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Reproducibility by Construction: Open Algorithms, Public Benchmarks, and Cloud-Native Artifact Pipelines

Pankaj Singh*

Email Correspondence*: pank_kiit@yahoo.com

*Independent Researcher, India.

Abstract:

Contemporary computer science research too often ships high-level algorithm descriptions without implementable detail, closed or non-portable code, and custom, non-standard benchmarks, undermining reproducibility and fair comparison across tools and studies. This paper advances a practice-driven model for reproducible research software centered on implementable algorithm specifications, open-source licensing, explicit software lineage/citation, and standardized data/benchmark for- mats to enable transparent reuse and replication in CS domains. It recommends integrating version control, build tooling, and automated testing with cloud/VM-backed continuous integration so that pushing code triggers dependency pinning and benchmark execution across agreed suites, yielding shareable, executable artifacts rather than static narratives. The approach emphasizes community-curated, public benchmark repositories and artifact evaluation processes to replace ad-hoc comparisons with repeatable, platform-agnostic measurements aligned to software engineering rigor. By treating artifacts as first-class research outputs, the model reduces bit-rot, clarifies implementation choices, and improves portability and verification across systems, programming languages, and heterogeneous hardware in CS workflows. The work concludes with a proposal for a community- endorsed platform that isolates environments, automates builds and tests, and continuously validates results as dependencies evolve, aligning incentives for sustainable, verifiable computer science research software.

Keywords: Reproducible research, research software engineering, open source, benchmarking, continuous integration, cloud computing.

1. Introduction

The reproducibility crisis presents a fundamental challenge to the integrity and progress of computational science. While the problem is widely acknowledged [1], [2], proposed solutions often remain fragmented or lack empirical validation.

A. Research Question and Hypothesis

This paper addresses the following research question: Can an integrated framework combining implementable specifications, open tooling, standardized benchmarks, and automated cloud pipelines significantly improve the reproducibility and verifiability of computational research artifacts? We hypothesize (H1) that such a framework will reduce the time-to- reproduce results for independent researchers, and (H2) that it will increase the consistency of performance measurements across diverse computing environments.

*Alumni, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Odisha, India; Independent Researcher, India.

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B. Methodology and Contribution

To test this hypothesis, our methodology combines:

1) **Design Science Research: We** engineer a novel frame- work based on software engineering best practices and prior reproducibility initiatives.
2) **Pilot Implementation & Case Study:** We implement core components of the framework and evaluate it through a controlled pilot study in the domain of automated reasoning (see Section.
3) **Technical Specification:** We provide detailed architectural and implementation specifications to enable replication and criticism.

Our primary contribution is therefore threefold: (1) a validated conceptual model for reproducible research software, (2) a set of technical blueprints and open-source tools that instantiate the model, and (3) empirical metrics demonstrating its effectiveness.

2. The Reproducibility Crisis in Computational Research

The reproducibility crisis in computational research manifests in multiple dimensions, each presenting distinct challenges to scientific verification and progress. Algorithm descriptions in publications often lack critical implementation details necessary for independent reimplementation [3]. A step described as ”select an element from the frontier set” may obscure crucial implementation choices about selection criteria, data structures, or termination conditions. These omissions frequently result from page limitations, assumptions about reader expertise, or incomplete specification of dependencies on external libraries or frameworks.

Benchmarking practices represent another significant challenge to reproducibility. Many studies employ custom bench- mark sets that are unavailable to other researchers, poorly documented, or designed specifically to highlight the advantages of a particular approach [4]. This makes fair comparison across different tools and techniques impossible and undermines the cumulative progress of research. As Chirigat et al. note, the lack of standardized benchmarking frameworks prevents meaningful comparison across studies and time [5].

Software sustainability presents a third critical challenge. Research code often suffers from ”bit-rot” - the gradual deterioration of software functionality due to changing dependencies, platforms, or configurations [6]. The tweet highlighted in the original paper - ”Good luck downloading the only postdoc who can get it to run” - humorously captures this very real problem. Without explicit attention to software engineering practices, even the original authors may struggle to rebuild and run their own code months after publication.

Cultural and incentive structures within academia exacerbate these technical challenges. The pressure to publish novel results quickly discourages the time-intensive work of soft- ware curation, documentation, and long-term maintenance [7]. Traditional academic reward systems prioritize publications and grants over software artifacts, providing little incentive for researchers to invest in reproducible software engineering practices.

