

# Citation File Format Core (CFF-Core)

Stephan Druskat (mail@sdruskat.net)

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## Abstract

The *Citation File Format* (*CFF*) is a human- and machine-readable format for CITATION files. These files provide citation metadata for (research and scientific) software. The format aims to support citation-specific use cases for software citation described in [1]. CFF is serialized in YAML 1.2, and is therefore Unicode-based and cross-language. This specification, together with the Unicode standard for characters, aims to provide all the information necessary to understand CFF, and to use (i.e., write) and re-use (i.e., read, validate, convert from) it. These specifications are maintained openly at <https://github.com/citation-file-format/citation-file-format>.

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## Introduction

### Status of this document

This document reflects version 1.0-RC1 of the *Citation File Format* (CFF)’s *Core* branch (cf. Status of the format). CFF has been developed in the context of the *Workshop on Sustainable Software for Science: Practice and Experiences (WSSSPE5.1)*, which was held on 6 September 2017 in Manchester, UK. More specifically, the constraints for CFF have been developed in the discussion and speed blogging group “Development and implementation of a standard format for CITATION files”, whose members were Stephan Druskat (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany), Neil Chue Hong (Software Sustainability Institute, University of Edinburgh, UK), Raniere Silva (Software Sustainability Institute, University of Manchester, UK), Radovan Bast (University of Tromsø, Norway), Andrew Rowley (University of Manchester, UK), and Alexander Konovalov (University of St. Andrews, UK).

CFF Version 1.0-RC1 has been developed by Stephan Druskat with contributions from the following.

- Radovan Bast (@bast): Reporter
- Raniere Silva (@rgaiacs): Reporter
- Michael R. Crusoe (@mr-c): Reporter

CFF has been developed to provide a format for CITATION files which could be recommended to readers of the blog post which has been produced by the group during the workshop and shortly after, and which will be published on the blog page of the Software Sustainability Institute.

### Rationale

The rationale for a standardized, machine- and human-readable format for CITATION files is discussed in more detail in [2]. CFF has been developed to support all citation-specific use cases for the citation of software, as discussed in [1], and thus promote attribution and credit for software in general, and research software in particular.

In a blog post [3], Robin Wilson has introduced CITATION files as a means to make citation information for software easily accessible. This accessibility is important, because in order to receive deserved credit for research software in the academic system - where credit is still mainly measured based on citations -, the citation information for software must be made visible; Authors will only cite software if the citation information is readily available, as there is no standard, easily deducible way (yet) to cite software, such as there is for journals for example.

Some have followed the advice, and have uploaded CITATION (or CITATION.md, or CITATION.txt) files to the root of the source code repository holding their software. While this practice has made for a good start, free form CITATION

files are not machine-readable, and machine-readability is a precondition for re-use of the citation information in different contexts which could further support a fair distribution of credit for research software.

## Status of the format

CFF-Core has been branched out to address issue `citation-file-format/citation-file-format#23`. While an ideal format for software citation would arguably implement transitive credit [4], there is no concrete implementation yet that is available for practical use by software creators. The most concrete suggestion for an implementation is [5], the application of which, however, seems impractical from a usability point of view in terms of human-writability. Especially regarding the current state of the practice of providing citation metadata for software (cf. `{% cite software-citation-practices --style ./_bibliography/apa-text.csl %}`) it seems that at this point in time, a lower-threshold approach - in terms of technical complexity - could potentially drive higher participation in the provision of software citation metadata.

On the other end of the complexity spectrum, free form `CITATION` files as suggested by Robin Wilson [3] provide an easy-to-access way of providing citation metadata for software. However, as these files are not reliably formatted, and thus not machine-readable, their potential for re-use is rather low. Re-use of software citation metadata, however, is a key factor in the promotion of software citation along the software citation principles [1], and ultimately the fair distribution of credit for software in science.

CFF aims to provide a compromise between the ideal state of software citation, i.e., transitive credit, and the state of the practice, i.e., free form `CITATION` files.

CFF-Core, in this context, provides an implementation for basic software citation metadata, so that creators of research software can supply relevant metadata for citation easily. CFF-Core aims at covering use cases *1 (Use software for a paper)*, *2 (Use software in/with new software)*, and *15 (Store software entry)* as defined in the software citation principles paper [1].

Further development of CFF towards an implementation of transitive credit may be undertaken in the future in another branch of CFF which may serve as an extension to CFF-Core.

