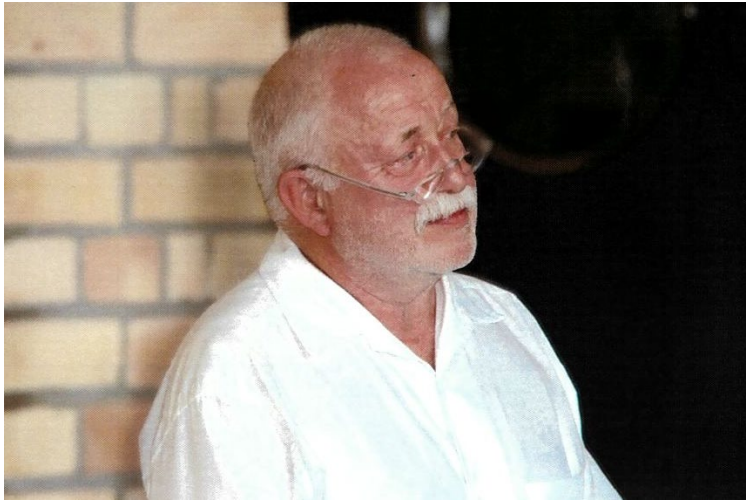


## Obituary for Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Gaul



\* July 3, 1945, in Stolp, Pommern,  
† September 1, 2025, in Karlsruhe

We mourn the loss of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Gaul, who served as President of the Board of the German Society for Classification (GfKl) Data Science Society from 1995 to 1998 and as a member of its Advisory Board since then. He also hosted several of this society's international annual conferences and was the head and/or

member of the respective program committees.

Together with Hans-Hermann Bock, Wolfgang Gaul made a decisive contribution to the reorientation of the GfKl, which initially focused on classification applications, toward the (further) development of suitable classification methods. As Managing Editor, he was involved in the founding of the English-language series "Studies in Classification, Data Analysis, and Knowledge Organization" at Springer-Verlag. Since 1990, all proceedings of the GfKl annual conferences have been published in this series. Wolfgang Gaul was also active for many years in other scientific societies such as the International Federation of Classification Societies (IFCS) and the German Society for Operations Research (GOR) and their predecessor organizations, for example, as a board member or as organizer and chair of the program committees of annual meetings.

Wolfgang Gaul studied mathematics at the University of Bonn, where he received his doctorate in 1974. He also completed his habilitation (postdoctoral qualification) at the University of Bonn in 1980. In the same year, he became a professor of marketing at the then University of Karlsruhe (TH) – now the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) – and director of the Institute for Decision Theory and Operations Research, together with Prof. Dr. Hermann Göppl.

In addition to fundamental innovations and further developments in methodological approaches, such as cluster and conjoint analysis, as well as data and web mining, Wolfgang Gaul is particularly known for his groundbreaking research on computer-aided marketing. As early as the late 1980s, he foresaw the future importance of developments in information and communication technology (ICT) for the field of marketing. For example, with his book "Computer-Assisted Marketing", published by Springer, he gave modern marketing access to ICT. Another groundbreaking research project by Wolfgang Gaul was the German Research Foundation (DFG) project WIMDAS, which he initiated together with Prof. Dr. Martin Schader and which dealt with knowledge-based marketing data analysis.

Wolfgang Gaul has published more than 100 articles in top journals such as the Journal of Marketing Research, the Journal of Econometrics, the International Journal of Research in Marketing, the Journal of Classification, the Journal of Business Research, the Annals of

Operations Research, the Advances in Data Analysis and Classification, the Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft, the Zeitschrift für betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung und Marketing ZFP, as well as in prestigious proceedings of international conferences. He has also successfully guided 15 young researchers to their doctorates. Three of them, after completing their habilitation under him, still hold professorships at renowned universities. Wolfgang Gaul also founded a successful company in 1995 – SciCon Wissenschaftliche Unternehmensberatung GmbH – together with his students Daniel Baier, Reinhold Decker, and Frank Wartenberg. This company was acquired by IMS Health in 2005 as part of a strategic acquisition.

Wolfgang Gaul was always a dedicated, supportive yet demanding teacher, an inspiring motivator, and a meticulous examiner to his students, colleagues, and industrial partners. Many remember his bluntly critical comments, corrections, and questions in conversations and lectures, which demonstrated his quick comprehension and comprehensive knowledge, as well as his lived commitment to scientific excellence. Many are still conditioned in this direction by him today.

For him, his constant pursuit of excellence did not represent a contradiction to social commitment: Together with his wife, Helga Gaul, he founded the “Helga and Wolfgang Gaul Foundation” in 2001, whose purpose is to support both excellent young researchers and people with disabilities who are unable to participate in scientific life.

In mourning his death, we can all take comfort in the fact that, in addition to his productivity in science and his numerous major professional successes, Wolfgang Gaul also led a rich and fulfilling private life. We therefore bid farewell to a great scientist with great gratitude and extend our sincere condolences to his wife, Helga Gaul, and all those who were close to him. We will always remember him fondly and with honor.

Prof. Dr. Daniel Baier, University of Bayreuth

Prof. Dr. Reinhold Decker, Bielefeld University

Prof. Dr. Andreas Geyer-Schulz, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)