETERMINANT an English mathematical word for 150 years There has been an English word determinant for around 400 years but its use as an algebraic term goes back about 150 years. In that sense it is a translation of the French word déterminant used by Cauchy which was itself inspired by the Latin word determinant used by Gauss. The Gauss-Cauchy terms were late arrivals in the sense that there was already a tradition of studying determinants that was more than 100 years old. Sources of information on the history of determinant. Modern textbooks of algebra do not usually spend much time on the origins of the terms used. The OED documents the appearance of the English word both in its pre-mathematical sense and in its mathematical sense. General histories of mathematics like Katz discuss determinants without paying much attention to terminology. The history of determinants is told in great detail in the volumes by Muir and these are the most authoritative sources for usage. POINT an English mathematical word for 600 years Although the word was already in the language (Harper), point began its mathematical career in English around 600 years ago. It was used to express an idea that went back two millennia. Sources of information on the history of point. Modern textbooks of geometry do not usually detail the origins of the terms used. Histories of mathematics like Katz discuss the treatment of the concept of point in Euclid's Elements without discussing the language Euclid used. The notes in Heath's edition of Euclid's Elements discuss the word(s) used by Euclid and his predecessors and the translators of the Elements. The OED documents the first appearance of the word in English. Up to Sources To Contents General References John Algeo and Thomas Pyles The Origins and Development of the English Language, 5th edition, Heinle, 2004. Amazon David Crystal The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language, Cambridge University Press, 1995. Amazon Philip Durkin The Oxford Guide to Etymology, Oxford University Press, 2009. Amazon David Graddol, Dick Leith, Joan Swann (editors) English: History, Diversity and Change, London: Routledge in association with the Open University, 1996. Geoffrey Howson A History of Mathematics Education in England, Cambridge University Press 1982. Victor J. Katz, A History of Mathematics: An Introduction, 2nd edition, Addison Wesley Longman, 1998. Amazon. Nicholas Ostler Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World, Harper, 2005. Amazon. David Eugene Smith, History of Mathematics: Volume II Special Topics of Elementary Mathematics 1925. Dover, 1958. Amazon. Invitation The Earliest Uses sites represent the efforts of many contributors and reflect the contributors' interests and knowledge. There are gaps in the coverage and many existing entries could be usefully expanded. So contributions are most welcome. Inevitably there will be errors in the existing entries. If you spot any, let us know and they can be corrected. Please contact Jeff Miller. To contents To Sources

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