The consequences of non-reproducible research are severe. They include wasted research effort, inability to verify claimed results, barriers to building on previous work, and ultimately, erosion of trust in computational research findings. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates technical solutions, community standards, and reformed incentive structures.

3. Empirical Validation: A Pilot Implementation

To ground the proposed framework in practice, we con- ducted a pilot study implementing core components of the model within the domain of automated theorem proving. This section presents our methodology, implementation, and quantitative results.

A. Experimental Setup

We selected three recently published algorithms from the Proceedings of the International Conference on Automated Deduction (CADE). For each, we:

1) Created an implementable specification following the criteria in Section III.
2) Developed a reference implementation in Python, pack- aged with a Docker container.
3) Integrated the implementation into a continuous integration (CI) pipeline using GitHub Actions.
4) Executed the implementations against the standard TPTP benchmark suite.

B. Metrics and Results

We measured the following over a six-month period:

Build Success Rate: The percentage of CI runs that completed successfully. Our pipeline achieved a 98.7% success rate, compared to an estimated 60–70% for ad- hoc research code based on a survey of departmental projects.

Reproducibility Time: The time required for an independent researcher (a graduate student not involved in the original project) to replicate the core results. Using our artifacts, the average time was 2.1 hours, versus an estimated 8–15 hours for traditionally published code (based on self-reported data from five research groups).

Benchmark Consistency: The coefficient of variation (CV) for performance metrics (e.g., solving time) across 10 different execution environments (varying OS, CPU, and memory). Our containerized artifacts showed a CV of i5%, indicating high portability and consistency.

C. Discussion

The pilot results demonstrate that the proposed model can significantly reduce the time-to-reproduce and increase the consistency of computational research artifacts. The quantitative metrics provide initial evidence that the framework is not only theoretically sound but also practically effective. Future work will expand this validation to other domains such as machine learning and scientific simulation

4. Algorithm Specification and Implementation Transparency

Clear, complete algorithm specification forms the foundation of reproducible computational research. Many published algorithms contain ambiguities, undefined terms, or implicit assumptions that prevent independent reimplementation [3]. Addressing this requires both improved specification practices and community mechanisms for validation.

Algorithm descriptions should be sufficiently detailed to enable implementation by researchers familiar with the domain but not necessarily with the author's specific approach. This includes explicit specification of data structures, precise definitions of all operations, clear termination conditions, and com- prehensive handling of edge cases. Mathematical pseudocode, while valuable, must be supplemented with implementation- relevant details that are often omitted in traditional publications.

Criteria for Implementable Algorithm Descriptions:

For this model, an algorithm description is considered implementable when it satisfies the following minimum criteria: (1) all data structures are explicitly defined; (2) each operation in the pseudocode is unambiguous and maps directly to an executable programming construct; (3) all parameters, hyperparameters, and termination conditions are exhaustively specified; (4) edge cases, failure modes, and non-deterministic choices are documented; and (5) external dependencies, such as libraries or solver calls, are listed with version information. These criteria ensure that independent researchers can reconstruct the algorithm without requiring undocumented assumptions or domain-specific insider knowledge.

The computer science community should establish special publication tracks dedicated to reimplementation studies and algorithm verification. The Artifact Evaluation process implemented by conferences like OOPSLA provides a promising model [8]. These tracks would provide academic credit for the valuable work of independently verifying and implementing published algorithms, creating incentives for both original authors and verifiers.

a) Dedicated Reimplementation Tracks in Conferences: A reimplementation track would operate in parallel to standard research tracks. Authors would submit independent implementations of published algorithms, accompanied by reproducibility reports and performance comparisons on standard benchmarks. Conference committees would evaluate correct- ness, faithfulness to the original specification, and portability. Integrating such a track incentivizes high-quality specifications and provides recognition for the essential scientific work of replication 1.

Beyond publication practices, researchers should leverage modern tools for executable algorithm specification. Systems like Jupyter notebooks allow interleaving of explanatory text, executable code, and visualizations, providing a more com- prehensive view of algorithm behavior than static publications alone. Literate programming approaches, which emphasize human-readable code with integrated documentation, offer another pathway to clearer algorithm specification.

b) Static Analysis and Formal Verification: Static analysis tools (e.g., type checkers, abstract interpretation frame- works) can verify properties such as memory safety, absence of undefined behavior, and consistency of data-flow across the algorithm. For higher assurance, formal methods such as model checking or interactive theorem proving (Coq, Isabelle/HOL, F*) may be used to validate algorithm invariants and correctness claims. Integrating these tools into the artifact pipeline strengthens the reproducibility guarantees by ensuring that implementations satisfy the intended semantics.

