

CS2220: Introduction to Computational Biology

Sequence Database Search

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Outline

Popular tools for fast
database search

FASTA

BLAST

Pattern Hunter, ...

Cautionary tales

Compare T with seqs of
known function in a db

Poor Sequence Alignment

- Poor seq alignment shows few matched positions
⇒ The two proteins are not likely to be homologous

Alignment by FASTA of the sequences of amicyanin and domain 1 of
ascorbate oxidase

```
Amicyanin      60      70      80      90     100
MPHNVHFVAGVLGEAALKGPMHKKQAYSLSPTTEAGTYDYHCTPHFMRGKVVI
Ascorbate Oxidase ILQGGTPWADGTASISQCAINPGETFFYNFTVDNPGTFFYHGLGMRQSAGLYG
                  70      80      90     100     110
```

No obvious match between
Amicyanin and Ascorbate Oxidase

Discard this function
as a candidate

Good Sequence Alignment

- Good alignment usually has clusters of
extensive matched positions
⇒ The two proteins are likely to be homologous

```
>gi113476732|ref|NP_108301.1| unknown protein [Mesorhizobium loti]
gi114027493|db|BAE53762.1| unknown protein [Mesorhizobium loti]
Length = 105

Score = 105 bits (262), Expect = 1e-22
Identities = 61/106 (57%), Positives = 73/106 (68%), Gaps = 1/106 (0%)

Query: 1 MKPRLASIALATIFLPMAVFARAATIEITMENLVISFIEVSAAKVDITRFVNRQVFAHT 60
       MK G L ++ MA PA AATIE+T++ LV SP V AKVGDIT WVN DV AHT
Sbjct: 1 MKAGALIRLSVLAALALMAFAAAATIEVTIDKLVSFATVEAKVDITIEVNRQVFAHT 60
```

good match between
Amicyanin and unknown *M. loti* protein

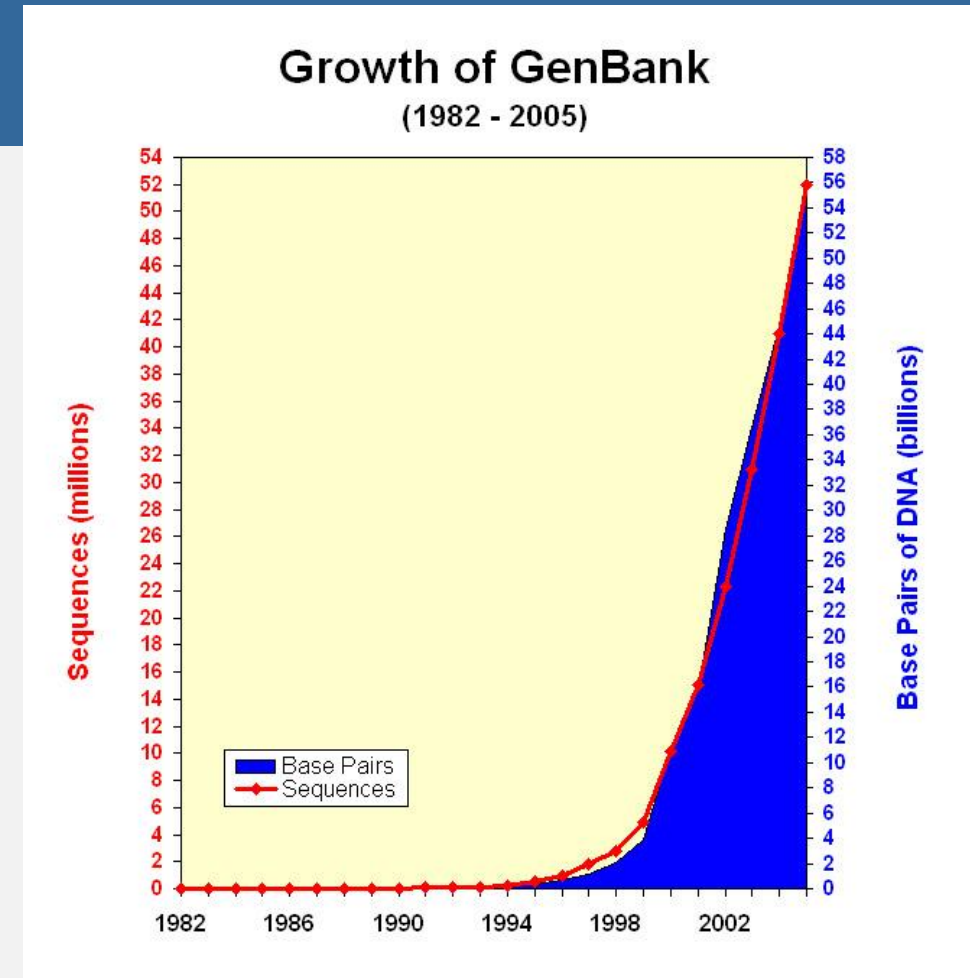
Assign to T same
function as homologs

Confirm with suitable
wet experiments

Scaling challenge

Increasing # of sequenced genomes: yeast, human, rice, mouse, fly, ...

S/w must be “linearly” scalable to large datasets



Performance of a search algorithm

Sensitivity

Ability to detect “true positive”

Measured as the probability of finding the match given the query and the database sequence has only $x\%$ similarity

Specificity

Ability to reject “false positive”

A good search algorithm should be both sensitive and specific

Need heuristics for sequence comparison

Time complexity for optimal alignment is $O(n^2)$, where n is sequence length

Given current size of sequence databases, use of optimal algorithms is not practical for database search

Heuristic techniques:

BLAST

FASTA

Pattern Hunter

MUMmer, ...

Speed up:

20 min (optimal alignment)

2 min (FASTA)

20 sec (BLAST)

Basic idea: Indexing & filtering

Good alignment includes short identical, or similar fragments, so ...

Break entire string into substrings, index the substrings

Search for matching short substrings and use as seed for further analysis

Extend to entire string find the most significant local alignment segment

FASTA

Overview of FASTA

Fast sequence search

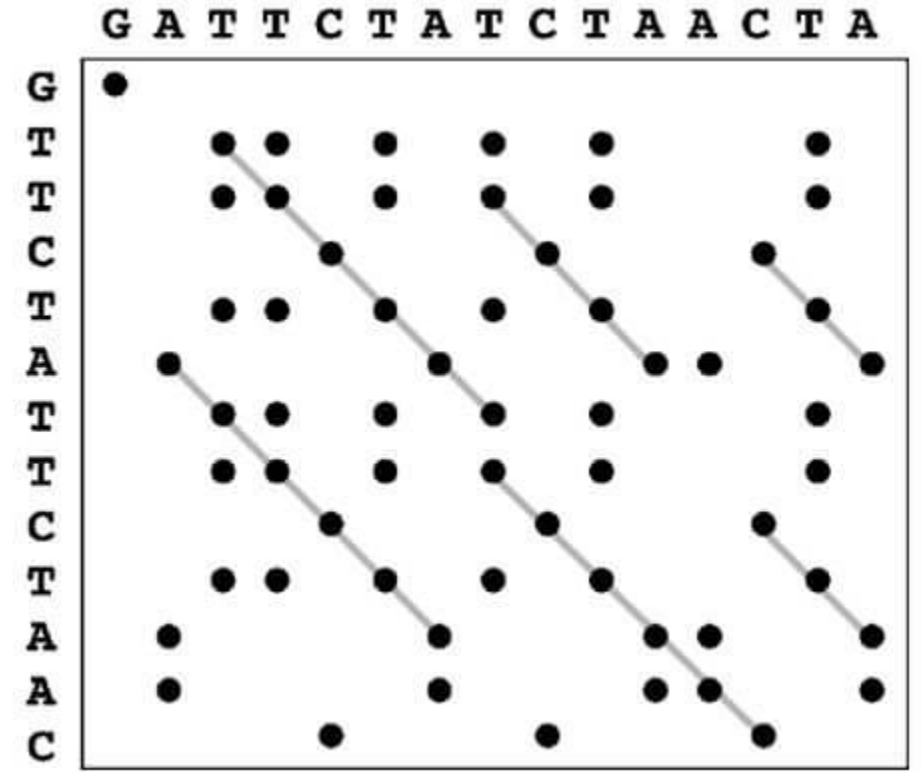
Based on dotplot

Identify identical words (k-tuples)

Search significant diagonals

Use PAM 250 for further refinement

Dynamic programming for narrow region



Dotplot: For a simple visual representation of the similarity between two sequences, individual cells in the matrix can be shaded black if residues are identical, so that matching sequence segments appear as runs of diagonal lines across the matrix.

FASTA algorithm

Divide query sequence into its constituent overlapping words (ktup) of length k ; default: 2 for proteins and 6 for nucleic acids

Each sequence in the database is also broken up in the same way

Two word lists are compared to find all identical words in both sequences

CTGCACTA
CTG
TGC
GCA
etc.

