

## INDUSTRY SUPPORT AT THE EMBL-EBI

The EBI supports Industry through two programmes; the EBI Industry Programme, a well established Programme for large companies, and the EBI SME Support Forum designed to offer support to smaller companies not eligible to join its larger Programme.

### THE EBI INDUSTRY PROGRAMME

The Industry Programme was set up in 1996 as a forum through which the EBI could provide training, research and the development and adaptation of bioinformatics resources that are particularly relevant to industry the domain of bioinformatics. This is still the main focus of the Programme and it remains as relevant to the needs of its members now as it was when they first joined. The Programme enables industry to quickly adapt to, and maximize the benefit from, innovations in the fast-growing field of bioinformatics. The Programme content remains at the cutting edge of bioinformatics through joint development by the EBI and its industry partners. There are currently 19 members of this Programme (see Table 1).

The major contributions of the EBI's Industry Programme have included the initiation of the development of standards for microarray data, plus an extensive programme of training workshops and international conferences on a range of aspects of relevance to bioinformatics from distributed object technology to ethics.

A special emphasis of the Industry Programme is on the development and promotion of standards. Through the Industry Programme, the EBI is able to participate actively in the standardisation activities of bodies including the Object Management Group (OMG), Integration Interoperability and Infrastructure Consortium (I3C) and Global Grid Forum (GGF). Formal specifications to which the EBI has contributed include "Biomolecular Sequence Analysis", "Genomic Maps", "Bibliographic Query Services", "Gene Expression", and "Life Science Identifiers (LSID)". Funding from the Industry Programme enabled the EBI to initiate the project that became the Microarray Gene Expression Data society (MGED) with the development of the MIAME and MAGE specifications and software. In 1998, it became evident microarrays were going to become very important. So in consultation with our industry partners, we moved resources into microarray analysis leading to the concept of ArrayExpress and now the EBI is a recognised centre for microarray informatics.

As well as participating in the development of standards, the EBI's Industry Programme has been instrumental in producing Open Source implementations of these standards, including the applications OpenBSA and OpenBQS for access to biomolecular sequence analysis programs and bibliographic query services respectively.

### Industry Programme training

The Industry Programme continues its coordination and organisation of high quality workshops and symposia, offering expert training to the Programme

- AstraZeneca
- Aventis
- Bayer Healthcare
- Boehringer Ingelheim
- Bristol-Myers Squibb
- GlaxoSmithKline
- F. Hoffman-La Roche
- Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical Research & Development
- Merck KgaA
- Merck Sharp & Dohme
- Nestle Research Centre
- Organon
- Pfizer
- Procter & Gamble
- Schering AG
- Serono S.A.
- Syngenta
- Sanofi-Synthelabo
- Unilever Research & Development

*Table 1. Member companies of the EBI Industry Programme.*



**Paul Matthews**

*Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, 1994-1999, GlaxoWellcome/GlaxoSmithKline, 1999-2001. At EMBL-EBI since June 2001.*

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#### Group Members 2004

##### Industry Programme Coordinator

Paul Matthews

##### Workshop Organiser

Liz Ford

##### Administration and Meeting Organiser

Delphine Gandelin

members in many areas of bioinformatics. Although the training offered at these workshops has historically been restricted to participants from the industries that are members, agreement has been made that these events can now be opened, with obvious discretion, to members of the EBI's SME Support Forum to attend. This is a very positive move, and consequently offers a great benefit to the members of our SME Support Forum. The member companies continue to identify the workshops as an extremely important part of the Industry Programme and a key contribution to its continued success. This year's training programme is listed below in Table 2.

### PARTNERS' MEETINGS

The Programme members continue to meet quarterly at the EBI to hear and discuss the current and future status of the Programme, and the wider EBI activities and strategy. These meetings allow the Programme to remain current to the industry members' needs, and also provide time for the members to meet other staff at EBI and allow interaction and discussion amongst themselves on neutral, pre-competitive territory. This opportunity is highly regarded by the members.

### THE EBI SME SUPPORT FORUM

In October 2003, supported by a generous two-year grant from the UK Department of Trade and Industry, the EBI launched its Support Forum for SMEs. The motivations for establishing this Forum came from a steady stream of requests for support from some SMEs, the realization that these companies are not the correct style of company to participate in the larger Industry Programme, unable to commit the time and financial resources necessary, and that the public funders increasingly require support for the SME community. Since the launch of this Forum, 16 companies have joined as members.

The differing types of company, *e.g.* service providers, drug discovery, platform technologies, integration services, have a variety of priorities for support. Some are looking for the high quality training we offer, others a direct line to helpdesk support and some an opportunity to meet and network with other SMEs from the same community. In planning the activities of the EBI's SME Support Forum, we have tried to offer broad benefits, all at a minimal cost, to members. We recognise that many of these companies have limited resources; human, financial and time. Many are concentrating on staying in business, and their own priorities can change quickly over the course of a few weeks/months.

These factors make it hard to determine a 'one size fits all' programme of support, and we continue to evolve the Forum as it establishes. Currently we offer members the opportunity to network and meet at EBI bi-annually, access to a small number of bespoke training workshops and the workshops conducted by the EBI Industry Programme, a dedicated helpdesk facility, technical development and consultancy.

22 - 23 January 2004	European Macromolecular Structure Database (EMSD)
23 - 25 February 2004	Ensembl 2004
29 - 31 March 2004	EMBOSS, BioPerl and BioJava
26 - 28 April 2004	Text Mining
24 - 26 May 2004	SRS v. 8 Administration
27 - 29 September 2004	Molecular Interactions and Pathways
01 - 02 November 2004	SNPs and Phenotype
22 - 23 November 2004	Symposium on Alternate Transcript Diversity – Data, Biology, and Therapeutics

**Table 2.** Industry Programme Training in 2004.