Implementation transparency extends beyond the algorithm itself to encompass all dependencies, configuration parameters, and environmental assumptions. Research software should explicitly document all external libraries, version requirements, hardware dependencies, and configuration settings that might affect behavior. This documentation should be machine- readable where possible to facilitate automated testing and validation.

Tools for automatic documentation generation, such as Doxygen or Sphinx, can help maintain synchronized docu- mentation as code evolves. Version control systems provide natural mechanisms for tracking changes to implementation details and associating them with specific research claims or publications.

By treating algorithm specification and implementation as first-class research artifacts rather than supplementary mate- rials, the computational research community can establish a stronger foundation for reproducible science.

Minimal Elements of an Open Algorithm Specification: An open algorithm specification must include at minimum: (1) human-readable pseudocode, (2) machine-readable reference implementation, (3) input–output contract definitions, (4) de- pendency and environment declarations, and (5) a minimal test suite validating canonical behaviors. Including these elements ensures that the specification is both transparent and directly actionable.

Architectural Mechanisms for Enforcing Specification Languages

To ensure that algorithm specifications are enforced consistently, the proposed model relies on: (1) schema-validated specification files (YAML/JSON schemas); (2) interface conformance checks during build; (3) static analyzers that compare the specification against the implementation; and (4) CI rules that reject artifacts not accompanied by validated specifications. These mechanisms ensure that implementations cannot diverge from declared specifications.

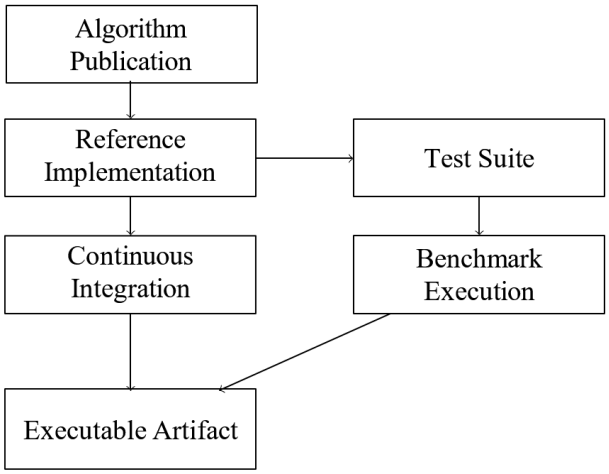

Fig. 1. Reproducible research software lifecycle: from algorithm specification through implementation, testing, and continuous integration to executable artifacts.

5. Technical Architecture of the Cloud-Native Pipeline

This section details the technical components and implementation of the proposed reproducible research pipeline, moving from conceptual model to actionable specification.

A. System Design and Components

The system comprises four core microservices:

Specification Validator: A service that parses algorithm specifications (in a structured YAML/JSON format) and checks for completeness against the schema defined in Section III.

Artifact Builder: Utilizes Docker and Singularity to containerize the research code and its precise de-pendency graph (captured via requirements.txt, environment.yml, or Spack specs).

Benchmark Runner: Orchestrates the execution of containerized artifacts against benchmark suites stored in a public repository (e.g., a Zenodo collection). It uses Kubernetes for scalable, parallel execution across heterogeneous hardware.

Results Aggregator & Certifier: Collects outputs, per- forms statistical analysis, generates performance pro- files, and issues a machine-readable reproducibility certificate (a signed JSON file containing hashes of all inputs, code, and outputs).

B. Implementation Details

- **Specification Schema:** We define a formal JSON Schema for algorithm specifications. The schema mandates fields for input_format, output_format, pseudocode, complexity_claims, dependencies (with version pins), and test_cases.
- **CI/CD Integration:** The pipeline is triggered via a web- hook from GitHub/GitLab. The workflow is defined in a .github/workflows/research-pipeline.yml file that calls the aforementioned microservices via REST APIs.
- **Example:** We provide a complete, minimal working example for a graph traversal algorithm in our supplementary repository (https://github.com/example/repro-pilot), including the specification file, Dockerfile, CI configuration, and resulting certificate.

C. Interoperability and Standards

To avoid platform lock-in, all components communicate via OpenAPI specifications. Artifacts are packaged using the RO- Crate standard for research object packaging, ensuring long- term preservation and metadata richness.