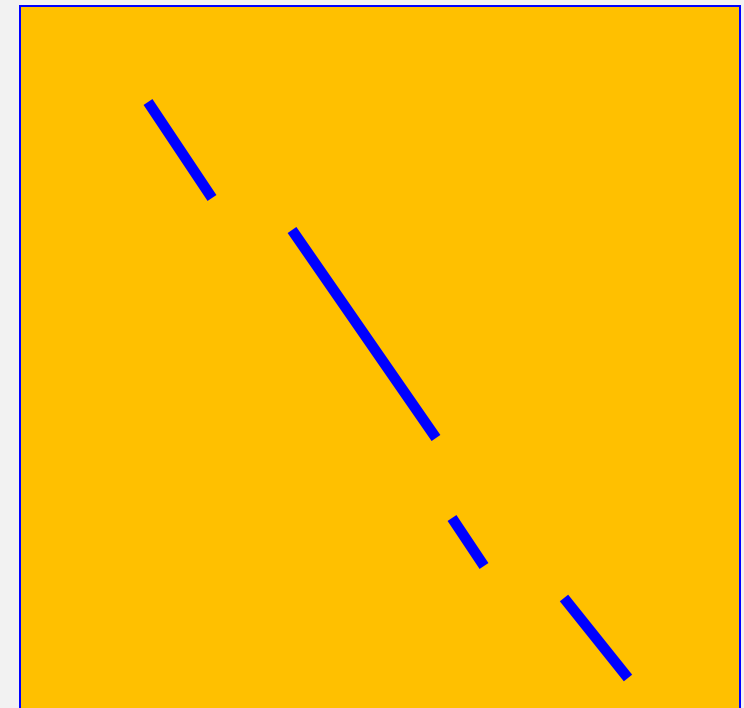
AGCTGACGCA
CTG
GCA

FASTA algorithm, cont'd

Ktup matches can be depicted in a matrix; diagonals indicate matches

For every library sequence, the 10 best diagonals are constructed from the ktup matches using a distance formula

The top 10 diagonals are rescored using substitution matrices; each of these rescored diagonals is called an initial region



FASTA, further cont'd

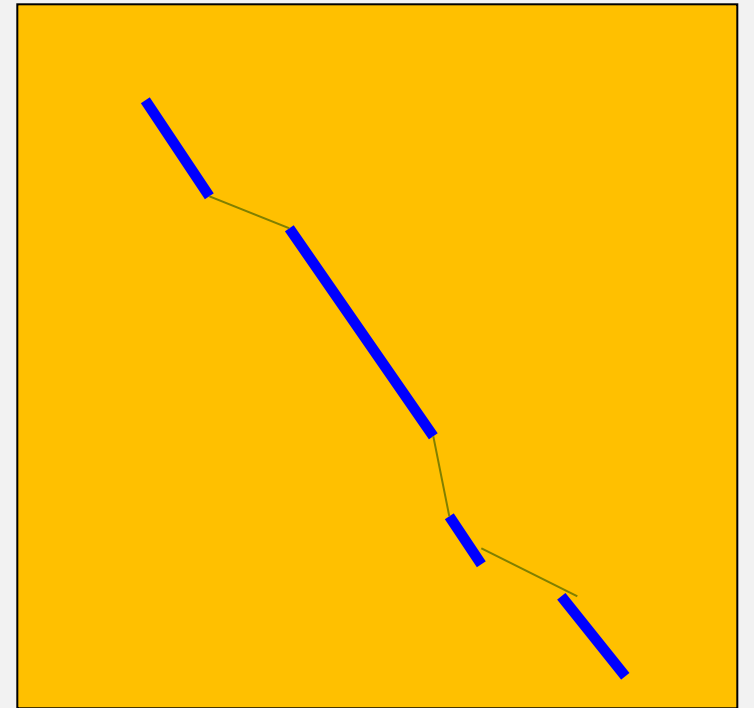
Initial regions are joined with a joining penalty (similar to a gap penalty)

The highest joined score defines the library sequence's score

Library sequences are ranked by this score

If the score is high, a Smith–Waterman alignment is run in the same dot-plot region using the same window

The resulting score is reported as the optimal score



BLAST

Overview of BLAST

Similarity matching of words

3 aa's, 11 bases

No need identical words

If no words are similar

No alignment

Won't find matches for very short sequences

Altschul et al, *JMB* 215:403-410, 1990

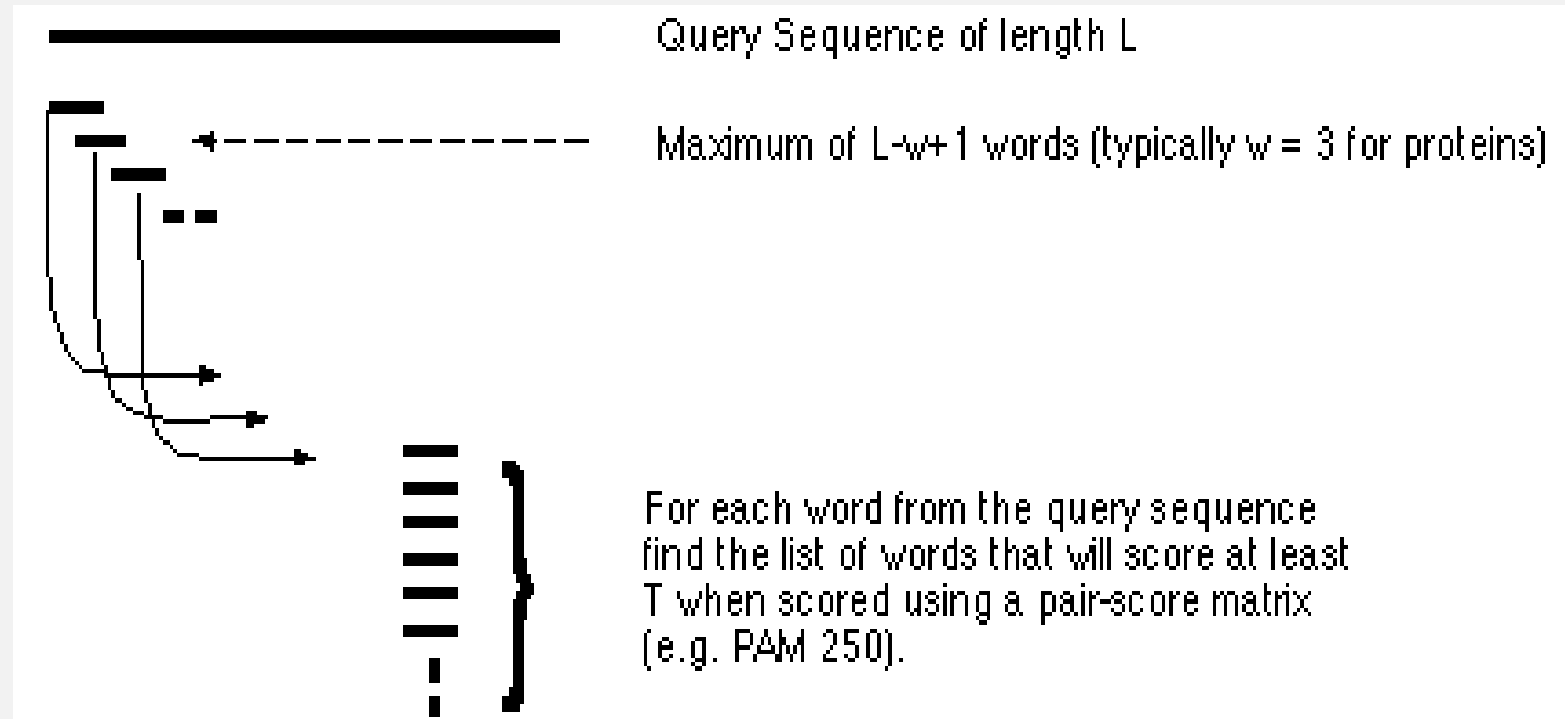
MSP: Highest scoring pair of segments of identical length. A segment pair is locally maximal if it cannot be improved by extending or shortening the segments

