



The first public nucleotide sequence database turns 25

Hinxton, 22 May 2007 – Today EMBL-Bank, the nucleotide sequence database of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), celebrates its 25th anniversary. It was the world's earliest public database of DNA and RNA sequences and remains Europe's primary nucleotide sequence resource. The database is maintained by EMBL's European Bioinformatics Institute in Hinxton (UK) in collaboration with its US and Japanese counterparts GenBank and the DNA Databank of Japan.

EBI Associate Director Graham Cameron commented: "In the early days, databases were an adjunct to scientific publications and sequences were transcribed from the literature. Times have moved on. The databases are now the primary record for high-throughput science. We and our partners in Japan and the USA are custo-

dians of that record, and proud of the long-standing collaboration which has kept all of the data available to scientists worldwide."

Over the years EMBL-Bank has grown exponentially and currently contains over 96 million entries corresponding to 170 gigabases of sequence from over 280,000 organisms. New sequences are submitted at a rate of more than one sequence every two seconds and the database receives millions of accesses every day. Today, half an hour at the computer can suggest a function for a new gene — a task that might previously have occupied a researcher for a year. In future, connections to diverse data from new high-throughput methods will help create an information space crucial to interdisciplinary systems biology. ●

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About EMBL:

The European Molecular Biology Laboratory is a basic research institute funded by public research monies from 19 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). 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.

About 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 bio-computing community.

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