## Goals

The goal of CFF is to provide an all-purpose citation format (similar to BibTeX or RIS), and specifically provide optimized means of citation for software via the provision of software-specific reference keys and types, e.g., a dedicated type for source code and one for executables, and a reference key for versions, cf. Reference types.

The ultimate goal of CFF as a project is comprehensive uptake and re-use of the format by Research Software Engineers and software developers as well as by vendors and services, such as software repositories, reference managers, etc., in order to boost the visibility of citation information for research software, and empower the fair distribution of credit for software development, maintenance, etc., in academia.

## Concepts

For users of other reference formats, such as BibTeX or RIS, it is important to note that in CFF, all available keys can be used for all reference types. For now, CFF leaves reasonability of use with format users and providers of tooling, such as conversion software for CFF and other formats. In other words, the use of keys should follow common sense. If not, it will confuse the user of the `CITATION` file, and some of the information will probably be lost in re-use scenarios such as conversion or display. If you feel that CFF does not offer a solution for your specific use case, please consider contributing to the format as described in section Contributions.

Furthermore please note that if a section of a work is referenced, this is not supported by a dedicated reference type. Instead, the `section` key should be used within a specific “parent” (i.e., `book` for a section of a book, etc.).

## Format

CFF `CITATION` files must be named `CITATION.cff`.

CFF is implemented in YAML 1.2, as the language provides optimal human- readability and the required core data types. For details, see the YAML 1.2 Specifications [6].

## File structure

CFF CITATION files represent YAML 1.2 dictionaries (“maps”) with three mandatory keys: **cff-version**, **message**, **references**.

**cff-version** must specify the exact version of the Citation File Format that is used for the file.

**message** must specify instructions to users on how to cite the software the CITATION.cff file is associated with.

**references** must specify a list of references.

Example:

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "Please cite the following works when using this software."
references:
  - ...
  - ...
```

## Reference structure

A reference item, i.e., an item in the list under **references**, must at least specify values for the following mandatory keys: **type**, **authors**, **title**.

**type** must specify the type of the referenced work. For a list of available values, cf. reference types.

**authors** must specify a list of person objects.

**title** must specify the title of the referenced work.

Example:

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "Please cite the following works when using this software."
references:
  - type: book
    authors:
      - ...
    title: The science of citation
  - type: software
    authors:
      - ...
    title: Software Citation Tool
```

Additionally, it can contain any further reference keys. In version 1.0-RC1, CFF does not specify a strict schema where specific reference types can only contain specific reference keys, although this may be implemented in future versions.

## Notable reference keys

### conference, database-provider, institution, publisher

These keys take an entity object as value. Entity objects reference named entities and provide a fixed set of keys, such as **name** and contact information.

Example:

```
references:
  - type: book
    publisher:
```

```
- name: PeerJ
  city: London
  country: GB
  website: https://peerj.com/
```

#### **authors, contact, editors, editors-series, recipients, senders, translators**

These keys take a collection of person objects as value. Person objects provide a fixed set of keys to reference individuals, including a detailed set for specifying personal names, an affiliation, etc.

Example:

```
references:
- type: software
  authors:
    - family-names: Druskat
      given-names: Stephan
      orcid: 0000-0003-4925-7248
      affiliation: "Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin"
      email: "mail@sdruskat.net"
      website: http://sdruskat.net
    - family-names: Beethoven
      name-particle: van
      given-names: Ludwig
    - family-names: Fernández de Córdoba
      given-names: Gonzalo
      name-suffix: Jr.
  ...
```

#### **type, languages, status**

These keys only take values from a defined set, cf. the respective sections:

- Reference types
- Language strings
- Status strings

#### **license-url, repository, repository-code, repository-artifact, url**

These keys take URL strings as values. URLs are being validated by a regular expression as provided in a GitHub Gist by Diego Perini.

#### **keywords**

This key takes a collection of strings.

Example:

```
references:
- type: software
  keywords:
    - linguistics
    - "multi-layer annotation"
    - web service
  ...
```

#### **scope**

A reference item can specify a more detailed scope for the reference, via the reference key **scope**. This key can be useful if certain references should only be cited under specific circumstances, e.g., only when a specific package of the software is used. In such a case, the package would ideally have its own CFF file, but if this is not possible for whatever reason, the **scope** key may come in handy.