Find alignments w/ optimal max segment pair (MSP) score

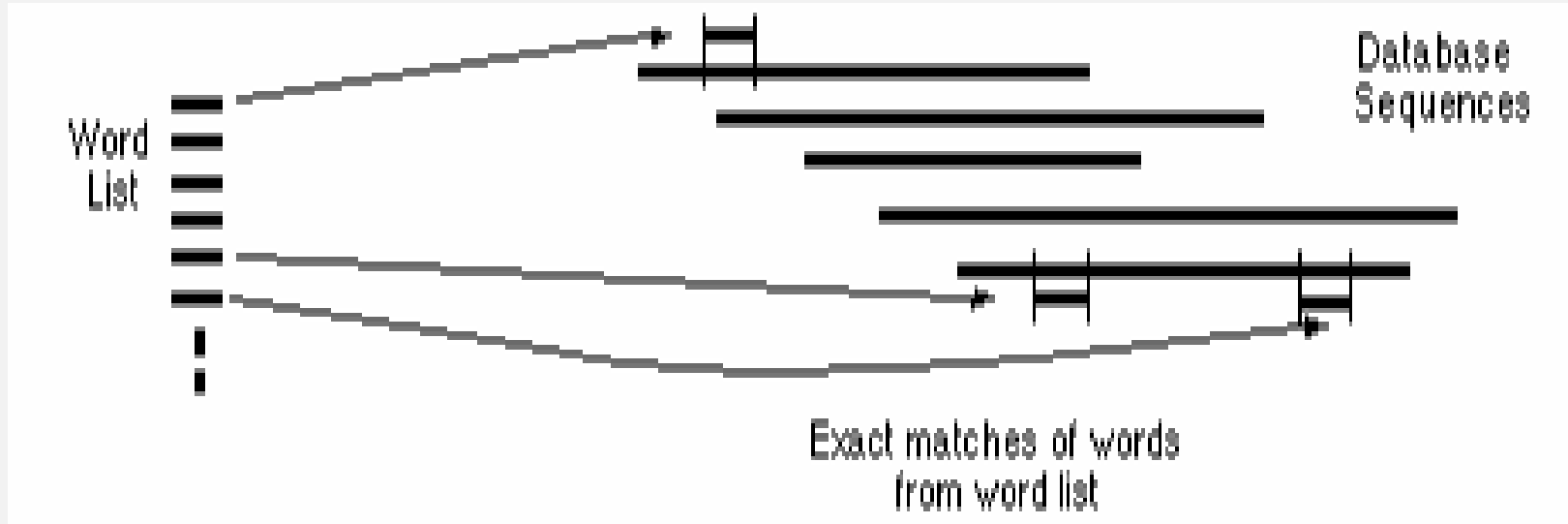
Gaps not allowed

Homologous seqs will contain a MSP w/ a high score; others will be filtered out

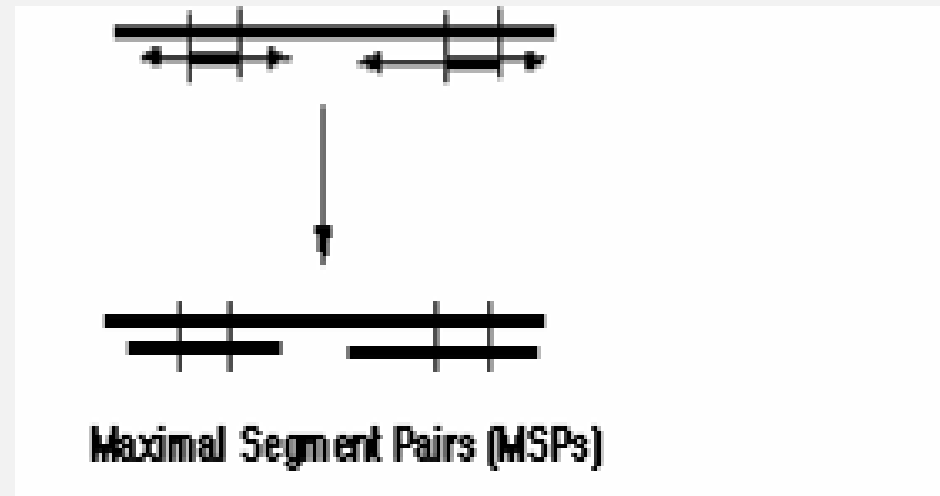
Step 1 of BLAST: For the query, find the list of high scoring words of length w



Step 2 of BLAST: Compare word list to db & find exact matches



Step 3 of BLAST: For each word match, extend alignment in both directions to find alignment that score greater than a threshold s



Exercise

Is BLAST generally more sensitive and more efficient than FASTA? Why?

Spaced seeds

Spaced seeds

111010010100110111 is an example of a spaced seed model with
11 required matches (weight=11)
7 “don’t care” positions

```
GAGTACTCAACACCAACATTAGTGGCAATGGAAAAT...
|| ||||| ||||| || ||||| |||||
GAATACTCAACAGCAACACTAATGGCAGCAGAAAAT...
111010010100110111
```

11111111111 is the BLAST seed model for comparing DNA seqs

Observations on spaced seeds

Seed models w/ different shapes can detect different homologies

3rd base in a codon “wobbles” so a seed like 110110110... should be more sensitive when matching coding regions

Some models detect more homologies

More sensitive homology search

PatternHunter I

Use >1 seed models to hit more homologies

Approaching 100% sensitive homology search

PatternHunter II

PatternHunter I

BLAST's seed usually uses more than one hits to detect one homology

⇒ Wasteful

```
TTGACCTCACC?  
| | | | | | | | | ?  
TTGACCTCACC?  
111111111111  
  111111111111
```

1/4 chances to have 2nd hit
next to the 1st hit

Spaced seeds uses fewer hits to detect one homology

⇒ Efficient

```
CAA?A??A?C??TA?TGG?  
| | | ? | ?? | ? | ?? | | ? | | ?  
CAA?A??A?C??TA?TGG?  
111010010100110111  
  111010010100110111
```

1/4⁶ chances to have 2nd hit
next to the 1st hit

Proposition

The expected number of hits of a weight- W length- M model within a length- L region of similarity p is $(L - M + 1) * p^W$

Proof:

For any fixed position, the prob of a hit is p^W

There are $L - M + 1$ candidate positions

The proposition follows

Implication

PatternHunter I
Ma et al., *Bioinformatics* 18:440-445, 2002

- BLAST's seed usually uses more than one hits to detect one homology
⇒ Wasteful
- Spaced seeds uses fewer hits to detect one homology
⇒ Efficient

TTGACCTCACC?
|||||
TTGACCTCACC?
1111111111
1111111111

1/4 chances to have 2nd hit next to the 1st hit

CAA?A??A?C??TA?TGG?
|||?|??|?|??|?|?
CAA?A??A?C??TA?TGG?
111010010100110111
111010010100110111

1/4⁶ chances to have 2nd hit next to the 1st hit

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PatternHunter I
Ma et al., *Bioinformatics* 18:440-445, 2002

Proposition. The expected number of hits of a weight- W length- M model within a length- L region of similarity p is $(L - M + 1) * p^W$

Proof. For any fixed position, the prob of a hit is p^W . There are $L - M + 1$ positions. The proposition follows.

