

Introduction

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The 20th anniversary of EMBnet: 20 years of bioinformatics for the Life Sciences community

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Abstract

The EMBnet Conference 2008, focusing on 'Leading Applications and Technologies in Bioinformatics', was organized by the European Molecular Biology network (EMBnet) to celebrate its 20th anniversary. Since its foundation in 1988, EMBnet has been working to promote collaborative development of bioinformatics services and tools to serve the European community of molecular biology laboratories. This conference was the first meeting organized by the network that was open to the international scientific community outside EMBnet. The conference covered a broad range of research topics in bioinformatics with a main focus on new achievements and trends in emerging technologies supporting genomics, transcriptomics and proteomics analyses such as high-throughput sequencing and data managing, text and data-mining, ontologies and Grid technologies. Papers selected for publication, in this supplement to *BMC Bioinformatics*, cover a broad range of the topics treated, providing also an overview of the main bioinformatics research fields that the EMBnet community is involved in.

EMBnet history, mission and activities

EMBnet was established in 1988 as an initiative of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) [1]. At that time, high-speed data communication across Europe as well as bioinformatics were in their infancy. The EMBL was accumulating an ever-growing quantity of sequence

data and both the molecular biology and the biotechnology research communities needed to have an easy and fast access to those data. Accessing a remote computer using an ordinary command-line oriented terminal was not enough. The solution for eliminating communication delays could only be found in a distribution of data and