

Class 04: The Central Dogma (1)

Held: Tuesday, 6 September 2011

Summary: We begin to study central issues in molecular biology and the corresponding computational problems.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: Chapter 2.

Notes:

- EC for Gene Gaub's concert, Thursday, 11 a.m.
- For Thursday, Read Chapter 3.
- For next Tuesday, read and respond to Altshul *et al.* 1990.
- A friendly reminder for the FaceBook generation: What appears in the S&B stays on the Web for a long time. Do you want a potential employer or grad school committee to read "My goal is to make out with everyone in this house before the end of the year." (That's better than the alcohol comments that normally appear in house profiles. However,)
- Pick new groups today. New partners. Still mixed background.
- You do not need to turn in a writeup for today's lab or Thursday's lab. You will, however, have to due the on-your-own project (2.65).

Overview:

- Reflection on the Chapter 1 programming lab.
- Basics of the Central Dogma
- Key Processes
- Some Related Issues
- Computational Problems
- Web Exploration

Reflection on Lab 1.4

- Python or Perl?
- Executable or interactive?
- What else did you learn?

The Central Dogma: The Basics

- The title of the chapter is “The Central Dogma”?
 - Do the authors tell us explicitly what the central dogma is?
 - How would you phrase the central dogma?
- The term “The Central Dogma” was coined by Francis Crick
 - You should know who Francis Crick is
 - The central dogma describes information transfer between the three primary sequences we work with
 - He introduced the concept in a 1958 conference paper and revisited it in a 1970 *Nature* paper.
- Crick describes the dogma in this way: “once (sequential) information has passed into the protein, it cannot get out again”
- Crick also breaks the possible types of information transfer into three categories:
 - General transfers, which happen for most kinds of cells:
 - DNA to DNA (replication)
 - DNA to RNA (transcription)
 - RNA to Protein (translation)
 - Special transfer, which happen in a few special cases
 - DNA to protein
 - RNA to RNA
 - RNA to DNA
 - Unknown transfers, which he postulates do not happen
 - Protein to DNA
 - Protein to RNA
 - Protein to Protein
- Interestingly, Crick’s second article on the Central Dogma is immediately followed by an article whose thesis is “Several RNA tumour viruses contain an enzyme that synthesizes a DNA-RNA hybrid using the single stranded viral RNA as template. Hybridization experiments confirm that the DNA strand is complementary to the viral RNA.”
- Do you know any possible exceptions to the “proteins don’t transfer information to any kind of sequence”?

The Key Processes

- Duplication
 - Copying DNA to DNA, e.g., when cells divide
 - Lots of effort to ensure accuracy of copy
 - Not that important right now
- Transcription
 - Copying DNA to RNA
 - Process goes from the 3’ to 5’ of the template strand
 - A lot like DNA pairing, except that U pairs with A.
 - The quick hack: Start with the coding strand, replace all T’s with U’s

- Translation
 - Starts at start codon (AUG)
 - Triplets of nucleotides converted to proteins
 - Stops at stop codon
 - A promoter region gets everything started

Some Related Issues

- Chromosomes: 46 (22 pairs plus two sex chromosomes)
- Inheritance
- Mutation

Computational Problems

- So, what are the interesting computational problems we get from this initial information?
- We can encode transcription and translation
 - What input types?
 - What output types?
- As the initial examples suggest, one interesting problem is to compare two DNA sequences and see how close they are.
 - Allows us to find basic information about mutations.
- A more interesting problem is to look at comparing partial sequences to longer sequences.

Web Exploration

- We're going to try the the Web exploration for Chapter 2.
- Form new groups!
- Please read through all of our lab before beginning.
- Random notes:
 - Stupid tidbit: Sam is likely to have an HBB mutation

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