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For $L = 1017$

*BLAST seed expects $(1017 - 11 + 1) * p^{11} = 1007 * p^{11}$ hits*

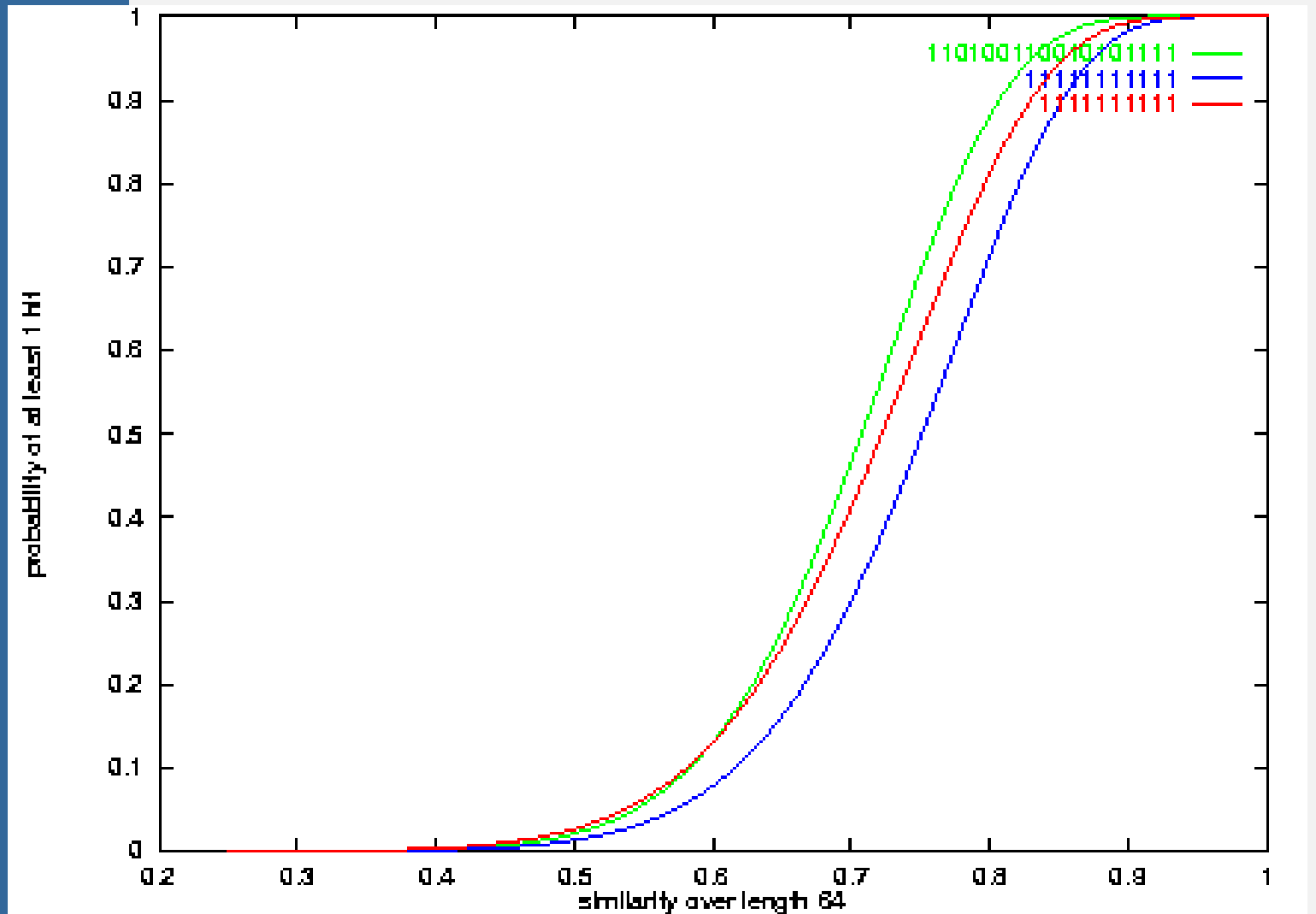
*But ~1/4 of these overlap each other. So likely to have only $\sim 750 * p^{11}$ distinct hits*

*Our example spaced seed expects $(1017 - 18 + 1) * p^{11} = 1000 * p^{11}$ hits*

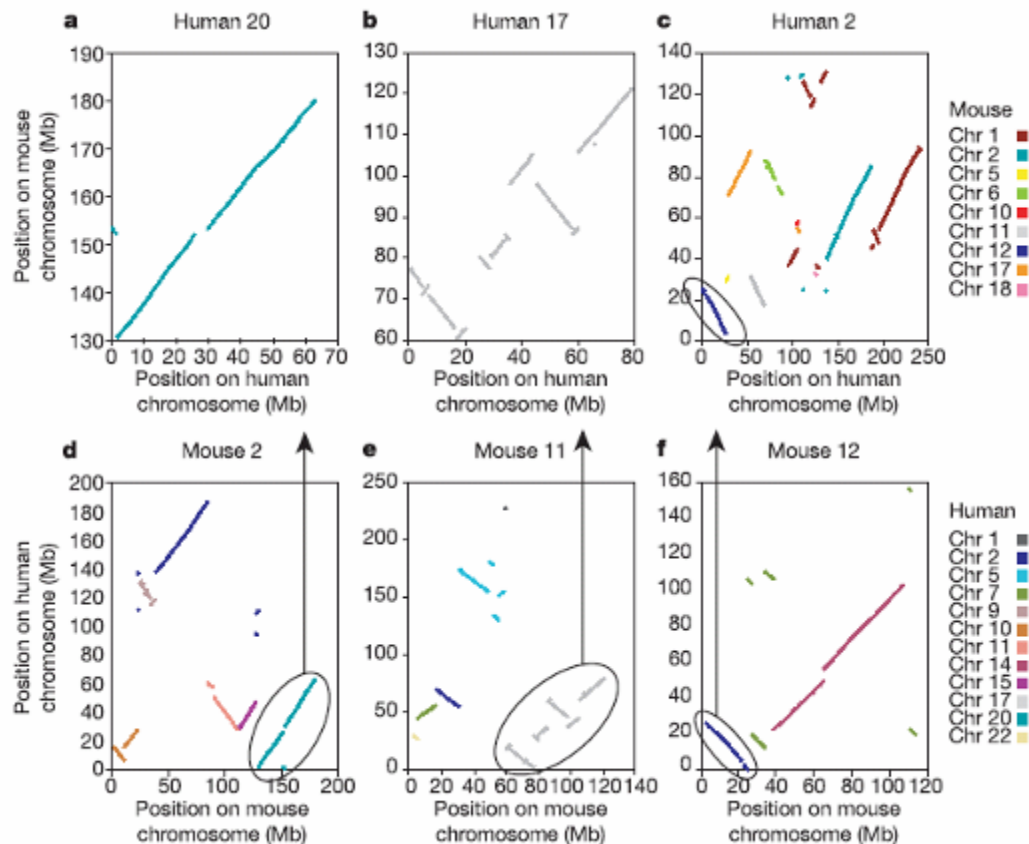
*But only 1/4⁶ of these overlap each other. So likely to have $\sim 1000 * p^{11}$ distinct hits*

Spaced seeds likely to be more sensitive & more efficient

Sensitivity of PatternHunter I



Speed of PatternHunter I



Mouse Genome Consortium used PatternHunter to compare mouse genome & human genome

PatternHunter did the job in a 20 CPU-days ---it would have taken BLAST 20 CPU-years!

How to increase sensitivity?

Ways to increase sensitivity:

“Optimal” seed

Reduce weight by 1

Increase number of spaced seeds by 1

Intuitively, for DNA sequences,

Reducing weight by 1 will increase number of matches 4 folds

Doubling number of seeds will increase number of matches 2 folds

Exercise

Is it better to use two spaced seeds or a reduced weight spaced seed?

PatternHunter II

Idea

Select a group of spaced seed models

For each hit of each model, conduct extension to find a homology

Selecting optimal multiple seeds is NP-hard

Li et al, *GIW 2003*, pp. 164-175

See also Ilie & Ilie, "Multiple spaced seeds for homology search", *Bioinformatics*, 23(22):2969-2977, 2007

Algo to select multiple spaced seeds

Let A be an empty set

Let s be the seed such that $A \cup \{s\}$ has the highest hit probability

$A = A \cup \{s\}$

Repeat until $|A| = K$

Computing hit probability of multiple seeds is NP-hard

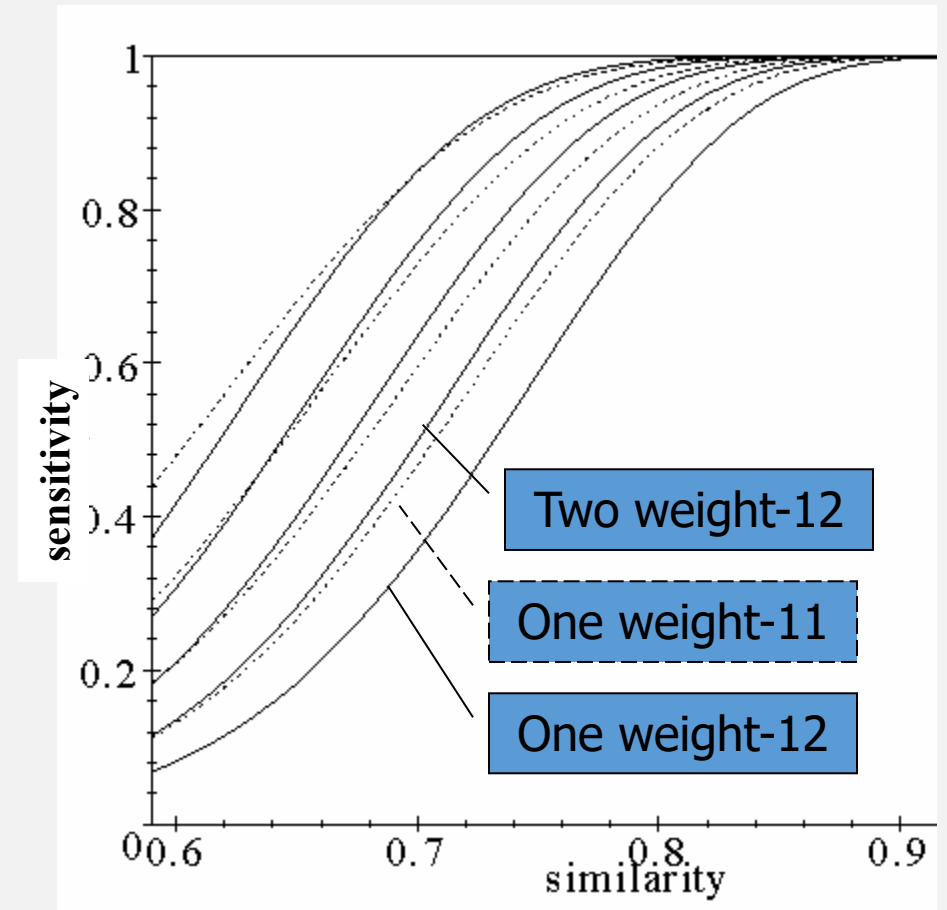
Sensitivity of PatternHunter II

Solid curves: Multiple (1, 2, 4, 8, 16) weight-12 spaced seeds

Dashed curves: Optimal spaced seeds with weight = 11, 10, 9, 8

⇒ “Double the seed number” gains better sensitivity than “decrease the weight by 1”

