Accommodating the Canadian Common CV
The Canadian Common CV (widely abbreviated CCV) is an online system created in 2002 to allow researchers to collect and manage their CV data in a central repository and to make applying for grant funding more efficient. Since its launch, the CCV has grown in significance, with approximately 100,000 users and 27 member organizations that serve as funding sources. The CCV’s rapid growth is largely due to its efforts to enhance the application process through its website and to its commitment for future improvements.

As it has grown in importance, however, the CCV has faced challenges related to the efficiency of entering data and the aesthetics and practicality of CVs generated from the system. In response, numerous organizations are working to improve the experience of researchers and address the needs of the research community—and Canadian institutions of higher learning and IT companies are joining the cause.

One particular area of difficulty lies in aligning the function of the CCV with universities’ increasingly common investment in faculty activity reporting (FAR) systems. Academic institutions have many good reasons to maintain their own in-house platforms for collecting and reporting the activities of their faculty members—both for external uses, like accreditation reporting, and for internal uses, like faculty performance reviews and decision making. But there’s no getting around it: there’s potentially very similar data in the two places.

How, then, can an academic technology company assist Canadian universities in efficiently and effectively sharing data between their campus FAR systems and the CCV? This paper will first frame the challenges, and will then turn to an overview of Interfolio’s breakthrough to solve it: the standard CCV database for faculty activity reporting.
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Consolidating Data
The CCV arose from the desire to consolidate CV data to help researchers submit credentials and accomplishments when applying for grants from the Canadian government and other Canadian funding organizations. Since granting institutions require a large volume of detailed information from applicants, researchers found themselves entering or compiling much of the same data over and over, in order to submit it to several funding sources. And each organization requires a distinct set of information—so there was no single template researchers could use to compile their CV submissions.

The core goals of the CCV were (1) to create a portal that allows researchers to upload their CV information in a standard format and (2) to establish a central repository of the data required to support multiple funding agencies.

Today, Canadian funding agencies require researchers to submit the CCV in grant applications. Some foundations and other funding agencies have begun using it as well. Since these influential organizations have made the CCV format mandatory in the grant application process, many applicants are now required to submit CV information through the dedicated online system.

Difficulties Emerge
Although the CCV was created to help researchers, the system has received ample criticism that deserves to be addressed.

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“In principle, the CCV is a great idea, but the functionality has been viewed as difficult to use,” says Scott Wymer, Vice President of Academic Technology at Interfolio. “There are lots of clicks, and the dataset is very diverse and complex. Just putting in something as simple as a degree requires entry of several fields. There are dozens of sections, and all very complex because the funding agencies want different pieces of data. The amount of data required has increased significantly, so the system requires a great deal of effort on the part of users.”

Furthermore, the CCV’s IT infrastructure has posed challenges. Some users say the system runs slowly and has experienced some downtime. In addition, users and institutions have raised concerns about the aesthetics and ease of use of the CV documents produced for reviewers.

Interfolio estimates it may take researchers with long lists of credentials as much as 50-60 hours to enter all of the information that the CCV requires. As a result,
some grant-seekers have even ended up hiring students or assistants to fill out their profile in the CCV.

Investigating Solutions
The committee that oversees the system—a group that includes Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)—has steadily pursued a solution that would streamline the submission process. In the process, these leaders have collaborated with a range of academic and research institutions, as well as third-party technology vendors, to arrive at a better model.

Individual universities, too, rely on much of the information commonly contained in CVs to evaluate faculty members for merit-based pay, tenure, promotion and other reviews—which means researchers spend a significant amount of time compiling this data in other systems before entering it into the CCV portal.

As academic leaders around the world increasingly find value in more sophisticated, detailed data management strategies, their comprehensive data management plans frequently include a dedicated central system for faculty activity reporting.

But in order for a faculty activity reporting platform to genuinely assist faculty members in moving their data (which they’ve already entered once!) between the CCV and their institution’s repository, most faculty activity reporting vendors require significant manual configuration of many data fields in their FAR system to map onto the CCV. In other words, when going through implementation for an institution-specific faculty activity reporting system, every institution across Canada would have to do parallel work to match up thousands of specific fields to the corresponding fields in the CCV—when a large portion of those mappings are common to all institutions.

A Brighter Future: Interfolio’s Standard CCV Database
In order to meet all these demonstrated needs of Canadian grant seekers, funders, and universities, Interfolio has collaborated with Canadian academic institutions (and at points other technology companies) to build a solution. The outcome sets Interfolio apart from any other faculty activity reporting vendor operating in Canada.

Today, Interfolio offers a standard integration package between its faculty activity reporting module and the Canadian Common CV. During implementation, Interfolio’s Canadian clients can get a head start on their institutional configuration by importing
With just a few clicks, scholars can take the bulk of the data entry work they’ve done in one system and import it straight into the other.

Interfolio’s standard CCV database—which automatically sets them up with a large core group of data fields in Interfolio that map to the corresponding fields in the CCV.

“The CCV allows you to import and export data,” Wymer explains. “Now you can take a CV created in our system and export to the CCV and—voila!—the CCV vita is updated. It’s a simple and elegant way to manage faculty data.”

When Canadian client institutions use the Interfolio standard CCV database, they save their faculty time and can generate more grant dollars for their school. With just a few clicks, they can take the bulk of the data entry work they’ve done in one system and import it straight into the other.

Data validation is a benefit, too. When faculty bring information from an existing CCV account into Interfolio, they can add or edit the dataset there before returning the updated and corrected vita to the CCV system.

Since Interfolio has already done the painstaking work of field mapping for the vast majority of the shared fields, Canadian users avoid complicated data matching when transferring CVs from one system to the other. Interfolio’s import/export tool combines and parses data from one section to multiple sections—or vice versa.

Furthermore, Interfolio’s solution includes safeguards to prevent users from accidentally overwriting existing CCV information and allows faculty to import scholarly work and information on past grant data from other sources (like Clarivate Analytics’ Web of Science and Process Pathways’ Romeo). In this way Interfolio saves time and reduces errors, making the CCV more valuable to Canadian higher education as a whole.

As the CCV technology evolves, and as participating institutions and their software vendors continue to collaborate in their handling of faculty data, the CCV and Interfolio together seem to have a promising future in supporting the grant-funding process in Canada.

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Notes
About Interfolio

Founded in 1999, Interfolio is an education technology company based in Washington, DC that offers the first holistic faculty information system to support the full lifecycle of faculty work, from job seeking to review, tenure, sabbatical, committee work, research, service, and beyond. Offering institutions increased transparency and insight into faculty data to help achieve their strategic initiatives, Interfolio believes that advancing the faculty will advance the institution. All of Interfolio’s products center on faculty: from their suite of enterprise products that support shared governance, like faculty hiring, review, and tenure, to activity reporting tools to assist accreditation and data analytics, to their consumer offering that provides individual scholars with a portable, private dossier to curate and share their academic work. Working with over 200 clients, Interfolio leads the market in innovative research and development of technology designed specifically to benefit both institutions and their faculty.

For more information about Interfolio, please contact team@interfolio.com, or visit www.interfolio.com.