

Professor Prof. h.c. mult. Dr. Dr. h.c. Bernhard Korte
November 3, 1938 – April 26, 2025

It is with deep sadness that we bid farewell to Professor Bernhard Korte, an outstanding scientist and pioneer in discrete mathematics, who passed away in Bonn on 26 April 2025. His work had a lasting impact on the world of mathematics and computer science, and his passion for science, art and culture left a lasting mark.

Born in Bottrop, Germany, on 3 November 1938, Bernhard Korte grew up in a coal-mining village as the son of a miner. After graduating from high school in 1959, he embarked on a scientific career, studying mathematics, physics and chemistry at the University of Bonn.



It was there that he laid the foundations for his impressive academic career: he obtained his doctorate in 1967, followed by his habilitation in 1971. His career took him to professorships in Regensburg and Bielefeld before returning to Bonn, where he became professor in 1972 and had a lasting influence on the university.

Professor Korte initially headed the Institute for Operations Research, which attracted the world's best scientists in discrete mathematics. This led to the establishment of the Research Institute for Discrete Mathematics at the University of Bonn, which he founded in 1987. Under his leadership, significant advances were made in combinatorial optimisation, particularly in the field of chip design. The 'BonnTools' developed by him and his team revolutionised the design of microprocessors, which are used in countless devices worldwide.

Professor Korte was not only an eminent scientist and scientific organiser, but also the founder of the Arithmeum. A passionate collector of historic calculating machines, he laid the foundations for what is now the largest and most important collection of its kind in the world. With equal dedication, he assembled one of the most renowned collections of concrete art and, with the ArithmeumLibrary, created the world's largest collection of historical arithmetic and mathematics books. All of these collections have found a unique home in the Arithmeum in Bonn, which he designed himself, and where science and art come together in a unique and vibrant way as a testament to his creative vision.

Bernhard Korte has received numerous awards for his outstanding achievements. He was awarded the State Prize of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1997 and the Great Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2002. He was also a Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic and an honorary professor of the Academia Sinica in Beijing and the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 1987 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Rome, La Sapienza. He was a member of the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina in Halle, the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Düsseldorf and the German Academy of Science and Engineering (acatech). In 2021, he was awarded the Innovation Prize of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia in the Honorary Award category for his life's work.

Bernhard Korte leaves an impressive legacy that goes far beyond his scientific contributions. He was an inspiring mentor, a creative spirit and, with his magnum opus, the Arithmeum, a passionate promoter of the connection between science and art. His life's work will live on in the institutions he built and inspire future generations.

It is with gratitude and appreciation that we pay tribute to a great scientist and human being whose legacy will continue to guide us. Our thoughts are with his family and loved ones at this difficult time.