Image credit: Bin Ma



Expts on real data

30k mouse ESTs (25Mb) vs 4k human ESTs (3Mb)

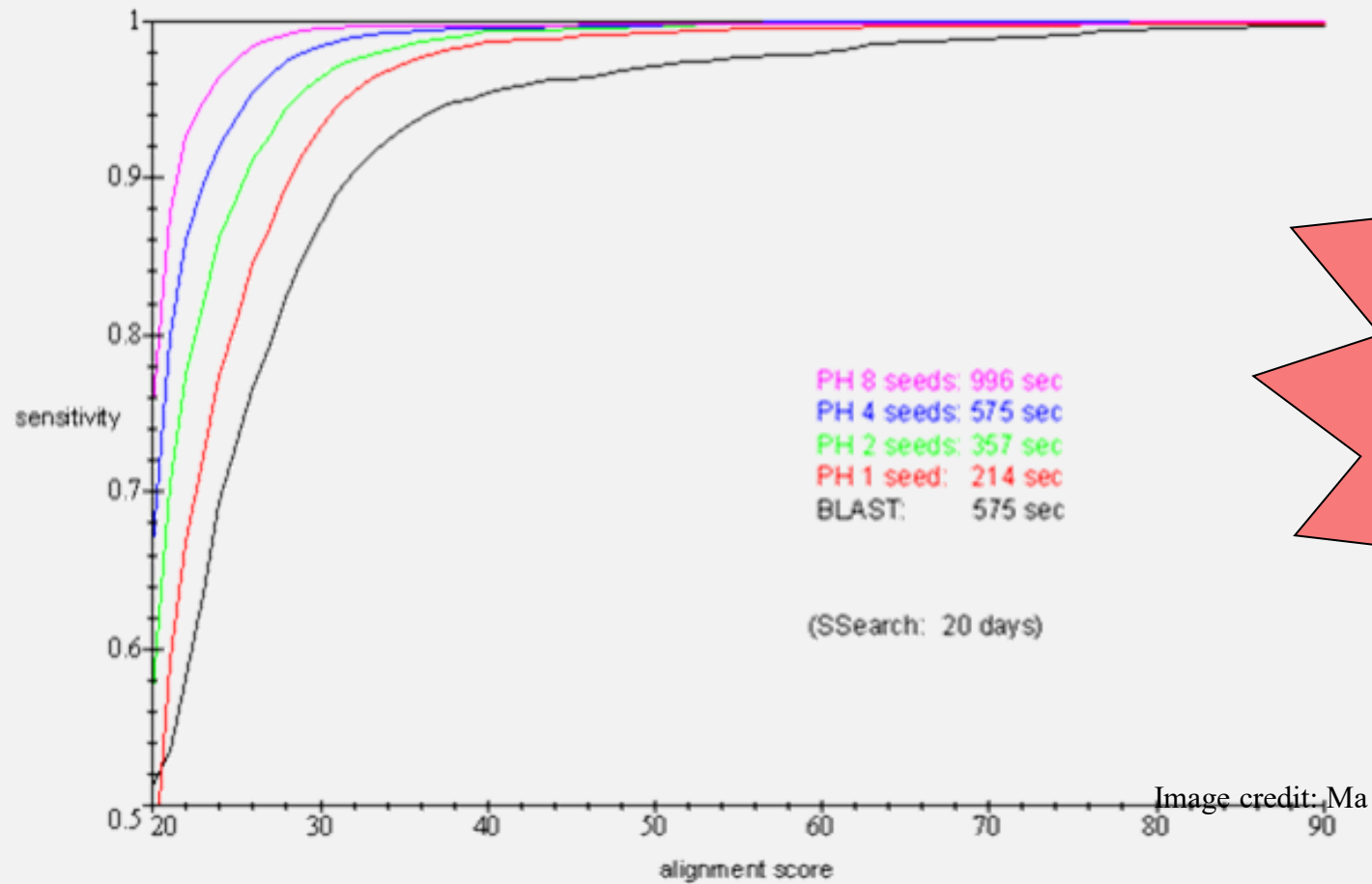
Downloaded from NCBI genbank

“Low complexity” regions filtered out

SSearch (Smith-Waterman method) finds “all” pairs of ESTs with significant local alignments

Check how many percent of these pairs can be “found” by BLAST and different configurations of PatternHunter II

Results



Farewell to Supercomputer Age of sequence comparison!

Computer: PIII 700Mhz Redhat 7.1, 1G main memory

Sequence Length	Blastn	PatternHunter
816k vs 580k	47 sec	9 sec
4639k vs 1830k	716 sec	44 sec
20M vs 18M	out of memory	13 min

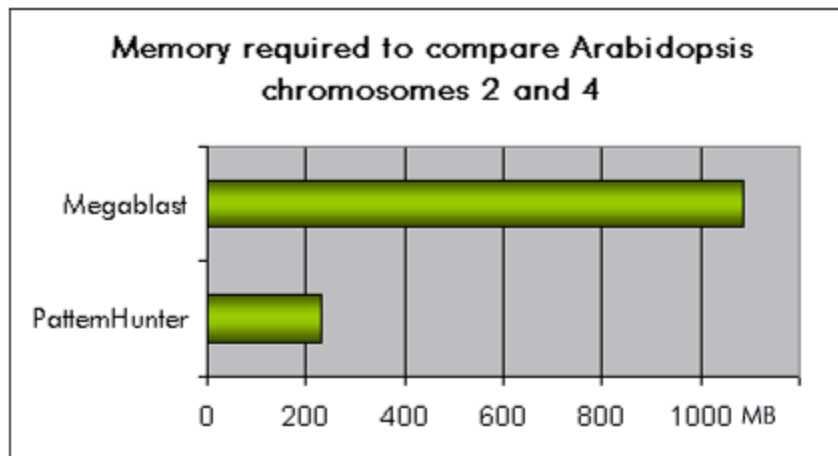
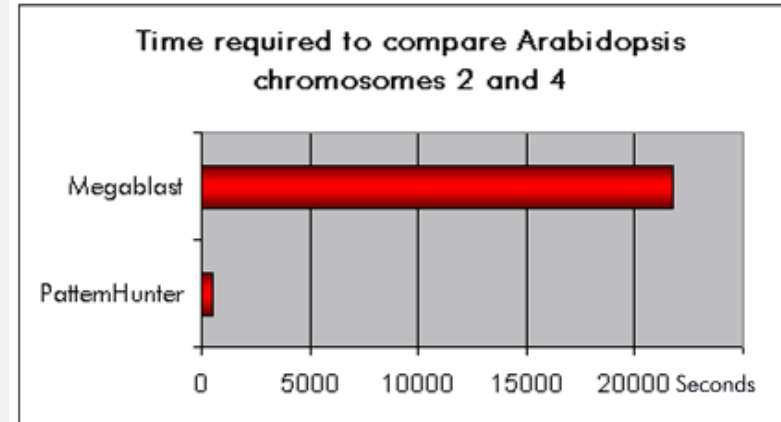
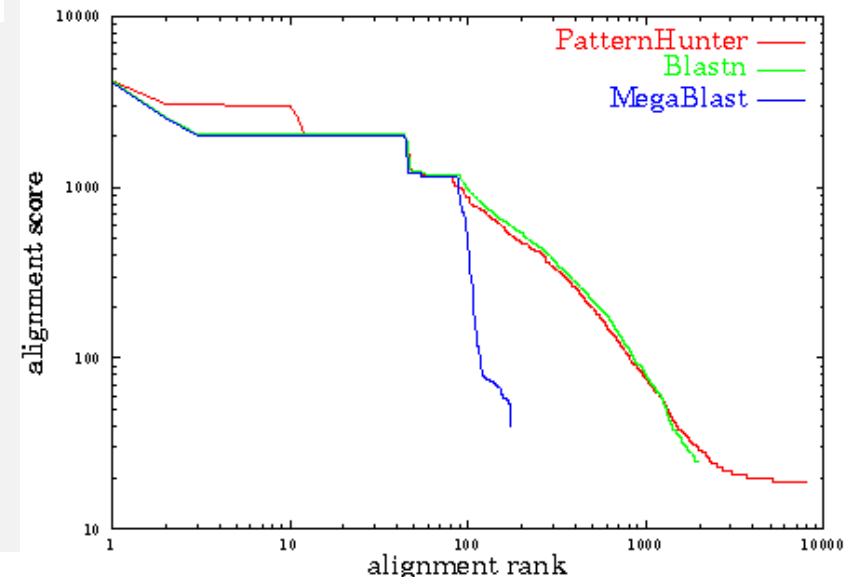