Example:

```
references:
- scope: "Cite this paper when you run software X with flag --xy"
  type: article
...
```

## Formatting

CFF follows the formatting rules of YAML 1.2, of which one of the most important ones is that the colon (:) after a key should always be followed by a whitespace.

Structure is determined by indentation, i.e., lines containing nested elements must be indented by at least one whitespace character, although using at least two whitespaces as a standard for indentation preserves readability.

Value strings can (and sometimes should) be double-quoted, e.g. "**string**", especially when they contain YAML special characters, or special characters in general. These include:

: { } [ ] , & \* # ? | - < > = ! % @ \

## Reference keys

CFF defines the following reference keys.

Table 1: Complete list of CFF keys.

CFF Key	CFF Data Type	Description
abbreviation	String	The abbreviation of the work
abstract	String	The abstract of a work
authors	Collection of <i>entity</i> or <i>person</i> objects	The author of a work
collection-doi	String	The DOI of a collection containing the work
collection-title	String	The title of a collection or proceedings
collection-type	String	The type of a collection
commit	String	The (e.g., Git) commit hash or (e.g., Subversion) revision number of the work
conference	<i>Entity object</i>	The conference where the work was presented
contact	Collection of <i>entity</i> or <i>person</i> objects	The contact person, group, company, etc. for a work
copyright	String	The copyright information pertaining to the work
data-type	String	The data type of a data set
database	String	The name of the database where a work was accessed/is stored
database-provider	<i>Entity object</i>	The provider of the database where a work was accessed/is stored
date-accessed	Date	The date the work has been last accessed
date-downloaded	Date	The date the work has been downloaded
date-published	Date	The date the work has been published
date-released	Date	The date the work has been released
department	String	The department where a work has been produced
doi	String	The DOI of the work
edition	String	The edition of the work
editors	Collection of <i>entity</i> or <i>person</i> objects	The editors of a work

CFF Key	CFF Data Type	Description
<b>editors-series</b>	Collection of <i>entity</i> or <i>person objects</i>	The editors of a series in which a work has been published
<b>end</b>	Integer	The end page of the work
<b>entry</b>	String	An entry in the collection that constitutes the work
<b>filename</b>	String	The name of the electronic file containing the work
<b>format</b>	String	The format in which a work is represented
<b>institution</b>	<i>Entity object</i>	The institution where a work has been produced or published
<b>isbn</b>	String	The ISBN of the work
<b>issn</b>	String	The ISSN of the work
<b>issue</b>	Integer	The issue of a periodical in which a work appeared
<b>issue-date</b>	String	The publication date of the issue of a periodical in which a work appeared
<b>issue-title</b>	String	The name of the issue of a periodical in which the work appeared
<b>journal</b>	String	The name of the journal/magazine/newspaper/periodical where the work was published
<b>keywords</b>	Collection of strings	Keywords pertaining to the work
<b>languages</b>	Collection of ISO 639 <i>language strings</i>	The language of the work
<b>license</b>	<i>License string</i>	The license under which a work is licensed
<b>license-url</b>	String ( <i>URL</i> )	The URL of the license text under which a work is licensed
<b>location</b>	<i>Entity object</i>	The location of the work
<b>loc-start</b>	Integer	The line of code in the file where the work starts
<b>loc-end</b>	Integer	The line of code in the file where the work ends
<b>medium</b>	String	The medium of the work
<b>month</b>	Integer	The month in which a work has been published
<b>nihmsid</b>	String	The NIHMSID of a work
<b>notes</b>	String	Notes pertaining to the work
<b>number</b>	String	The accession number for a work
<b>number-volumes</b>	Integer	The number of volumes making up the collection in which the work has been published
<b>pages</b>	Integer	The number of pages of the work
<b>patent-states</b>	String	The states for which a patent is granted
<b>pmcid</b>	String	The PMCID of a work
<b>publisher</b>	<i>Entity object</i>	The publisher who has published the work
<b>recipients</b>	Collection of <i>entity</i> or <i>person objects</i>	The recipient of a personal communication
<b>repository</b>	String ( <i>URL</i> )	The repository where the work is stored
<b>repository-code</b>	String ( <i>URL</i> )	The version control system where the source code of the work is stored
<b>repository-artifact</b>	String ( <i>URL</i> )	The repository where the (executable/binary) artifact of the work is stored
<b>scope</b>	String	The scope of the reference, e.g., the section of the work it adheres to

