Expanding the Reach of the NCIBI Tools Beyond the University of Michigan

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Abstract

With the exponential increase in data, researchers have a fundamental need for resources that can analyze such data. Organizations like the NCBI (National Center for Biomedical Informatics) develop powerful and relevant bioinformatics tools to address this need. Connecting researchers with newly available resources, especially beyond the developing organization’s home institution is a challenge. The Bioinformationist can confront this issue by introducing the biomedical informatics community to these resources and providing instruction on their use. The University of Michigan Bioinformationist has been involved in several recent events that have expanded the reach of the NCBI tools: 1) The National Cancer Institute-Frederick’s Scientific Library Resource Fair 2) Remote Cytoscape training class 3) Medical Library Association Continuing Education Course. This poster discusses the Bioinformationist’s role in these three events and the opportunity that they provided for expanding the reach of NCBI tools.

Introduction

NCBI, the National Center for Integrative Biomedical Informatics, is one of seven NCBOs (National Centers for Biomedical Computing) in the NIH (National Institutes of Health) Roadmap. Located at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, NCBI is engaged in developing and implementing powerful, relevant bioinformatics tools for Integrated Biomedical Informatics. Since its founding in 2005, NCBI has developed a suite of tools (http://portal.ncbi.org/gateway/tryourtools.html), including the MiMI (Molecular Interactions) database, Gene2MeSH, Meta2MeSH, MetScape, and ConceptGen.

Because NCBI is physically situated at the University of Michigan, it is convenient and easy to provide outreach and education to the local community. More challenging is to get the resources used and accepted by a broader base of users. A conduit to the biomedical informatics community, the Bioinformationist can introduce these resources and provide instruction on their use. Bioinformationists are “information specialists who have received graduate training and practical experience that provides them with disciplinary background both in biomedical, behavioral or biological sciences and information sciences/informatics” as defined by the National Library of Medicine (NLM).1

The University of Michigan Bioinformationist has been involved in several recent events that have expanded the reach of the NCBI tools:

1. The National Cancer Institute-Frederick’s Scientific Library Resource Fair
2. Remote Cytoscape training class
3. Medical Library Association Continuing Education Course

National Cancer Institute (NCI-Frederick) Scientific Library Resource Fair

The Event The Bioinformationist participated in and gave a twenty minute presentation, covering the MetScape Plugin for Cytoscape, MiMI, Gene2MeSH, ConceptGen, and the NCBI Web Services at the NCI (National Cancer Institute)-Frederick Scientific Library Resource Fair

The Location Frederick, Maryland

The Time March 8, 2011 from 10:00am-3:00pm

The Format At a table designated for NCBI, the Bioinformationist provided information about NCBI resources, was available to answer questions, and supplied handouts on NCBI tools

The Impact 39 NCBI researchers interacted with the Bioinformationist, including a researcher who brought in his own data

This event provided a great opportunity for researchers outside of the University of Michigan to learn about the NCBI tools. The researchers at NCIFrederick provide a potential user base for NCBI; the Bioinformationist attending this event allowed these users to learn about the resources.

Remote Cytoscape Class

The Event The Bioinformationist taught a Remote Cytoscape class using Adobe Connect. The class included NCBI’s MiMI and MetScape plugins, in addition to several other plugins and the core software

The Location Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Time March 18, 2011 from 2:00pm-3:00pm

The Format Using Adobe Connect, attendees from locations other than Ann Arbor could take the training from a local workstation. Participants were able to ask questions and make comments via text chat.

The Impact 21 people registered for the class and 30 people actually viewed it. The participants were not only from the University of Michigan, but also from North Carolina Central University, Jackson State University, University of Illinois, the National Cancer Institute-Frederick, and Plutonic Research and Knowledge Teams Intl.

This class introduced Cytoscape and its NCBI plugins to potential users in many locations beyond the University of Michigan.

Conclusion

Through each of the above events, the NCI-F Scientific Library Resource Fair, the Remote Cytoscape class, and the MLA CE Course, the Bioinformationist increases the reach and impact of the NCBI tools. As a result of these activities, potential users from many locations outside of the University of Michigan are introduced and trained on NCBI resources. The Bioinformationist hopes to continue offering and attending events and trainings that will further expand the use of these tools, to ensure that researchers from across the country and world know about these valuable tools.

References

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