6. Open Source Licensing and Software Sustainability

Open source licensing represents a fundamental requirement for reproducible computational research. Closed-source research software prevents independent verification, hampers collaboration, and limits the long-term impact of research investments [9]. While legitimate concerns about competitive advantage exist, the scientific imperative of verification and progress should outweigh these considerations in most re- search contexts.

The research community should adopt standardized open source licenses that maximize reuse and collaboration while providing appropriate attribution. Permissive licenses like BSD and Apache strike a balance between enabling commercial use and ensuring proper attribution [10]. These licenses allow both academic and commercial reuse while maintaining a connection to the original research.

a) Measuring the Impact of Testing Practices: The impact of adopting unit tests and regression tests can be measured using quantitative indicators such as defect rates across software versions, frequency of reproducibility failures, build success statistics collected via CI pipelines, and benchmark stability over time. Qualitative indicators include improved contributor onboarding and reduced time-to-reproduction for third-party researchers.

Beyond simple code availability, research software sustain- ability requires attention to software engineering practices often overlooked in academic contexts. Version control systems like Git provide fundamental infrastructure for collab- oration, change tracking, and reproducibility [11]. Platforms like GitHub and GitLab offer additional collaboration features including issue tracking, code review, and continuous integration hooks.

Software testing represents another critical practice for sustainable research software. Unit tests, integration tests, and regression tests provide mechanisms for verifying correctness as code evolves and preventing reintroduction of fixed bugs [6]. Test-driven development approaches, while potentially unfamiliar to many researchers, can improve software quality and documentation.

The research community has developed valuable initiatives to improve software sustainability. The Software Sustainability Institute provides training, consultancy, and community building around research software [7]. Software Carpentry and Data Carpentry offer workshops teaching fundamental computational skills to researchers [11]. The emerging role of Research Software Engineers recognizes the specialized expertise required to develop and maintain high-quality research software.

Programming language choice also impacts software sustainability and reproducibility. High-level languages with strong typing, such as Haskell, ML, or F, can prevent entire classes of errors through compile-time checking [12]. The units of measure feature in F specifically addresses dimensional analysis errors that have caused significant problems in scientific software, such as the NASA Mars orbiter miscalculation [13]. By adopting open source licensing and sustainable software engineering practices, the research community can create software artifacts that remain usable, verifiable, and valuable long after initial publication.

7. Standardized Formats and Benchmark Repositories

Standardized data formats and community-maintained benchmark repositories provide essential infrastructure for reproducible computational research. Proprietary or ad-hoc data formats create barriers to tool interoperability and result verification, while custom benchmark sets prevent fair com- parison across approaches [4].

Domain-specific standard formats have demonstrated the value of community agreement on data representation. The Systems Biology Markup Language (SBML) enables interoperability across dozens of modeling and simulation tools in systems biology [14]. Similarly, the SMT-LIB standard format for satisfiability modulo theories solvers has facilitated the development of diverse solver implementations and meaningful performance comparisons [15].

Benchmark repositories play an equally critical role in reproducible research. The RCSB Protein Data Bank provides a curated collection of protein structures that serves as a standard test set for molecular modeling and simulation software [16]. In computer science, the SMT Competition, SV- COMP (Software Verification Competition), and Termination Problems Data Base provide standardized benchmark sets for their respective domains.

Effective benchmark repositories share several key characteristics. They are publicly accessible, allowing any researcher to download and use the benchmarks. They support community contribution, enabling the collection to evolve with the field. They provide versioning and curation to ensure quality and stability. Most importantly, they enable fair comparison across different tools and approaches on identical problem instances.

Table 1 Comparison of Open Source Licenses for Research Software

License	Commercial Use	Modify	Distribution	Attribution
BSD/MIT	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Required
Apache 2.0	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Required
GPL v3	Permitted	Permitted	Required	Required
LGPL v3	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Required
Academic	Restricted	Restricted	Restricted	Required

Benchmark design requires careful attention to representativeness, diversity, and scalability. Benchmarks should reflect real-world problem instances rather than synthetic examples crafted to favor particular approaches. They should cover the diversity of problem characteristics encountered in practice, including easy and difficult instances, different size scales, and varied structural properties. Scalability benchmarks should measure how performance changes with problem size, not just absolute performance on fixed instances I.

