



Launch of new Ensembl Genomes and new-look Ensembl website means more genome power at your fingertips

Hinxton, 20 April 2009 – Today sees the release of Ensembl Genomes, a web-based browser that allows anyone to examine the genomes of much of life on earth. Ensembl Genomes is the new younger sibling of the Ensembl genome browser, which opens up the power of Ensembl to non-vertebrate species - plants, fungi, bacteria, metazoa and protists - for the first time.

The genome is at the heart of biology. The Ensembl genome browser, a joint project between the European Molecular Biology Laboratory's European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI) and the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, has been helping researchers studying vertebrate and model organism genomes since 2000. Now five new resources: Ensembl Plants, Ensembl Fungi, Ensembl Bacteria, Ensembl Metazoa and Ensembl Protists, provide an integrated portal to access fully sequenced genomes and related data for the rest of cellular life, including many organisms of medical and agricultural importance.

The launch of Ensembl Genomes gives researchers new ways to explore complex biological interactions between species, because they can now compare different genomes in a common system. For example, researchers studying malaria can now find the malaria and mosquito genomes alongside the genome of the human host.

Paul Kersey, leader of the Ensembl Genomes team at EMBL-EBI said 'In the spirit of Ensembl, the Ensembl Genomes resources provide a free and open source framework for communities of researchers working on non-vertebrate species to handle the influx of genome-scale data already being generated by new high-throughput technologies.'

Access to data held in Ensembl and Ensembl Genomes has been improved by the development of a new user interface, providing faster and more intuitive access to more data. The web code behind the new interface was developed by the Ensembl web team at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute (WTSI). Tim Hubbard, Head of Informatics at WTSI said 'This new Ensembl web interface provides substantial improvements for users and puts the project in an excellent position to support the rest of biology through Ensembl Genomes as well as handle the flood of genome data from next-generation sequencing platforms'. The latest Ensembl developments have also seen the creation of a fully-functional mirror of the Ensembl website, which receives nearly 500,000 hits per day, to provide improved service to users from the US and the Pacific Rim. ●

Ensembl Genomes: www.ensemblgenomes.org/

Ensembl: www.ensembl.org

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About EMBL-EBI:

The European Bioinformatics Institute (EBI) is part of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) and is located on the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus in Hinxton near Cambridge (UK). The EBI grew out of EMBL's pioneering work in providing public biological databases to the research community. It hosts some of the world's most important collections of biological data, including DNA sequences (EMBL-Bank), protein sequences (UniProt), animal genomes (Ensembl), three-dimensional structures (the Macromolecular Structure Database), data from microarray experiments (ArrayExpress), protein-protein interactions (IntAct) and pathway information (Reactome). The EBI hosts several research groups and its scientists continually develop new tools for the biocomputing community.

About EMBL:

The European Molecular Biology Laboratory is a basic research institute funded by public research monies from 20 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and associate member state Australia. Research at EMBL is conducted by approximately 80 independent groups covering the spectrum of molecular biology. The Laboratory has five units: the main Laboratory in Heidelberg, and Outstations in Hinxton (the European Bioinformatics Institute), Grenoble, Hamburg, and Monterotondo near Rome. The cornerstones of EMBL's mission are: to perform basic research in molecular biology; to train scientists, students and visitors at all levels; to offer vital services to scientists in the member states; to develop new instruments and methods in the life sciences and to actively engage in technology transfer activities. EMBL's International PhD Programme has a student body of about 170. The Laboratory also sponsors an active Science and Society programme. Visitors from the press and public are welcome. www.embl.org

About the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute:

The Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, which receives the majority of its funding from the Wellcome Trust, was founded in 1992. The Institute is responsible for the completion of the sequence of approximately one-third of the human genome as well as genomes of model organisms and more than 90 pathogen genomes. In October 2006, new funding was awarded by the Wellcome Trust to exploit the wealth of genome data now available to answer important questions about health and disease.

<http://www.sanger.ac.uk>

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