Software patents in Bioinformatics

Bioinformatics has published papers describing new software for over 20 years (Nilsson and Klein 1985). During this time the world of software has changed considerably particularly with the irresistible rise of initiatives to build freely accessible software as has opening access to data resources. The Internet and the Web have also changed the way we use and distribute software. This social and technical revolution is also changing the structure of the relations between commercial and academic software-based activities, for which patents and software protection are key elements.

In this and the following issue we publish two editorials addressing the general topics of software accessibility, patents and intellectual property. In this issue, Steven L. Salzberg and John Quakenbush (past and present Associate Editors, respectively) present one perspective on the issue. In the next issue another of our Associate Editors, Jonathan D. Wren will put forward a different perspective.

We welcome additional contributions to this discussion from our readership, which will help the journal in the process of adapting our publication guidelines to better serve the development of Bioinformatics.

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