CFF Key	CFF Data Type	Description
<b>section</b>	String	The section of a work that is referenced
<b>senders</b>	Collection of <i>person objects</i>	The sender of a personal communication
<b>status</b>	<i>Status string</i>	The publication status of the work
<b>start</b>	Integer	The start page of the work
<b>thesis-type</b>	String	The type of the thesis that is the work
<b>title</b>	String	The title of the work
<b>translators</b>	Collection of <i>entity or person objects</i>	The translator of a work
<b>type</b>	<i>Reference types string</i>	The type of the work
<b>url</b>	String ( <i>URL</i> )	The URL of the work
<b>version</b>	String	The version of the work
<b>volume</b>	Integer	The volume of the periodical in which a work appeared
<b>volume-title</b>	String	The title of the volume in which the work appeared
<b>year</b>	Integer	The year in which a work has been published
<b>year-original</b>	Integer	The year of the original publication

## Exemplary uses

This section details exemplary use cases for some of the keys to avoid ambiguity/misuse.

### abstract

- If the work is a journal paper or other academic work: The abstract of the work.
- If the work is a film, broadcast or similar: The synopsis of the work.

### department

- If the work is a thesis: The academic department where the thesis has been produced.
- If the work is a government document: The governmental department which has issued the document.

### format

- If the work is a music file: The digital format in which a musical piece is saved, e.g., MP3.
- If the work is a data set: The digital format in which the data set is saved.
- If the work is a painting: The format of the painting, e.g., the width and height of the canvas.

### institution

- If the work is a report: The institution where the report has been produced.
- If the work is a case: The court where a case has been held.
- If the work is a blog post: The institution responsible for running the blog.
- If the work is a patent, legal rule or similar: The issuing institution of the patent/rule.
- If the work is a grant: The funding agency sponsoring the grant.
- If the work is a thesis: The university where a thesis has been produced.
- If the work is a statute: The institution or geographical unit which the statute adheres to.
- If the work is a conference: The organisation which held the conference.

### languages

- If the work is a book: The language in which the book is written.

### location

- If the work is an artwork: E.g., the museum holding the work.
- If the work is a historical work, illuminated manuscript or similar: The library or archive where the work is held.

### medium



- If the work is an artwork: The medium of the artwork, e.g., “photograph”, “painting”, “oil on canvas”, etc.
- If the work is a book or similar: Whether it is a printed book or an ebook.

#### **month**

- If the work is a conference: The month in which the conference has been held.
- If the work is a magazine article: The month in which the magazine issue containing the article has been published.

#### **number**

- If the work is a conference paper: E.g., the submission number of the paper
- If the work is a grant: The grant number provided by the funding agency.
- If the work is a work of art: E.g., the catalogue number provided by a museum holding the artwork.
- If the work is a report: The report number of a report.
- If the work is a patent: The patent number of the work.
- If the work is a historical work, illuminated manuscript or similar: The codex or folio number of a manuscript, or the library identifier for a manuscript.

#### **term**

- If the work is a dictionary or encyclopedia: The term in the dictionary or encyclopedia that is being referenced.

#### **title**

- If the work is a case: The name of the case (e.g., Name v. Name).

#### **version**

- If the work is a software: The version of the referenced software.

## **Reference types**

Table 2: Complete list of CFF reference types.

Reference type string	Description
<b>art</b>	A work of art, e.g., a painting
<b>article</b>	
<b>audiovisual</b>	
<b>bill</b>	A legal bill
<b>blog</b>	A blog post
<b>book</b>	A book or e-book
<b>catalogue</b>	
<b>conference</b>	
<b>conference-paper</b>	
<b>data</b>	A data set
<b>database</b>	An aggregated or online database
<b>dictionary</b>	
<b>edited-work</b>	An edited work, e.g., a book
<b>encyclopedia</b>	
<b>film-broadcast</b>	A film or broadcast
<b>generic</b>	The fallback type
<b>government-document</b>	
<b>grant</b>	A research or other grant
<b>hearing</b>	
<b>historical-work</b>	A historical work, e.g., a medieval manuscript
<b>legal-case</b>	
<b>legal-rule</b>	
<b>magazine-article</b>	
<b>manual</b>	A manual
<b>map</b>	A geographical map

