

In Memory of Professor Hildrun Kretschmer (1947–2024)

Han Woo Park

YeungNam University, South Korea (han.woo.park.korea@yu.ac.kr)

First received 17 May 2025. Published online 23 May 2025.

Abstract

This note serves as a heartfelt obituary in memory of Professor Hildrun Kretschmer, whom I deeply respected both as a scholar and as a person. She passed away in November 2024 after a long illness (Glänzel, 2024). Professor Kretschmer was a pioneer and a leading figure among the distinguished German scholars in the field of scientometrics. Born in 1947 in East Germany, she devoted her entire life to advancing the quantitative study of science.

DOI: 10.62478/STXO5947

IPNS: k2k4r8lkopb6ivebs8fm9h6b5ndfmk9mv2y2gjlcm3u72zju3auptcl3

This note serves as a heartfelt obituary in memory of Professor Hildrun Kretschmer, whom I deeply respected both as a scholar and as a person. She passed away in November 2024 after a long illness (Glänzel, 2024). Professor Kretschmer was a pioneer and a leading figure among the distinguished German scholars in the field of scientometrics. Born in 1947 in East Germany, she devoted her entire life to advancing the quantitative study of science.

It must be noted that I have highlighted my own circumstances and personal connection to her in order to set myself apart from other obituary texts for Professor Kretschmer. I first met Professor Kretschmer in 2009 at the CollNet Conference held in China. She had co-founded WISELab at Dalian University of Technology in 2005 with Liu Zeyuan. Since its inception, WISELab has become a flagship research center for scientometrics in China and across Asia. It has inspired a new generation of researchers and stimulated innovative work in scientometrics, webometrics, and related disciplines.

That particular event held special meaning for me. In 2009, I had been selected as part of the Korean government's ambitious World Class University (WCU) initiative, and I was leading a webometrics research group at Yeungnam University. Among humanities and social sciences projects, our WCU team was the only one from a regional university to be selected. The CollNet conference in China was also attended by Eugene Garfield, the founder of the SCI, SSCI, and A&HCI databases. He is seated at the center of the group photo from the event. Professor Kretschmer is seated next to him, and I am standing at the center right.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10152488520704675&set=gm.800776273289753>

Through that encounter with Professor Kretschmer, I was invited to join the editorial board of the CollNet Journal of Scientometrics and Information Management (CJSIM). I later participated in another CollNet 2011 conference in Istanbul, Turkey, where I presented my research and engaged with globally renowned European scholars recognized in big data and network analysis in the field of scientometrics and informetrics. These experiences gave me insight into their intellectual worlds and academic values.

After completing my PhD in the US, I began working at the Royal Netherlands Academy (NIWI-KNAW) and was affiliated with Amsterdam School of Communication, where Professor Loet Leydesdorff, whom I met in 2002, had been my mentor. In a different way, Professor Kretschmer has become another European mentor for me. In particular, Dr. Bulent Özel and I delivered a paper called “A Methodology at Studying Web Visibility of Key Political Figures” in CollNet 2011. In addition, he conducted a fascinating workshop on utilizing R software for big data analytics. I have learned from him a lot. Since then, Bulent has become a long-lasting friend and colleague. I have extended an invitation to him to come to Daegu, South Korea, for his talk at the “Open Daegu for Creative City” global forum.

The connection with Professor Kretschmer eventually led to my major role in organizing the 8th International Conference on Webometrics, Informetrics and Scientometrics & 13th COLLNET Meeting, which was held in Seoul, South Korea, 2012 (Glänzel, 2013). The conference was hosted by the Korea Institute of Science and Technology Information (KISTI), and I served as an organizing committee member. I took this opportunity to introduce Korean culture to long-time CollNet colleagues.

Later, I went on to found and organize international scholarly association and conference based in Daegu and Gyeongbuk areas, Korea: WATEF (World Association for Triple hElix & Future strategy studies) and DISC (Data, Innovation, Social networks, Convergence) conference, which focus on digital convergence and interdisciplinary scholarship. I sought to integrate Professor Kretschmer’s vision of bibliometric and scientometric methodologies into these initiatives. Her emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinary and international collaboration remains highly relevant in today’s era of data-driven science. Researchers in big data and network science must continue to engage in quantitative studies of all forms of collaboration. Maintaining and growing CollNet as a collaborative and inclusive network remains a practical and symbolic mission.

However, the growing polarization between Seoul and provincial areas in South Korea, along with worsening financial constraints, led my institution—Yeungnam University, a private regional university—to suspend support for international conferences. As a result, it became difficult for me to meet CollNet colleagues regularly, and I unfortunately lost the chance to see Professor Kretschmer before her passing.

My team has nevertheless participated in presenting our research remotely. Here is a link to our recent presentation at CollNet 2024 in France. <https://youtu.be/D5MadQiaFi4>

Although several international colleagues recently encouraged me to host a CollNet conference in Korea again, I had no choice but to decline due to worsening internal and external conditions. Nevertheless, the fact that CollNet continues to hold annual conferences and publishes the COLLNET Journal—becoming a thriving community in scientometrics and information science—is largely thanks to her visionary leadership. She championed diversity in expert networks and tackled global challenges by fostering inclusive scholarly collaborations. Her legacy lives on in today's AI-driven era, continuing to shape the field through studies in big data analytics, co-authorship networks, and citation analysis. May her memory and contributions be remembered and celebrated for generations to come.

References Glänzel, W., Kretschmer, T., Markscheffel, B. et al. Hildrun Kretschmer (1947–2024). *Scientometrics* 130, 1327–1328 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-025-05267-5> Kretschmer, H., Glänzel, W. The 8th International Conference on Webometrics, Informetrics and Scientometrics & 13th COLLNET Meeting. *Scientometrics* 97, 1 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-013-1078-5>

Websites: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/160979967269390/> <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/tsim20>