

20 October 2016

EMBL-EBI and EMBL-ABR: a proposal on collaborative approaches

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The past year has seen the formation of EMBL Australia Bioinformatics resource (EMBL-ABR) into a federated network composed of ten nodes spread across Australia, based on their expertise in bioinformatics and a coordinating hub hosted by the EMBL-ABR: VLSCI node in Melbourne. The process involved in creating such resource required dialogues across Australia, including the bioscientists (herein encompassing both, life scientists and medical researchers), as well as those working directly in bioinformatics and e-research level projects. It became apparent how there is a critical mass of bioscientists that benefit or could benefit from the services and expertise provided and present at EMBL-EBI. Similarly, EMBL-ABR Bioinformatics Key areas (data, tools, platforms, standards, training and compute) touch needs that are currently being discussed and are at a mature stage already within EMBL-EBI as well as the efforts within ELIXIR. Hence, it is crucial for EMBL-ABR to establish concrete ties with EMBL-EBI so as to ensure the initiatives it champions are not redundant to already existing solutions, as well as serving as an effective conduit for all the relevant stakeholders in Australia.

Here we propose a list of activities that aim to render an efficient interaction between EMBL-EBI and EMBL-ABR. These also would function as raising awareness about the vast resources and services already present at EMBL-EBI, and at the same time, collect the specific requirements and needs the Australia bioscientists may have according to their bio-domains, so that a joint targeted discussion on how to address these can take place.

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-LIASON: Keep the regular monthly executive level catch up between EMBL-EBI & EMBL-ABR.

-HELPDESK BioinfAU: Develop within the EMBL-ABR network a “helpdesk” forum that collects the needs/requirements from Australia Bioscientists and Bioinformaticians, developed in consultation with EMBL-EBI so as to adopt a common terminology that can easily be assigned to respective areas/services/tools EMBL-EBI has. This helpdesk would also function as a monitoring of needs that have certain levels of critical mass, and help to gain a picture of generic needs (e.g. that can be spread across biosciences working with a specific type of molecule) versus bioscience domain specific (e.g. special challenges when dealing with particular not well know large plant genomes).

-JOINT SURVEY: Focus EMBL-ABR survey 2017 on specific usage and understanding of EMBL-EBI resources by AU bioscientists and possible limitation and needs gathering exercise.

-WEBINARS SERIES: Pilot Webinars series extension from exiting efforts already developed by EMBL-EBI Training Team as well as Launch the EMBL-ABR Friends Programme, which will consist of webinars with key experts that talk with the EMBL-ABR distributed network in a dialogue facilitate by EMBL-ABR. This would be pilot with EMBL-EBI experts primarily during 2017 and then expanded according to the impact it creates to include other experts from across the globe.