Reference type string	Description
<b>multimedia</b>	A multimedia file
<b>music</b>	A music file or sheet music
<b>newspaper-article</b>	
<b>pamphlet</b>	
<b>patent</b>	
<b>personal-communication</b>	
<b>proceedings</b>	Conference proceedings
<b>report</b>	
<b>serial</b>	
<b>slides</b>	Slides, i.e., a published slide deck
<b>software</b>	Software
<b>software-code</b>	Software source code
<b>software-container</b>	A software container (e.g., a docker container)
<b>software-executable</b>	An executable software, i.e., a binary/artifact
<b>software-virtual-machine</b>	A virtual machine/vm image
<b>sound-recording</b>	
<b>standard</b>	
<b>statute</b>	
<b>thesis</b>	An academic thesis
<b>unpublished</b>	
<b>video</b>	A video recording
<b>website</b>	

## Objects

### Entity objects

Entity objects can represent different types of entities, e.g., a publishing company, or conference. In CFF, they are realized as collections with a defined set of keys. Only the key **name** is mandatory.

Table 3: Complete list of keys for entity objects.

Entity key	Entity Data Type	optional
<b>name</b>	String	
<b>address</b>	String	•
<b>city</b>	String	•
<b>region</b>	String	•
<b>post-code</b>	String	•
<b>country</b>	String	•
<b>orcid</b>	String	•
<b>email</b>	String	•
<b>tel</b>	String	•
<b>fax</b>	String	•
<b>website</b>	String ( <i>URL</i> )	•
<b>date-start</b>	Date	•
<b>date-end</b>	Date	•
<b>location</b>	String	•

### Exemplary uses

**address**

- To be used for street names and house numbers, etc.

#### region

- To be used for, e.g., states (as in US states or German federal states).

#### post-code

- The post code or zip code of an address.

#### country

- The ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 country code for a country. A list of ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes can be found at Wikipedia:ISO 3166-1.

Example:

#### references:

```
- type: book
  publisher:
    - name: PeerJ
      city: London
      country: GB
```

#### date-start and date-end

- The start and end date of, e.g., a conference. This must be formatted according to ISO 8601, e.g., YYYY-MM-DD, or 2017-10-04T16:20:57+00:00.

## Person objects

A person object represents a person. In CFF, person objects are realized as collections with a defined set of keys, of which only **family-names** and **given-names** are mandatory.

Table 4: Complete list of keys for person objects.

Entity key	Entity Data Type	optional
family-names	String	
given-names	String	
name-particle	String	•
name-suffix	String	•
affiliation	String	•
address	String	•
city	String	•
region	String	•
post-code	String	•
country	String	•
orcid	String	•
email	String	•
tel	String	•
fax	String	•
website	String ( <i>URL</i> )	•

## Exemplary uses

### Name keys

CFF aims to implement a culturally neutral model for personal names, according to the suggestions on splitting personal names by the W3C and the implementation of personal name splitting in BibTeX [7].

To this end, CFF provides four generic keys to specify personal names:

1. Values for **family-names** specify family names, including combinations of given and patronymic forms, such as *Guðmundsdóttir* or *bin Osman*; double names with or without hyphen, such as *Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger* or *Sánchez Vicario*. It can potentially also specify names that include prepositions or (nobiliary) particles, especially if they occur in between family names such as in Spanish- or Portuguese-origin names, such as *Fernández de Córdoba*.
2. Values for **given-names** specify given and any other names.
3. Values for **name-particle** specify nobiliary particles and prepositions, such as in Ludwig *van* Beethoven or Rafael *van der* Vaart.
4. Values for **name-suffix** specify suffixes such as *Jr.* or *III* (as in Frank Edwin Wright *III*).

Note that these keys may still not be optimal for, e.g., Icelandic names which do not have the concept of family names, or Chinese generation names, but the alternative is highly localized customization, which would be counterintuitive as to CFF's goal to be easily accessible. Thus, it is ultimately the task of CFF file authors to find the optimal name split in any given case.

### affiliation

- To specify the affiliation of a person, e.g., a university, research centre, etc.

### Address keys

- Cf. Entity objects for details.

### orcid

- To specify an ORCID identifier in the format dddd-dddd-dddd-dddd, e.g., 0000-0003-4925-7248.

## Specified value strings

The keys **status**, **license**, and **languages** can only take values from a fixed set of strings. These are specified below.

### Status strings

Works can have a different status of publication, e.g., journal papers. CFF specifies the following value strings for the key **status**.

Table 5: Defined statuses for works.

