Class 02: What is Bioinformatics?

Held: Tuesday, 30 August 2011

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

Related Pages:
- EBoard.
- Due: Reading response to Science articles. [RISC survey] Introductory survey..

Notes:
- If you have not done so already, please fill out the [RISC Survey] asap.
- We will start the Web exploration in class today. You should continue it on your own. You and your partner(s) should turn in answers to the Web exploration questions on Thursday.
- No additional readings for Thursday!
- EC for Thursday’s “CS Extra” on HCI for Peace.

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?
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/