

'Killer app' for research launched

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The colwiz R&D platform helps research groups collaborate.

(PhysOrg.com) -- New free software, launched by Oxford University scientists, gives researchers the tools they need to collaborate more efficiently and quickly with colleagues scattered around the world and working in a variety of different research areas.

The [colwiz](#) ('collective wisdom') R&D [platform](#) manages the entire research lifecycle from an initial idea, through a complex collaboration, to publication of the results. It is being launched through Isis Innovation's Software Incubator - a new programme designed to promote software start-ups from the University of Oxford.

"At the moment [researchers](#) are using a dizzying array of different applications to communicate and collaborate," said colwiz Chief Scientist Professor David Gavaghan of Oxford University. "These might

include Google Apps, Microsoft Live Services, LinkedIn, Yammer and Social Text. But because these are separate applications they don't do everything and don't always talk to each other, and this slows researchers down. colwiz replaces this hotchpotch with an integrated suite of tools custom-built for fast and efficient management of the research process."

At the heart of the colwiz platform is a publication library that enables users to manage publications using both a desktop application (for Windows, Linux and Mac) and a version 'in the cloud' that can be accessed from anywhere over the Internet. This is combined with communications and collaboration tools for brainstorming, research tasks and schedule management.

Tahir Mansoori, CEO and co-Founder of colwiz, said: 'We are working with some of the leading researchers in Oxford who are undertaking projects funded by hundreds of millions of pounds in grant funding, but without any underpinning IT platform. So we thought: "why not build a platform that really supports these research activities?" That's how colwiz was born and now we're hoping researchers from institutions around the world will reap the benefits.'

Whilst useful in its own right for researchers writing their own publications, and keeping up with and citing the latest research in their area, the colwiz platform comes into its own with the sort of large interdisciplinary research collaborations needed to tackle some of the grand challenges of 21st Century science where collaboration tools are essential. "By breaking down the research process into its key components we have figured out which tools were potentially the most important. We then custom-built each tool from scratch and integrated them seamlessly into a single platform for individual and group productivity," said Mansoori.

"Over the last ten years my own research in the field of computational biology has become increasingly interdisciplinary, and I now work with a large number of colleagues not only from different departments in Oxford but from different Institutions around the world," said Professor Gavaghan. "I hadn't found software that enabled me to manage the entire research process - from concept through collaborative execution to published results - within a single platform and neither had my colleagues. colwiz is the first platform to address these needs, and will significantly simplify research activities across the board - from individual students and researchers in universities to corporate R&D departments."

The colwiz recently won support from the Oxford University Challenge Seed Fund, a Dragon's Den style competition organised by Isis Innovation, which recognises the best ideas coming out of the University. Tom Hockaday, MD of Isis Innovation, said: "We are delighted that colwiz - a solution built by academics for academics - is already widely deployed within the University and proving to be a great success. Research is the University's core business and so a platform to support research from a start-up is clearly a strong proposition."

More information: Members of academic institutions from US and UK universities can sign up for free and start using the colwiz platform. There are plans to extend the support to further academic institutions, government R&D organisations and commercial enterprises in the near future.

Provided by Oxford University

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