Status (String)	Description
<b>in-preparation</b>	A work in preparation, e.g., a manuscript (covers drafts)
<b>abstract</b>	The abstract of a work
<b>submitted</b>	A work that has been submitted for publication
<b>in-press</b>	A work that has been accepted for publication but has not yet been published
<b>advance-online</b>	A work that has been published online in advance of publication in the target medium
<b>preprint</b>	A work that has been published as a preprint before peer review

### License strings

License strings must conform with the SPDX Licenses list, i.e., a license must be specified via the short identifier from the list. If a license is not included in the SPDX Licenses list, the **license-url** should be provided as a fallback.

Example:

```
references:
- type: software
```

```

authors:
  - ...
title: My Research Tool
license: Apache-2.0
- type: software
  authors:
    - ...
  title: Obscure Research Tool
  license-url: http://r3s34archs0ft.com/eula

```

## Language strings

Natural languages as a value for the key `languages` are specified via their respective 3-character ISO 639-3 code. A list of ISO 639-3 codes is maintained at [Wikipedia:List of ISO 639-3 codes](#). Alternatively, a language's 2-character ISO 639-1 code may be used. A list of ISO 639-1 codes is maintained at [Wikipedia:List of ISO 639-1 codes](#).

Example for a work in both English and Daakaka:

```

references:
  - type: book
    ...
  languages:
    - en
    - bpa

```

## Schema

Work is still in progress to provide a schema for CFF, against which CFF files can be validated.

## Examples

### Software examples

One of the main foci of CFF is to comprehensively cover the provision of citation metadata for software. To this end, it should always be used based on the Software Citation Principles [1]! Please make sure you follow the best practices wherever possible. Two typical scenarios for software citation metadata include the existence and respectively lack of a DOI for the software for which citation metadata is provided, for both of which examples follow.

#### A software with a DOI

Note that [1, p. 12] recommend

[...] the use of DOIs as the unique identifier due to their common usage and acceptance, particularly as they are the standard for other digital products such as publications.

Furthermore, DOIs should point to a “unique, specific software version” [1, p. 12]. Also it is recommended [1, p. 13] that:

the [DOI] should resolve to a persistent landing page that contains metadata and a link to the software itself, rather than directly to the source code files, repository, or executable.

Therefore, a minimal `CITATION.cff` file in such a case would look similar to the following.

```

cff-version: 1.0.0
message: If you use this software, please cite it as below.
references:
  - type: software
    authors:
      - family-names: Druskat
        given-names: Stephan
        orcid: 0000-0003-4925-7248
    title: My Research Tool
    version: 1.0.4
    doi: 10043/zenodo.1234

```

A more comprehensive version could look similar to the following.

```

cff-version: 1.0.0
message: If you use this software, please cite it as below.
references:
  - type: software
    authors:
      - family-names: Druskat
        given-names: Stephan
        orcid: 0000-0003-4925-7248
        affiliation: "Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Dept. of German Studies
          and Linguistics"
        email: mail@sdruskat.net
        website: https://hu.berlin/sdruskat
    title: My Research Tool
    version: 1.0.4
    doi: 10043/zenodo.1234
    repository-code: https://github.com/sdruskat/my-research-tool
    repository-artifact: https://hu.berlin/nexus/mrt
    date-published: 2017-09-23
    keywords:
      - "McAuthor's algorithm"
      - linguistics
      - nlp
      - parser
      - deep convolutional neural network
    license: Apache-2.0
    url: https://sdruskat.github.io/my-research-tool

```

## A software without a DOI

For software without a DOI, it is recommended that “the metadata should still provide information on how to access the specific software, but this may be a company’s product number or a link to a website that allows the software be purchased.” [1, p. 13]. Furthermore, “if the version number and release date are not available, the download date can be used. Similarly, the contact name/email is an alternative to the location/repository.” [1, p. 7]

Hence, for a closed source software without a DOI for which the version number and release date cannot be determined, a CITATION.cff file could look like this.

```

cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you dare to use this commercial, closed-source, unversioned software
in your research, please at least cite it as below."
references:
  - type: software
    title: Opaquity

```

```
number: opq-1234-XZVF-ACME-RLY
date-downloaded: 2017-02-31
contact:
  - family-names: Vader
    given-names: Darth
    affiliation: Dark Side Software
    location: DS-1 Orbital Battle Station, near Scarif
    email: father@imperial-empire.com
    tel: +850 (0)123-45-666
```

