

Common standards for genomics and proteomics

The Biotechnology Industry Organization, based in the United States, has launched a prototype of a common data platform for genomics and proteomics data. This platform, with Java programming language and extensible mark-up language (XML) standards, can be used by biotech, pharmaceutical or IT sectors to exchange genomic and proteomic data.

Unlike the Internet, which is guided by standards set by the World-Wide-Web consortium, biology related databases have yet to be standardized. The absence of such standards necessitate various groups to develop their own tools to analyse and handle data. Depending on the source of datasets, different tools are often required. However, if data exchange is standardized, information management and analysis will be simple. Standardization will not only help laboratories, but also some smaller companies engaged in life science research and product development. The groundwork for this was laid by bringing several life science and information technology experts under one umbrella, the Informatics Inter-operable Infrastructure Consortium, which has over 30 members including Sun Microsystems, IBM and the National Cancer Institute, the United States. (Trends in Genetics, August 2001)