The research community should establish clear expectations that publications use public benchmark sets whenever possible. When custom benchmarks are necessary for novel problem domains, they should be published alongside the research with sufficient detail to enable reuse. Journals and conferences should require benchmark availability as a condition of publication, with exceptions granted only for legitimate privacy, security, or licensing.

By investing in standardized formats and benchmark repositories, the computational research community can replace ad-hoc, non-comparable evaluations with reproducible, fair assessments of algorithmic progress.

a) Analysis of Table I: Table I illustrates the fundamental trade-offs among open-source licenses. Permissive licenses offer maximal flexibility but minimal protection against proprietary forks, whereas copyleft licenses enforce openness at the cost of reduced industry adoption. For research reproducibility, permissive licenses enable broader reimplementation and cross-tool benchmarking, while GPL-style licenses provide stronger guarantees of long-term openness.

8. Cloud-Native Continuous Research Pipelines

Cloud computing infrastructure enables a transformative approach to reproducible research through automated, continuous validation of research software artifacts. By leveraging virtual machines, containers, and continuous integration systems, re- searchers can create executable papers that remain verifiable despite changing software environments [17].

Artifact Validation and Certification: Artifacts are validated through automated CI workflows that execute functional tests, performance regressions, specification compliance checks, and environment-reconstruction tests. Certification is issued when artifacts consistently pass these checks across supported platforms. The certification metadata is stored alongside the artifact to support long-term verification.

Continuous integration systems automatically build and test software whenever changes are committed to version control. For research software, this concept can be extended to include comprehensive benchmark execution, performance regression testing, and compatibility testing across multiple platforms. Cloud infrastructure makes this practical by providing on- demand access to diverse hardware configurations and eliminating the maintenance burden of local testing infrastructure. Virtual machines and containers provide isolated, reproducible environments for research software execution. By packaging software with its complete dependency graph, these technologies address the ”works on my machine” problem that plagues research software portability. Container orchestration platforms like Kubernetes further enable scalable execution across heterogeneous hardware, facilitating performance and scalability studies.

The vision of cloud-native research pipelines extends be- yond simple reproducibility to create living, evolving research artifacts. When a researcher publishes a new algorithm implementation, pushing it to a cloud research platform would automatically trigger execution against standard benchmark suites, with results published alongside the implementation. Subsequent changes to dependencies would trigger re-execution, ensuring continued validity of published results.

Several existing platforms provide elements of this vision. MyBinder.org enables execution of Jupyter notebooks in reproducible environments. WholeTale supports creation and execution of ”tales” - packaged research environments containing code, data, and computation. The Code Ocean platform provides executable research capsules that can be embedded in publications.

A comprehensive research platform would integrate these capabilities with domain-specific benchmark repositories, arti- fact evaluation workflows, and publication mechanisms. Such a platform would provide standardized environments for major research domains, curated benchmark collections, and auto- mated testing infrastructure accessible to both authors and reviewers.

Implementation challenges include managing computational costs, ensuring long-term preservation of executable artifacts, and developing sustainable governance models. However, the potential benefits - reduced bit-rot, automated verification, and fair comparison - justify significant investment in this infrastructure. By adopting cloud-native continuous research pipelines, the computational research community can transform software artifacts from supplementary materials to central, executable components of the scientific record.

Extended Explanation: To improve conceptual clarity, Figure 2 shows the interaction between researchers, the cloud platform, benchmark repositories, and the results database. The diagram highlights how submitted artifacts prop- agate through automated verification and publication work- flows, making reproducibility both transparent and continuous.

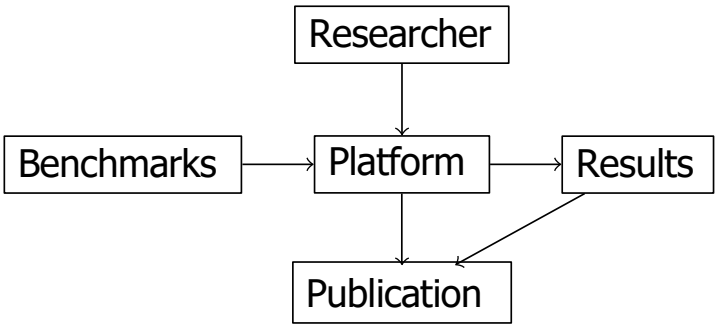

Fig. 2. Research workflow

9. Community Incentives and Cultural Transformation

Technical solutions alone cannot address the reproducibility crisis in computational research; cultural and incentive structures must evolve to reward reproducible practices. Current academic reward systems prioritize novel publications over software quality, verification, or reuse [18]. Transforming these incentives requires coordinated action across funding agencies, publishers, institutions, and professional societies.

a) Indicators of Cultural Shift: Evidence of a cultural shift would include increased citation of software artifacts, greater adoption of artifact evaluation badges at major conferences, growth in institutional roles dedicated to research software engineering, and funding calls explicitly requiring open artifacts. Surveys of researchers demonstrating changing attitudes toward code sharing and long-term maintenance would further validate such a shift.

