

CPR - A Comprehensive Provenance Record for Verification Workflows in Whole Tale

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1 Introduction

An increasing number of journal publishers verify computational artifacts as part of the peer-review process. Although defining and achieving computational reproducibility has proven thorny generally, the particular problems publishers aim to detect in this context are well defined. Questions representative publishers answer via verification workflows include:

- Is the description in the text and supplementary materials sufficient to enable others to repeat the reported computations?
- Does repeating the computations yield the reported results?

Platforms such as Binder [2] and Whole Tale [1] provide environments for assessing reproducibility of computational artifacts by these standards via what is essentially *black-box testing* of the computational workflow. A verifier uses information provided in the paper to (1) set up the required computational environment; (2) stage input data; (3) trigger a sequence of automated computations; and (4) allow these computations to run to completion. Finally the verifier confirms that the products of the computations match the description in the paper.

Whole Tale further aims to enable verifiers to observe *how* automated computational workflows produce intermediate and final artifacts. Ultimately this will allow publishers to ask a third general question:

- Is the authors' description of the roles played by various software components consistent with the observed flow of data through those components?

This capability will provide verifiers means for *white-box* testing of the computations reported in a paper. Specifically, it will enable a verifier to detect cases where the sequence of computational steps and flow of data between these steps does not conform to the description given in the paper. The demonstration described here exercises and demonstrates capabilities of the tools Whole Tale employs to record, store, query, and visualize the flow of data through computational workflows for this purpose.

2 The CPR Toolkit

The CPR (Comprehensive Provenance Record) Toolkit is a suite of tools for recording, storing, querying, and visualizing the run-time provenance of artifacts

produced by a run of a computational workflow. While the primary purpose of CPR is to automate the monitoring and management of provenance-relevant events and records associated with a Whole Tale *recorded run*, the toolkit can be employed in any Linux-based computing environment.

Figure 1 illustrates the flow of information through elements of the CPR toolkit. CPR employs *ReproZip* to observe system calls invoked as part of the recorded run and to record metadata about (1) the operating-system level processes comprising the overall computation; (2) the files accessed by these processes; and (3) the access mode for file accesses, i.e. whether the process opened the file for reading, writing, or both. ReproZip captures and records all of this information in a SQLite database with a schema specific to ReproZip.

Once a recorded run is complete, the *cpr* utility extracts these OS-level records from the ReproZip trace, transform them into RDF triples, and loads the triples into an RDF dataset in an instance of Blazegraph. The triples are expressed using a vocabulary developed to represent provenance information in the context of Whole Tale recorded run executions. The CPR vocabulary extends PROV and provONE with subclasses and new concepts specific to Whole Tale, supporting storage and query of provenance captured from multiple recorded runs and versions of multiple Tales (Figure 2). CPR can represent this vocabulary either as Datalog facts or as RDF triples.

Finally, the Geist reporting tool is used to pose SPARQL queries against the Blazegraph instance, to format the query results as reports, and to create visualizations of query results using Graphviz. Geist queries, reports, and visualizations may be parameterized; in Whole Tale we plan to create a predefined set of reports and visualizations following each recorded run.

References

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2. Jupyter-Project: Binder 2.0 - Reproducible, Interactive, Sharable Environments for Science at Scale. 17th Python in Science Conference (2018)