Image credit: Bioinformatics Solutions Inc



About the inventor: Ming Li

Ming Li

University Professor, Univ of Waterloo

Fellow, Royal Society of Canada

Fellow, ACM

Fellow, IEEE



Cautionary tales

Guilt by association

Compare T with seqs of known function in a db

Poor Sequence Alignment

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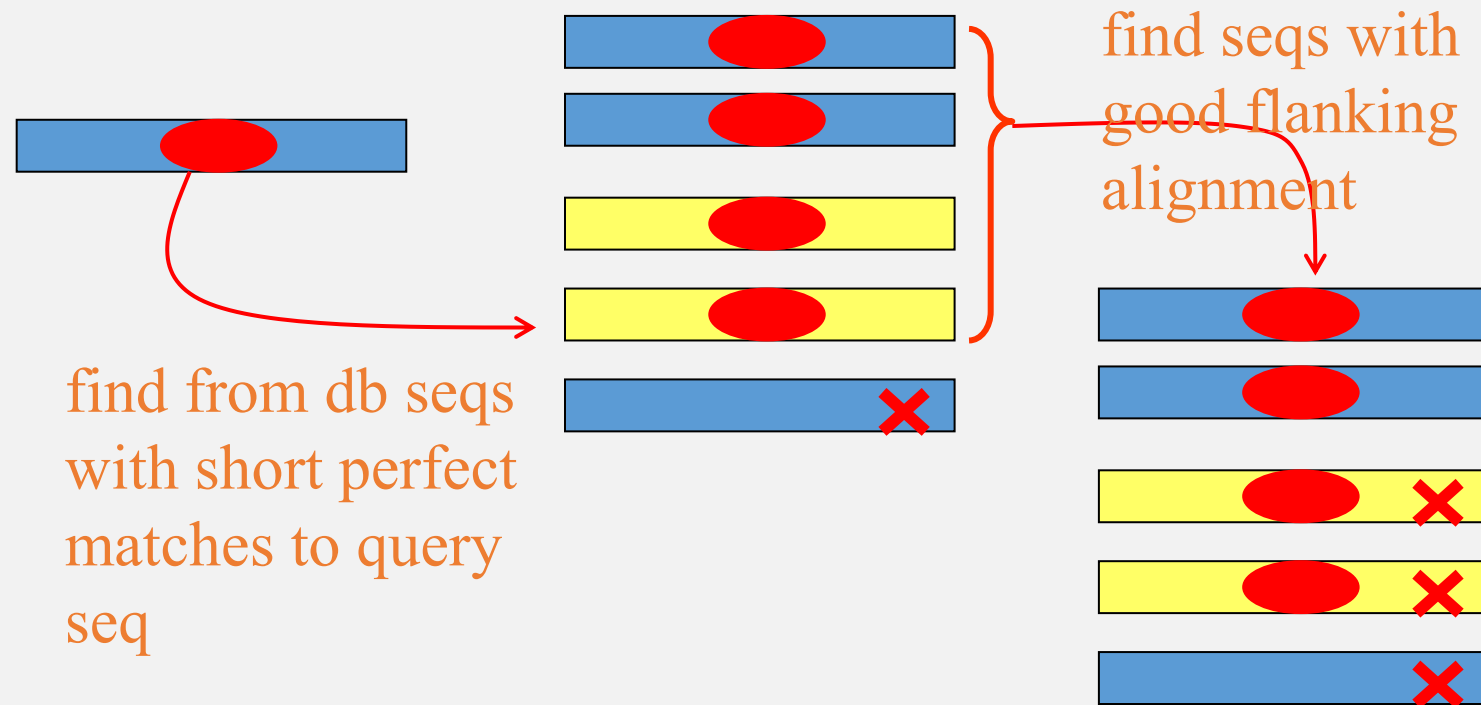
Query: 1 MKPORLASIALAIIFLPMVFAHAATIEITMENLVISFTEVSAKVVDITKPVNKDVFAHT 60
      MK G L ++ MA PA AATIE+T++ LV SP Y AKVGDIT VVN DV AHT
Sbjct: 1 MKAGALIRLSVLAALALMAAPAAAATIEVTIDKLVFSPATVEAKVVDITKPVNKDVFAHT 60
```

good match between
Amicyanin and unknown M. loti protein

Assign to T same
function as homologs

Confirm with suitable
wet experiments

BLAST is one of the most popular tool for doing “guilt-by-association” sequence homology search



Homologs obtained by BLAST for a query sequence

Sequences producing significant alignments:		Score (bits)	E Value
gi 14193729 gb AAK56109.1 AF332081.1	protein tyrosin phosph...	621 L	e-177
gi 126467 sp P18433 PTRA_HUMAN	Protein-tyrosine phosphatase...	621 L	e-177
gi 4506303 ref NP_002827.1 	protein tyrosine phosphatase, r...	621 L	e-176
gi 227294 prf 1701300A	protein Tyr phosphatase	620	e-176
gi 18450369 ref NP_543030.1 	protein tyrosine phosphatase, ...	621 L	e-176
gi 32067 emb CAA37447.1 	tyrosine phosphatase precursor [Ho...	611 L	e-176
gi 285113 pir JC1285	protein-tyrosine-phosphatase (EC 3.1....	619	e-176
gi 6981446 ref NP_036895.1 	protein tyrosine phosphatase, r...	611 L	e-176
gi 2098414 pdb 1YFO A	Chain A, Receptor Protein Tyrosine Ph...	611 S	e-174
gi 32313 emb CAA38662.1 	protein-tyrosine phosphatase [Homo...	611 L	e-174
gi 450583 gb AAB04150.1 	protein tyrosine phosphatase >gi 4...	605	e-172
gi 6679557 ref NP_033006.1 	protein tyrosine phosphatase, r...	601 L	e-172
gi 483922 gb AAA17990.1 	protein tyrosine phosphatase alpha	599	e-170

Thus, the query sequence could be a protein tyrosine phosphatase α (PTP α)

Example alignment with PTP α

Score = 632 bits (1629), Expect = e-180
Identities = 294/302 (97%), Positives = 294/302 (97%)

```
Query: 1  SPSTNRKYPPLPVDKLEEE INRRMADDNKLFREEFNALPACPIQATCEAASXXXXXXXXR 60
          SPSTNRKYPPLPVDKLEEE INRRMADDNKLFREEFNALPACPIQATCEAAS      R
Sbjct: 202 SPSTNRKYPPLPVDKLEEE INRRMADDNKLFREEFNALPACPIQATCEAASKEENKEKNR 261

Query: 61  YVNILPYDHSRVHLTPVEGVPSDYINASFINGYQEKKNFIAAQGPKEETVNDFWRMIWE 120
          YVNILPYDHSRVHLTPVEGVPSDYINASFINGYQEKKNFIAAQGPKEETVNDFWRMIWE
Sbjct: 262 YVNILPYDHSRVHLTPVEGVPSDYINASFINGYQEKKNFIAAQGPKEETVNDFWRMIWE 321

Query: 121  QNTATIVMVTNLKERKECKCAQYWPDQGCWTYGNVRVSVEDVTVLVDYTVRKFCIQQVGD 180
          QNTATIVMVTNLKERKECKCAQYWPDQGCWTYGNVRVSVEDVTVLVDYTVRKFCIQQVGD
Sbjct: 322 QNTATIVMVTNLKERKECKCAQYWPDQGCWTYGNVRVSVEDVTVLVDYTVRKFCIQQVGD 381

Query: 181  VTNRKPQRLITQFHFTSWPDFGVPFTP IGMLKFLKKVKACNPQYAGAI VVHCSAGVGRTG 240
          VTNRKPQRLITQFHFTSWPDFGVPFTP IGMLKFLKKVKACNPQYAGAI VVHCSAGVGRTG
Sbjct: 382 VTNRKPQRLITQFHFTSWPDFGVPFTP IGMLKFLKKVKACNPQYAGAI VVHCSAGVGRTG 441

