

# Remembering Friedrich Leisch



Kurt Hornik



# Friedrich “Fritz” Leisch 1968–2024



- 1987–1993 University studies in Applied Mathematics ("Technische Mathematik") @ Technische Universität Wien
- 1991 Taking courses from KH (stochastic processes etc., computational statistics basically non-existent then)
- 1993 Diploma thesis ("Stochastic methods in futures trading")
- 1995 Scholarship for postgraduate studies at University of South-Australia, Adelaide, Australia

Brought two things back home:

1. Research ideas for “bagged clustering”
2. Rumors about R

# Falling in Love with R

The basic availability of R changed *everything* for us

Immediately stopped using & enhancing Octave (stats toolbox)

However, much didn't work, and much more was missing

Started to send polite "suggestions for improvement"

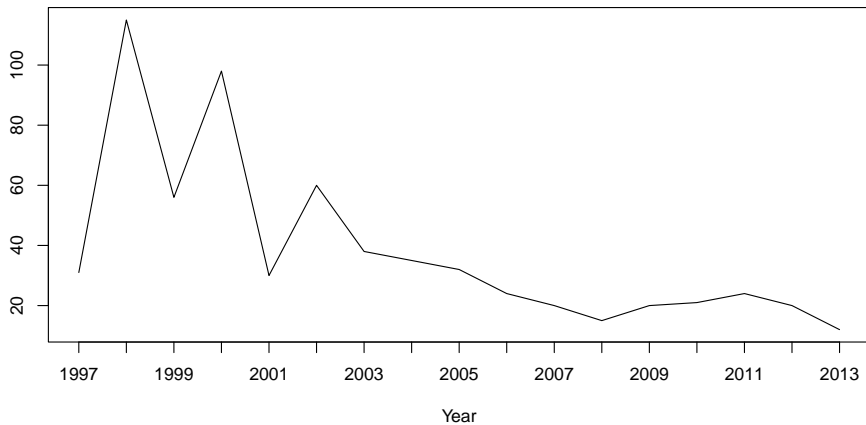
Clearly ok in quality but too high in quantity: "Can u pls fix yourselves?"

Got write access to the R sources (CVS, then SVN)

First commit by Fritz in SVN logs: r110 | leisch | 1997-10-02

In 1997, officially became R Core members

# SVN Commits



# R Package Management System & CRAN

Before R there was S . . .

Contributed extensions for S available from Statlib, but rather inconvenient to use. Typically easy to port to R (date, chron, htest, . . . ), but how to use conveniently?

Fritz and I were proud & happy Debian (testing) users  $\Rightarrow$  got some good ideas

- Develop a package management system using ideas from Debian's APT
- Set up a repository for distributing packages: CRAN

In the early 2000s, Fritz had the following idea:

*Perhaps we can put R code inside  $\LaTeX$  docs and get it replaced by the results from running it?*

Not much later:

r17636 | leisch | 2002-01-04 18:40:33 +0100 (Fri, 04 Jan 2002)  
added Sweave

Clearly motivated by Knuth's noweb tangle/weave, but getting the weaver to run the code

This idea really (again) changed the world!

- Co-developed the DSC and UseR! conference formats

Co-organized the initial Vienna instances:

*DSC 1999, DSC-2001, DSC 2003, UseR! 2004, UseR! 2006*

DSC 1999 was the first time R Core physically met.

- Co-founded the R Foundation for Statistical Computing, and initially served as General Secretary

The R Foundation provides the resources to keep R Core and CRAN going

- Co-founded R News (replaced by the R Journal in 2009), and served as co-editor in 2001 and editor in 2003



1999	PhD (“Ensemble Methods for Neural Clustering and Classification”)
2005	Habilitation
2006–2011	Professor @ Department of Statistics, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
2011–2024	Professor @ Institute of Applied Statistics and Computing, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna

Impressive number of contributions to modern computational and applied statistics

Eventually also Department Head

# A Toast to Fritz

