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Technical Note

3DBIONOTES: A unified, enriched and interactive view of macromolecular information

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of high throughput techniques like Next Generation Sequencing, the amount of biological information for genes and proteins is growing faster than ever. Structural information is also rapidly growing, especially in the cryo Electron Microscopy area. However, in many cases, the proteomic and genomic data are spread in multiple databases and with no simple connection to structural information.

In this work we present a new web platform that integrates EMDB/PDB structures and UniProt sequences with different sources of protein annotations. The application provides an interactive interface linking sequence and structure, including EM maps, presenting the different sources of information at sequence and structural level. The web application is available at http://3dbionotes.cnb.csic.es.

1. Introduction

Currently, high-throughput techniques are producing massive amounts of genomic and proteomic information, feeding most relevant biological databases such as UniProt (UniProt Consortium, 2015) and ENSEMBL (Cunningham et al., 2015), extending the amount of available annotations for genes and proteins. Indeed, these annotations are essential contributions to the study of protein and gene functions. However, structural information is a key element required for a deeper understanding of the molecular properties that allow proteins to perform specific tasks. Therefore, depicting genomic and proteomic information over structural data would offer a more complete picture in order to understand how proteins and genes behave in the different cellular processes.

In this work we present a web platform –3DBIONOTES– that integrates proteomic and functional annotations with structural data, providing a unified and interactive view of the different sources of information. The main interface comprises three panels: the 3D viewer, the protein sequence viewer and the annotations panel. The three views are interactively connected and the different annotations can be displayed both at sequence level, highlighting the amino acids of a selected annotation, and at structural level, mapping the corresponding residues into the protein structure.

2. 3DBIONOTES framework

The 3DBIONOTES project aims to integrate the different levels of molecular biology information into an intuitive environment where protein sequences and structures are represented in a single and interactive graphical interface. In its current version, 3DBIONOTES offers a unified view of three of the most relevant protein databases: UniProt (UniProt Consortium, 2015), PDB (Berman et al., 2014) and EMDB (Lawson et al., 2011), onto which other sources of biological annotations are also provided, such as PhosphoSitePlus (Hornbeck et al., 2015), Immune Epitope DB (Vita et al., 2015), BioMuta (Wu et al., 2014) and dSysMap (Mosca et al., 2015).

2.1. 3DBIONOTES server

The web server was implemented using the Ruby on Rails application framework. The server performs three major tasks: first, it maps the residue identifiers of PDB structures with the amino acid indexes of UniProt sequences; second, it provides the relation between EMDB maps, PDB structures and UniProt sequences; and third, it supplies the protein annotations. The first task is carried out using the SIFTS (Structure Integration with Function, Taxonomy and Sequence) resource provided by the EBI (Velankar et al., 2013), this resource is a collection of XML files that offer a residue-level mapping between UniProt and PDB entries. For the second task, providing the relation between EMDB, PDB and UniProt entries, the server uses the EBI REST web services

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(Meldal et al., 2015). In particular, three different services are used: the 'fitted' EMDB-service is used to obtain the PDB structures fitted within an EMDB map, the 'uniprot' SIFTS-service that relates the PDB chain identifiers with their corresponding UniProt accession and, finally, the 'best_structure' SIFTS-service, that allows to retrieve a list of PDB structures and chains related with a specific UniProt entry. Consequently, the web server can be accessed using any class of identifier, such as EMDB codes, PDB identifiers or UniProt accessions. Finally, the server also supplies the protein annotations collected from UniProt, PhosphoSitePlus, Immune Epitope DB, BioMuta and dSysMap. The UniProt and dSysMap annotations are collected using the web services provided for this purpose. In turn, PhosphoSitePlus and BioMuta provide their data in tab format files that were parsed and stored in a MySQL database. Finally, Immune Epitope DB information is available as a MySQL exportable file. Once the raw annotations are collected, the server builds an array of features where each array element describes a particular annotation, identifying its database source, type, subtype, start, end and description. This design is very easy to extend, since introducing a new source of protein annotations only involve the development of a data collector system and a new parser.

Regarding maintenance of this application, PDB structures, UniProt features and dSysMap annotations are retrieved on the fly and thus, they are updated automatically. However, EMDB maps, PhosphoSitePlus data and BioMuta annotations are stored locally and a bash script is executed weekly to keep this information updated.

2.2. 3DBIONOTES client

The web client is responsible for the data representation and also for providing an interactive environment connecting protein sequences, structures and annotations. The client comprises three major panels (Fig. 1): the structural panel (Fig. 1A), the sequence panel (Fig. 1B) and the annotation panel (Fig. 1C). The structural panel uses JSmol viewer (Jmol, 2013) in order to display PDB structures and EMDB maps. The sequence panel shows the alignment between the sequences of PDB structures and their corresponding UniProt sequences, to that end we used a bespoken version of the BioJS (Gomez et al., 2013) 'Sequence' package (Gomez and Jimenez, 2014). The annotation panel consists of a modified version of the EBI-UniProt protein annotations viewer (UniProt – EBI, 2014). All panels are interconnected, leading to a graphic interactivity between them; thus, when a protein annotation from the annotation panel is clicked, the protein sequence region related to the annotation and the residues in the corresponding chain of the structural panel are highlighted. Additionally, when a segment of sequence in the sequence panel is selected, the annotation panel displays the selected region so that the particular annotations falling inside are marked and the corresponding residues of the structural panel are highlighted. Querying 3DBIONOTES is performed through a web form and the application accepts any identifier from EMDB, PDB or UniProt.

