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The GOBLET Training Portal: A Global Repository of Bioinformatics Training Materials, Courses and Trainers

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ABSTRACT

Summary: Rapid technological advances have led to an explosion of biomedical data in recent years. The pace of change has inspired new, collaborative approaches for sharing materials and resources to help train life scientists both in the use of cutting-edge bioinformatics tools and databases, and in how to analyse and interpret large datasets. A prototype platform for sharing such training resources was recently created by the Bioinformatics Training Network (BTN). Building on this work, we have created a centralised portal for sharing training materials and courses, including a catalogue of trainers and course organisers, and an announcement service for training events. For course organisers, the portal provides opportunities to promote their training events: for trainers, the portal offers an environment for sharing materials, for gaining visibility for their work and promoting their skills: for trainees, it offers a convenient one-stop shop for finding suitable training resources and identifying relevant training events and activities locally and world-wide.

Availability: http://mygoblet.org/training-portal
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INTRODUCTION

Technologies underpinning the life sciences are constantly evolving (Abeln et al., 2013) and, at the same time, are spurring development of new methods for data analysis and interpretation (Carvalho and Rustici, 2013; Libeskind-Hadas and Bush, 2013; Brazas and Ouellette, 2013). Researchers – students and professionals alike – therefore constantly need to acquire new skills in order to keep abreast of the latest developments (Schneider et al., 2010; Via et al., 2011; 2013; Vincent and Page, 2013). Attempting to address this need, the Global Organisation for Bioinformatics Learning, Education and Training (GOBLET) has established a training portal, spanning the fields of bioinformatics, biocuration, biocomputing and computational biology. The portal provides a freely available collection of materials and courses, and a catalogue of trainers, classified by tags. The tags make it easy to find and share materials, and to identify trainers with appropriate expertise. The portal inherits much of the functionality of the prototype BTN website (Schneider et al., 2012), extending its features to accommodate the diverse needs of global communities of life scientists: enhancements include i) the addition of features such as the definition of fields for describing materials, to make them more discoverable, and ii) the possibility to add course pages, linked to their associated materials, so that the portal is both a repository and a record of what is to be, and what was, taught at a given time, rather than just a bag of disconnected contents.

THE TRAINING PORTAL

The portal, built using the Drupal content management system, embodies three main entities: Members, Materials and Courses. Members may be individuals representing their own interests, or they may represent particular organisations or groups (national and/or international networks and societies, research institutes, foundations, academic groups, and so on).

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