

Class 02: What is Bioinformatics? (2)

Held: Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Summary: We continue our introduction to bioinformatics by exploring a few of the primary articles on the identification of dinosaur DNA.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: Chapter 1. Asara et al. 2007. Pevzner et al. 2008. Schweitzer et al. 2009..
- Due: Reading response to *Science* articles.

Notes:

- Please fill out the RISC Survey asap.
- For Thursday, do a peer review of two of your colleagues' response papers. (Details to follow in class.)
- We will start the Web exploration in class today and continue it on Thursday. You and your partner(s) should turn in answers to the Web exploration questions next Tuesday.

Overview:

- Dinosaur DNA, revisited.
- What is bioinformatics?, revisited.
- The joys of interdisciplinarity.
- Web exploration.

Dinosaur DNA, revisited

Vida will be leading this discussion. These are a few thoughts, comments, etc., from Sam.

- After reading the primary literature, do you think that the *Wired* article was accurate in its description of the science involved?
- What is the process by which the authors used mass spec. to identify sequences?
 - Is that process novel or well established? How do you know?
- What role does biology play in this process?
- What role does computer science play in this process?
- How much computation is required?
- What are Pevzner's primary criticisms?

What is bioinformatics?, Revisited

- What does the book tell us that bioinformatics is?
- How does that relate to your own perspective on bioinformatics?

The joys of interdisciplinarity

- This course is supposedly *interdisciplinary*. What does that mean?
- Can we be interdisciplinary while preserving the integrity of disciplines?
- Can we be interdisciplinary without deep knowledge of our own field?
- Can we be interdisciplinary without deep knowledge of another field?
- ...
- As we suggested on the first day, Sam and Vida will do our best to model what it means to be a multi-disciplinary team. We both have deep knowledge of our own fields (or so we hope) and shallow knowledge of each other's fields.
 - Will that be enough?
 - How will we cope with the incomplete knowledge?
 - ...

Web Exploration

- Rather than using the Web exploration from the book, we will use our own variant.
- Create a team of three people which includes at least one person who has taken some biology and at least one person who has taken some computer science.
- Your goal is to find out some things about *favism* using some extant bioinformatics data resources, primarily at the National Center for Biotechnology Information, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>.

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