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Median Citation Index vs Journal Impact Factor MANOLIS ANTONOYIANNAKIS, (1) Columbia University (2) American Physical Society — The Journal Impact Factor is an arithmetic mean: It is the average number of citations, in a year, to a journal's articles that were published the previous two years. But for the vast majority of scholarly journals, the distribution of these citations is skewed (non-symmetric). We argue that a more representative member of the skewed distribution of citations is its median, not the mean. We thus introduce the Median Citation Index (MCI) and compare it to the journal Impact Factor (JIF) as a potentially more suitable choice of the “center” of the distribution, or its typical value. Unlike the JIF, the MCI is far less sensitive to outlier (very highly cited) papers or to gaming, and does not lend itself to the hype of calculating it to three decimal digits.

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