



In Memory of Fritz Leisch

Bettina Grün, Kurt Hornik, Torsten Hothorn, Theresa Scharl,
Achim Zeileis

Friedrich "Fritz" Leisch 1968–2024



Early Years

- 1987–1993 University studies in Applied Mathematics ("Technische Mathematik") @ Technische Universität Wien
- 1991 Taking courses from Kurt (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"

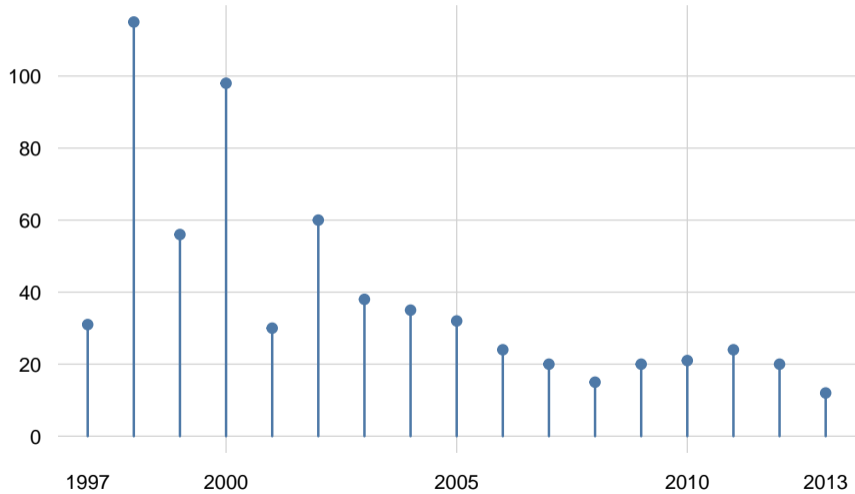
Clearly ok in quality but too high in quantity: "Can u pls fix yourselves?"

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

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

In 1997, Fritz & Kurt 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 & Kurt were proud & happy Debian (testing) users \implies got some good ideas

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

Sweave

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 \implies but getting the weaver to run the code

This idea really (again) changed the world!

Shaping the R Universe

- 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 Secretary General

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

Academia

- 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,
BOKU University, Vienna

Impressive number of contributions to modern computational and applied statistics

Eventually also Department Head

Thank you, Fritz!