Query: 241  TFVVIDAMLDMOHSEKVKDVYGFVSRIRAQRCQM VQTD MQYVF IYQALLEHYLYGDTELE 300
          TFVVIDAMLDMOHSEKVKDVYGFVSRIRAQRCQM VQTD MQYVF IYQALLEHYLYGDTELE
Sbjct: 442 TFVVIDAMLDMOHSEKVKDVYGFVSRIRAQRCQM VQTD MQYVF IYQALLEHYLYGDTELE 501
```

Guilt by association: Caveats

Ensure that the effect of database size has been accounted for

Ensure that the function of the homolog is not derived via invalid “transitive assignment”

Ensure that the target sequence has all the key features associated with the function, e.g., active site and/or domain

Law of large numbers

Suppose you are in a room with 365 other people

Q: What is the prob that a specific person in the room has the same birthday as you?

A: $1/365 = 0.3\%$

Q: What is the prob that there is a person in the room having the same birthday as you?

A: $1 - (364/365)^{365} = 63\%$

Q: What is the prob that there are two persons in the room having the same birthday?

A: 100%

Interpretation of P-value

Seq. comparison progs, e.g. BLAST, often associate a P-value to each hit

P-value is interpreted as prob that a random seq has an equally good alignment

Note: $P = 1 - e^{-E}$

Suppose the P-value of an alignment is 10^{-6}

If database has 10^7 seqs, then you expect $10^7 * 10^{-6} = 10$ seqs in it that give an equally good alignment

⇒ Correct for database size if your seq comparison prog does not

Lightning does strike twice!

Roy Sullivan, a former park ranger, was struck by lightning 7 times

1942 (lost big-toe nail)

1969 (lost eyebrows)

1970 (left shoulder seared)

1972 (hair set on fire)

1973 (hair set on fire & legs seared)

1976 (ankle injured)

1977 (chest & stomach burned)

September 1983, he committed suicide



Cartoon: Ron Hipschman
Data: David Hand

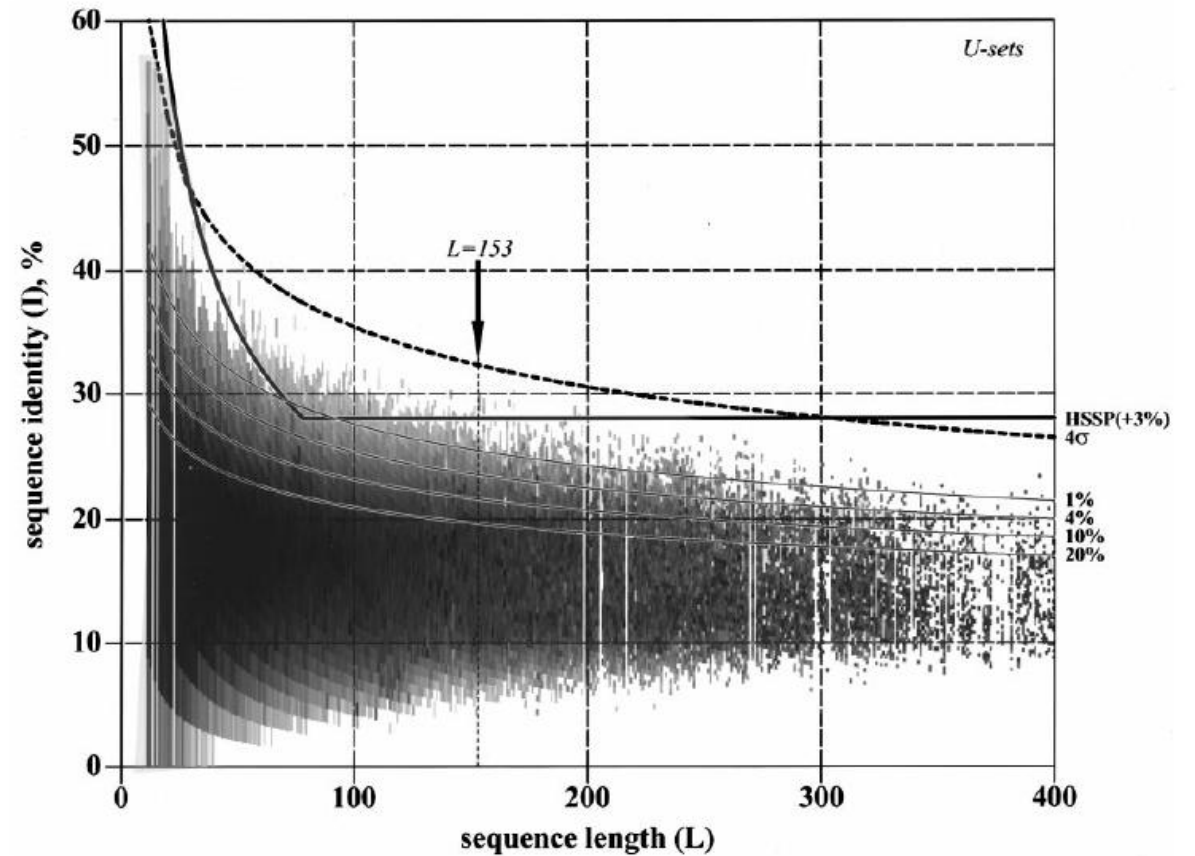
Exercise

One fourth of all residues in protein sequences occur in regions with biased amino acid composition

What happens when you align protein sequences containing biased amino acid composition?

What should you do about this?

Effect of sequence length

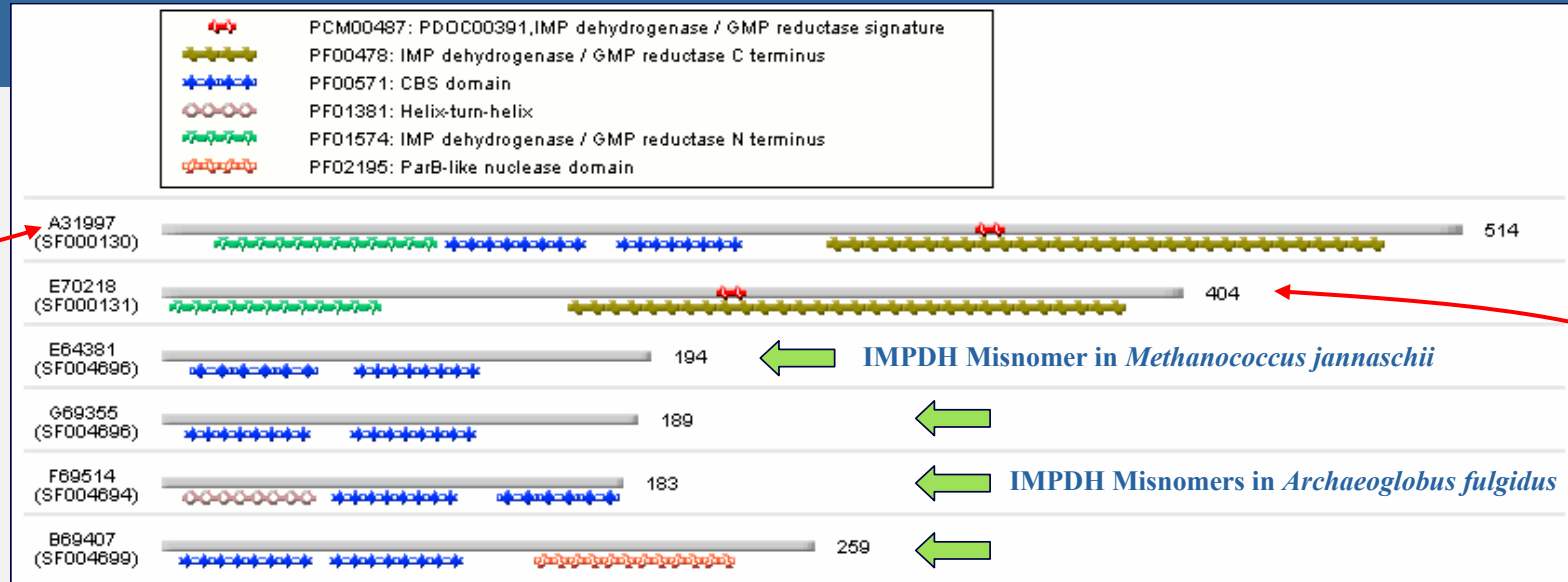


Abagyan RA, Batalov S. Do aligned sequences share the same fold? J Mol Biol. 1997 Oct 17;273(1):355-68

IMP dehydrogenases (IMPDH)

18 entries were found				
ID	Organism	PIR	Swiss-Prot/TrEMBL	RefSeq/GenPept
NF00181857	Methanococcus jannaschii	E64381 conserved hypothetical protein MJ0653	Y653_METJA Hypothetical protein MJ0653	g1592300 inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB) NP_247637 inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB)
NF00187788	Archaeoglobus fulgidus	G69355 MJ0653 homolog AF0847 <i>ALT_NAMES</i> : inosine-monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-1) homolog [misnomer]	O29411 INOSINE MONOPHOSPHATE DEHYDROGENASE (GUAB-1)	g2649754 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-1) NP_069681 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-1)
NF00188267	Archaeoglobus fulgidus	F69514 yhcV homolog 2 <i>ALT_NAMES</i> : inosine-monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2) homolog [misnomer]	O28162 INOSINE MONOPHOSPHATE DEHYDROGENASE (GUAB-2)	g2648410 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2) NP_070943 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2)
NF00188697	Archaeoglobus fulgidus	A partial list of IMP dehydrogenase misnomers in complete genomes remaining in some public databases		g2648410 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2)
NF00197776	Thermoplasma volcanium			g2648410 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2)
NF00414709	Methanothermobacter thermautotrophicus			g2648410 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2)