3. Use cases

3.1. Human APC/C-Cdh1-Emi1 ternary complex

The Anaphase-Promoting complex is a cell-cycle regulatory macromolecule that triggers the transition from metaphase to anaphase. The activation of the complex depends on its association with one of the coactivator proteins. In this example we have explored the interaction between the APC/C complex and the Cdh1 coactivator subunit (EMDB entry EMD-2924). This interaction is negatively regulated by phosphorylation and Cdh1 is inactivated and prevented to interact with APC/C when residues S40,

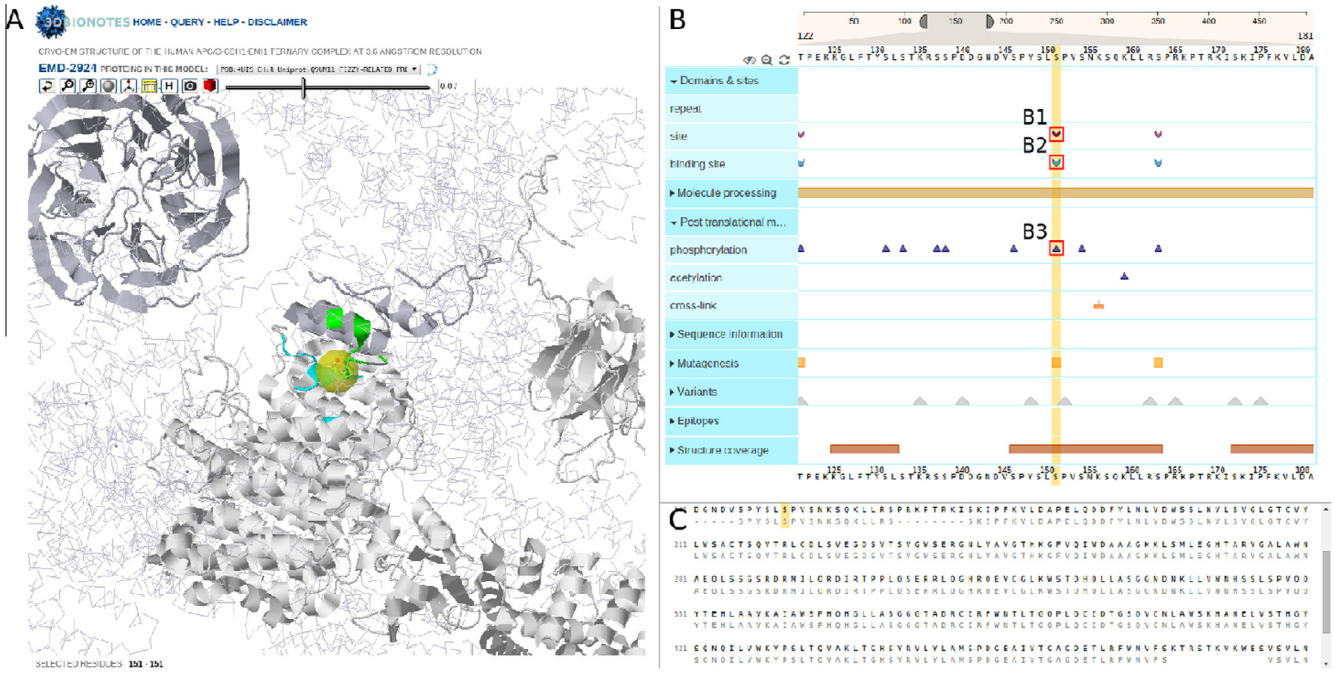

Fig. 1. Human APC/C-Cdh1-Emi1 ternary complex. Screenshot of the 3DBIONOTES interface presenting the case when the server is queried with the EMDB entry EMD-2924. (A) The structural panel, on the left hand side, highlights the Cdh1 coactivator subunit in dark gray color and cartoon style together with the Anaphase-Promoting complex subunit 1 (APC1) in light gray color and also cartoon style. The S151 amino acid of Cdh1 is displayed within a yellow sphere and those residues that are closer than 10 Å are highlighted in green if the residues belong to the Cdh1 protein and in cyan color if are contained in the APC1 subunit. (B) The annotation panel, on the top right hand side, is centered on the S151 amino acid of Cdh1 (UniProt ID Q9UM11) and the annotations related with the phosphorylation and regulation properties of S151 are remarked within red squares. (B1) This annotation indicates that the s151 amino acid is a regulatory site for the interaction between Cdh1 and APC1. (B2) Binding site annotation for a kinase–substrate interaction, in this case the Cell division protein kinase 2 protein binds to the S151 residue. (B3) Annotation indicating that the S151 residue is a phosphorylation site. (C) The sequence panel, on the bottom right hand side, shows the amino acid sequence of the UniProt entry Q9UM11 (Cdh1 subunit), marking in orange color the S151 residue.