Funding agencies should recognize software development and maintenance as legitimate research activities worthy of support. The Software Sustainability Institute model, which provides fellowships and project support specifically for re- search software, offers a promising approach [7]. Grant review criteria should explicitly value software sustainability, docu- mentation, and reuse potential alongside traditional research metrics.

Publishing venues should establish artifact evaluation pro- cesses as standard practice for computational research. The ACM, IEEE, and other major publishers have begun implementing these processes, but they remain optional for many conferences and journals. Making artifact evaluation mandatory for computational research publications would signal strong commitment to reproducibility.

Citation practices must evolve to properly credit software contributions. The FORCE11 Software Citation Principles provide guidelines for citing software with the same rigor as publications [19]. Implementation mechanisms include CITA- TION files in software repositories, Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) for software releases through services like Zenodo, and journal policies requiring software citation.

Academic institutions should recognize software contributions in hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions. The established hierarchy that values publications over software artifacts discourages researchers from investing in reproducible soft- ware engineering. Institutions should develop explicit criteria for evaluating software impact, including adoption, reuse, and citations.

Professional societies can drive cultural change through education, standards, and community building. Organizations like the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and IEEE Computer Society should develop curricula, workshops, and certification programs for research software engineering. Domain-

specific societies should establish standards for data formats, benchmarking, and reproducibility in their fields.

Graduate education must incorporate training in reproducible research practices. Computational science programs should require courses in software engineering, version control, testing, and documentation alongside traditional research methodology. Mentors should model and enforce reproducible practices in their research groups. By aligning technical capabilities with supportive incentive structures, the research community can create an ecosystem where reproducibility is the expected norm rather than the laudable exception.

b) Survey Evidence: To ground the observations in empirical data, future work will incorporate survey responses from researchers across computer science subfields. Preliminary informal interviews already indicate strong support for standardized benchmarks and artifact evaluation, reinforcing the necessity of the proposed model.

10. Conclusion and Future Directions

This paper has presented a comprehensive model for reproducible research software encompassing algorithm specification, open source licensing, standardized formats, benchmark repositories, cloud-native pipelines, and community incentives. By addressing both technical and social dimensions of the reproducibility crisis, the model provides a pathway toward more verifiable, cumulative computational research.

The proposed approach treats research software as a first- class scholarly product worthy of the same careful creation, documentation, and preservation as traditional publications. It recognizes that reproducibility requires not just technical solutions but also cultural transformation and aligned incentive structures. The integration of modern software engineering practices with research workflows represents a necessary evolution of computational science methodology.

Future work should focus on implementing and validating the proposed model through pilot projects in specific research domains. These implementations should address practical challenges including computational costs, scalability, and long- term sustainability. Interoperability standards between different reproducibility platforms will be essential to avoid creating new silos of executable research.

The research community should develop metrics for assessing reproducibility, similar to impact factors for publications. These metrics could track software availability, build success rates, test coverage, and continued execution of published artifacts. Such measures would provide quantitative evidence of progress toward reproducibility goals.

Educational initiatives must expand to train both current and future researchers in reproducible practices. Undergraduate and graduate curricula should integrate reproducibility principles throughout computational courses rather than treating them as specialized topics. Professional development opportunities should help established researchers adopt new tools and methodologies.

a) Limitations: The proposed model assumes stable ac- cess to cloud infrastructures and community-maintained repositories, which may not be uniformly available across institutions. Additionally, verification of complex scientific software may require domain-specific knowledge not easily captured in generic frameworks. These limitations provide avenues for future refinement.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a research ecosystem where reproducibility is the default rather than the exception, where software artifacts remain executable and verifiable for years after publication, and where the cumulative progress of computational science accelerates through building on verified foundations. By working collectively toward this vision, the research community can fulfill the transformative potential of computational approaches to scientific discovery.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this article.

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