#### software (with two references)

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use My Research Tool, please cite both the software and the
outline paper."
references:
  - type: software
    authors:
      - family-names: Doe
        given-names: Jane
      - family-names: Bielefeld
        name-particle: von
        given-names: Arthur
      - family-names: McAuthor
        given-names: Juniper
        name-suffix: Jr.
    title: My Research Tool
    doi: 10043/zenodo.1234
  - type: article
    authors:
      - family-names: Doe
        given-names: Jane
      - family-names: Bielefeld
        name-particle: von
        given-names: Arthur
    title: "My Research Tool: A 100% accuracy syntax parser for all languages"
    year: 2099
    journal: Journal of Hard Science Fiction
    volume: 42
    issue: 13
    doi: 10.9999/hardscifi-lang.42132
```

#### software-code (without a DOI: code repository + commit)

We recognize that there are certain situations where it may not be possible to follow the recommended best-practice. For example, if (1) the software authors did not register a DOI and/or release a specific version, or (2) the version of the software used does not match what is available to cite. In those cases, falling back on a combination of the repository URL and version number/commit hash would be an appropriate way to cite the software used. [1, p. 12]

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use this MRT alpha snapshot version, please cite."
references:
  - type: software-code
    authors:
      - family-names: Doe
```

```
    given-names: Jane
title: My Research Tool Prototype
version: 0.0.1-alpha1-build1507284872
repository-code: https://github.com/doe/mrt
commit: 160d54f9e935c914df38c1ffda752112b5c979a8
```

#### software-container

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use the MRT Docker container, please cite the following."
references:
  - type: software-container
    authors:
      - name: "Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin"
        website: https://www.linguistik.hu-berlin.de/
      - family-names: Doe
        given-names: Jane
    title: mrt-iain-m-banks
    version: 1.0.4 (Iain M. Banks)
    url: https://github.com/doe/docker-brew-mrt-core/blob/160d54f9e935/iain/Dockerfile
    repository: https://hub.docker.hu-berlin.de/_/mrt-iain-m-banks/
```

#### software-executable

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use MRT, please cite the following."
references:
  - type: software-executable
    authors:
      - family-names: Doe
        given-names: Jane
    title: My Research Tool Kickstarter
    version: 2.0.0
    doi: 10043/zenodo.1234
    repository-artifact: https://hu.berlin/nexus/mrt-kickstarter
    filename: mrt2-kickstarter.exe
```

## Other examples

#### art

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use this software, please cite the following."
references:
  - type: art
    authors:
      - family-names: Picasso
        given-names: Pablo
    title: Guernica
    year: 1937
    medium: Oil on canvas
    format: 349.3cm x 776.6cm
    location:
      - name: Museo Reina Sofia
```



city: Madrid  
country: ES

#### article

cff-version: 1.0.0  
message: "If you use this software, please cite the following paper."  
references:  
- type: article  
  authors:  
    - family-names: Smith  
      given-names: Arfon M.  
    - family-names: Katz  
      given-names: Daniel S.  
      affiliation: "National Center for Supercomputing Applications &  
Electrical and Computer Engineering Department & School of Information  
Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois,  
United States"  
      orcid: 0000-0001-5934-7525  
    - family-names: Niemeyer  
      given-names: Kyle E.  
    - name: "FORCE11 Software Citation Working Group"  
      website: <https://www.force11.org/group/software-citation-working-group>  
  title: "Software citation principles"  
  year: 2016  
  journal: PeerJ Computer Science  
  volume: 2  
  issue: e86  
  doi: 10.7717/peerj-cs.86  
  url: <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.86>

#### blog

cff-version: 1.0.0  
message: "If you use MRT in your research, please cite the following blog article."  
references:  
- type: blog  
  authors:  
    - family-names: Doe  
      given-names: Jane  
  title: "Implement a 100% accuracy syntax parser for all languages? No probs!"  
  date-published: 2017-09-23  
  url: <https://hu-berlin.de/blogs/jdoe/2017/09/23/if-only>  
  institution:  
    - name: "Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin"  
      city: Berlin  
      country: DE

#### book

cff-version: 1.0.0  
message: "If you use MRT for your research, please cite the following book."  
references:  
- type: book  
  authors:

```

- family-names: Doe
  given-names: Jane
title: "The future of syntax parsing"
year: 2017
publisher:
- name: Far Out Publications
  city: Bielefeld
medium: print

```

#### conference-paper