NF00414811	Methanothermobacter thermautotrophicus			g2648410 inosine monophosphate dehydrogenase (guaB-2)
NF00414837	Methanothermobacter thermautotrophicus	H69232 MJ1225-related protein MTH992 <i>ALT_NAMES</i> : inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase related protein IX [misnomer]	O27073 INOSINE-5'-MONOPHOSPHATE DEHYDROGENASE RELATED PROTEIN IX	g2622093 inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase related protein IX NP_276127 inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase related protein IX
NF00414969	Methanothermobacter thermautotrophicus	B69077 yhcV homolog 2 <i>ALT_NAMES</i> : inosine-monophosphate dehydrogenase related protein X [misnomer]	O27616 INOSINE-5'-MONOPHOSPHATE DEHYDROGENASE RELATED PROTEIN X	g2622697 inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase related protein X NP_276687 inosine-5'-monophosphate dehydrogenase related protein X

IMPDH domain structure



Typical IMPDHs have IMPDH domains as catalytic core and CBS domains

A less common but functional IMPDH (E70218) lacks the CBS domains.

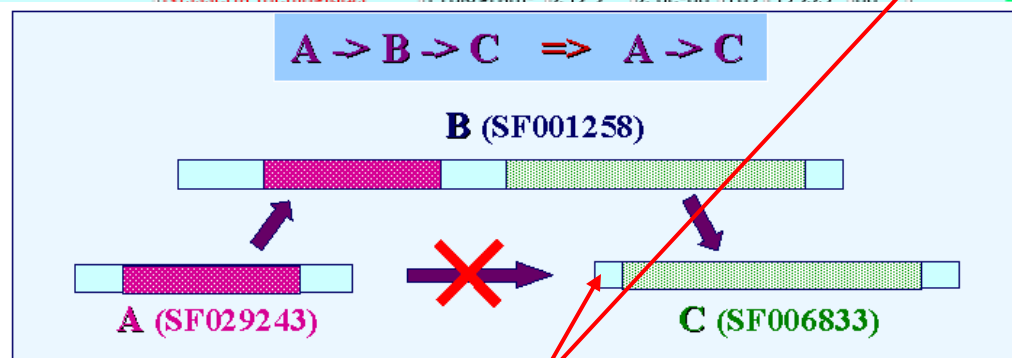
Misnomers show similarity only to the CBS domains

Invalid transitive assignment

Root of invalid transitive assignment

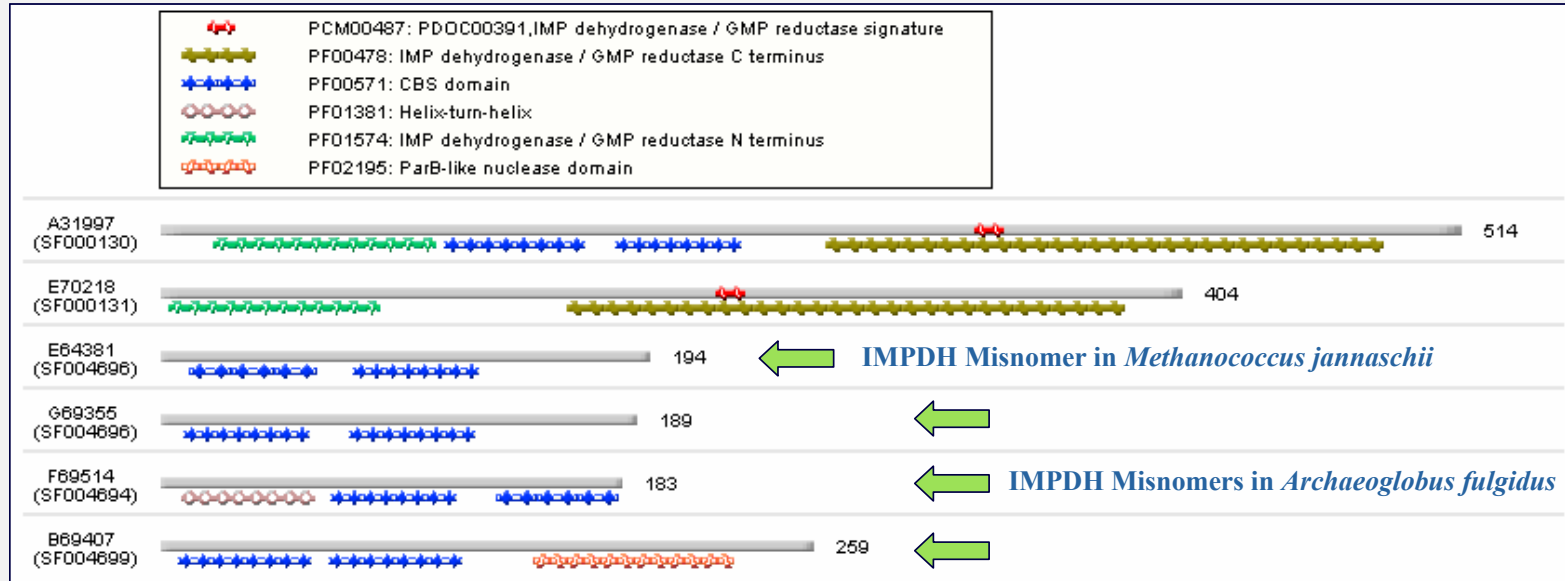
B →	<input type="checkbox"/> H70468	SF001258	051440	phosphoribosyl-AMP cyclohydrolase (EC 3.5.4.19) / phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) [similarity]	Aquifex aeolicus	Prok/other	594.3	4.8e-26	205	39.086	197	
	<input type="checkbox"/> S76963	SF001258	039935	phosphoribosyl-AMP cyclohydrolase (EC 3.5.4.19) / phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) [similarity]	Synechocystis sp.	Prok/gram-	557.0	5.7e-24	230	39.175	194	
	<input type="checkbox"/> T35073	SF029243	005738	probable phosphoribosyl-AMP cyclohydrolase	Streptomyces coelicolor	Prok/gram+	399.3	3.5e-15	128	42.157	102	
	<input type="checkbox"/> S53349	SF001257	001188	phosphoribosyl-AMP cyclohydrolase (EC 3.5.4.19) / phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) / histidinol dehydrogenase (EC 1.1.1.23)	Saccharomyces cerevisiae	Euk/fungi	384.1	2.5e-14	799	31.863	204	
A →	<input type="checkbox"/> E69493	SF029243	005738	phosphoribosyl-AMP cyclohydrolase (EC 3.5.4.19) [similarity]	Archaeoglobus fulgidus	Archae	396.8	4.8e-15	108	47.778	90	
C →	<input type="checkbox"/> G64337	SF006833	030827	phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) [similarity]	Methanococcus jannaschii	Archae	246.9	1.1e-06	95	36.842	95	
	<input type="checkbox"/> D81178	SF006833	101491	phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) NMB0603 [similarity]	Neisseria meningitidis	Prnk/oram-	239.9	2.6e-06	107	35.227	88	
	<input type="checkbox"/> G81925	SF006833	101491	phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) NMA0807 [similarity]								
	<input type="checkbox"/> S51513	SF001257	001188	phosphoribosyl-AMP cyclohydrolase (EC 3.5.4.19) / phosphoribosyl-ATP pyrophosphatase (EC 3.6.1.31) / histidinol dehydrogenase (EC 1.1.1.23)								

Mis-assignment of function



No IMPDH domain

Emerging pattern



Most IMPDHs have 2 IMPDH and 2 CBS domains

Some IMPDH (E70218) lacks CBS domains

IMPDH domain is the emerging pattern

Concluding remarks

Exercise

What have you learned?

Acknowledgements

Some slides on popular sequence alignment tools are based on those given to me by Bin Ma and Dong Xu

Good to read

S. F. Altschul et al. “Basic local alignment search tool”, *JMB*, 215:403-410, 1990

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B. Ma et al. “PatternHunter: Faster and more sensitive homology search”, *Bioinformatics*, 18:440-445, 2002

M. Li et al. “PatternHunter II: Highly sensitive and fast homology search”, *GIW 2003*, 164-175