```

cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use MRT for your research, please cite the following."
references:
- type: conference-paper
  authors:
    - family-names: Doe
      given-names: Jane
  title: "Ultimate-accuracy syntax parsing with My Research Tool"
  year: 2017
  collection-title: "Proceedings of the 1st Conference on Wishful Thinking"
  collection-doi: 10043.zenodo.4321
  editors:
    - family-names: Kirk
      given-names: James T.
  conference:
    - name: 1st Conference on Wishful Thinking
      location: Spock's Inn Hotel and Bar
      address: 123 Main St
      city: Bielefeld
      region: Jarvis Island
      post-code: 12345
      country: UM
      date-start: 2017-04-01
      date-end: 2017-04-01
  start: 42
  end: 45
  doi: 10043/zenodo.1234

```

#### edited-work

Note that the editors of the edited work must be specified under the **authors** key. Specific citation styles may or may not attach a suffix to the authors, such as “, eds.” or similar.

```

cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use MRT, please cite the following."
references:
- type: edited-work
  authors:
    - family-names: Doe
      given-names: Jane
  title: "Ultimate-accuracy parsing in practice"
  year: 2017
  publisher:
    - name: Far Out Publications

```

```
city: Bielefeld
country: DE
```

## report

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use MRT in your research, please cite the following."
references:
- type: report
  authors:
    - name: Fictional Parsing Interest Group, ACME Inc.
  title: "100% accuracy syntax parsing at ACME"
  url: http://www.acme.com/sigs/fp/reports/hpsp.pdf
  year: 2017
  date-accessed: 2017-09-23
```

## thesis

```
cff-version: 1.0.0
message: "If you use MRT in your research, please cite the following."
references:
- type: thesis
  authors:
    - family-names: Doe
      given-names: Jane
  title: "A high accuracy syntax parser in Visual Basic"
  thesis-type: PhD
  year: 2017
  department: Dept. of Universal Language Philosophy
  institution:
    - name: "Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin"
      city: Berlin
      country: DE
  database: Thesisserver
  date-accessed: 2017-09-23
  date-published: 2017-03-21
  url: http://thesisserver.hu-berlin.de/2017/march/phd/doe-12345
```

## Infrastructure

The roadmap for CFF plans for the provision of further infrastructure (e.g., software packages and web services), to support the following use cases for CFF:

- Creating CFF files
- Reading CFF files
- Validating CFF files
- Converting CFF files

## Contributions

Contributions to the format specifications are welcome! For details on how to contribute, please refer to the GitHub repository for CFF at <http://github.com/sdruskat/citation-file-format>.

## License

This document is licensed under a CC-BY- SA-4.0 license. The full license text can be obtained from the URL <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>.

## References

- [1] A. M. Smith, D. S. Katz, K. E. Niemeyer, and FORCE11 Software Citation Working Group, “Software citation principles,” *PeerJ Computer Science*, vol. 2, p. e86, Sep. 2016 [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.86>
- [2] S. Druskat, “Track 2 Lightning Talk: Should CITATION files be standardized?” in *Proceedings of the Workshop on Sustainable Software for Science: Practice and Experiences (WSSSPE5.1)*, 2017 [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.3827058>
- [3] R. Wilson, “Encouraging citation of software - introducing CITATION files.” 2013 [Online]. Available: <https://www.software.ac.uk/blog/2013-09-02-encouraging-citation-software-introducing-citation-files>
- [4] D. S. Katz, “Transitive credit as a means to address social and technological concerns stemming from citation and attribution of digital products,” *Journal of Open Research Software*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. e20, 2014.
- [5] D. S. Katz and A. M. Smith, “Implementing transitive credit with JSON-LD,” *Journal of Open Research Software*, vol. 3, no. e7, 2015 [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.5334/jors.by>
- [6] O. Ben-Kiki, C. Evans, and I. döt Net, “YAML Ain’t Markup Language (YAML™) Version 1.2. 3rd Edition, Patched at 2009-10-01.” 2009 [Online]. Available: <http://yaml.org/spec/1.2/spec.html>
- [7] J.-M. Hufflen, “Names in bibtex and mlBibTeX,” *TUGboat*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 243–253, Nov. 2006 [Online]. Available: <https://www.tug.org/TUGboat/tb27-2/tb87hufflen.pdf>