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POODLE 1.0 - To the core of your data

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Abstract

Motivation: Many life science laboratories are still using Excel files do organize their data. This leads to a huge workload for maintenance as well as a inconvenient access and update routine. POODLE provides an easy-to-use and powerful interface to improve the work of your lab.
Results: POODLE is a Java-based web interface, which allows intuitive access, update and manipulation of data.
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Supplementary information: Supplementary data are available at *https://github.com/derjedi/BioinformaticsI-Assigments/tree/master/poodle_project* online.

1 Introduction
2 Approach

As already wrote above many life-science laboratories use Excel files for storing and working with data. But Excel files have a few drawbacks, which make working with them inconvenient. On of the biggest problems occurs, if more than one member of the laboratory tries to access the file at the same time. That can lead to inconsistent files. Second, searching in a Excel file is not as easy as it could be. Furthermore, licenses for Excel are expensive and free software is not as powerful as commercial ones. The reason for using Excel rather than a database system is that most life-scientist are not familiar with database systems and therefor chooses the GUI of Excel to work with. We are facing that problem by combining the functionality of a database system with an intuitive and easy-to-learn handling.

3 Methods

POODLE is build as a two-layer software. The first layer consists of the database and routines to automatically build and update that database. The second layer consists of the web service that is used to access, update and manipulate data. This is the front end layer and provides access to all functions for the user. Because POODLE is not just a data storage software but also comes with useful methods like a Blast search.

3.1 Database layer

SQLite[1] is the database system running in the background. We chose this software for several reasons. First, it is free of charge. Second, and more important SQLite is a small and fast database system written in C. So the requirement in space is very low. Since, the whole database is stored just in one file SQLite also has a incredibly good performance. Besides, SQLite guaranties that all transactions are ACID even if a system crash or power failure occurs. So we have a robust storage and access of data as well as a lot of functionality provided by the database system. In addition to the SQLite database POODLE's software creates a BLAST database for the provided data, too.

The build and update process is implemented in Python. So the user does not have to have knowledge in SQL coding but only has to execute one python script and everything is done automatically. This routine ensures that the SQLite database and the BLAST database are always in the same state. It also makes the database a little bit safer, since changes can be reviewed before inserting them into the database.

3.2 Web service

POODLE web service is build with Vaadin[2]. This allows a safe communication between the front end and the database layer as well as a smooth and easy handling of the side. Since a website developed with Vaadin is highly modular, it is easy to extend the web service in the future. That could be necessary, if new functionalities are required. Currently, there are three pages with different roles. The search page provides a formula that can be used to perform a simple SQL search in the local database. Therefor, different files are displayed and can be filled by the user. A click on the search button will automatically build a SQL query and results are displayed, if there are available results. The new entry page allows to insert a new entry into the database. It also provide a Blast search against the NCBI databases to check, whether there are available information about the current sequence or not. Last but not least, users can perform a local Blast search against their one database or a remote Blast search against the NCBI databases on the Blast page.

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[1] http://www.sqlite.org/

[2] https://vaadin.com/home

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Fig. 1. Caption, caption.

3.3 Blast functionality

Our software package provides not just a database functionality for powerful and secure data storage and a easy-to-use interface but also a Blast (Altschul *et al.*, 1990) functionality. This functionality is implemented by a combination of Blast binaries provided by NCBI and the Biojava Api (Prlić *et al.*, 2012). There are two different Blast searches available in POODLE. On one hand, there is a remote Blast search on the NCBI server. And on the other hand, there is a local Blast search. The remote Blast search is not a fully functional copy of the NCBI web service but can used to perform a quick and simply search against databases provided by NCBI, e.g. Swissprot (O'Donavan *et al.*, 2002). But we do not recommend to overuse that because too many requests may cause a blacklisting by NCBI. This remote Blast routine is mainly for the insertion of a new entry. The idea is to check whether there are information about the new sequence. The local Blast routine does everything someone would expect from a Blast search but against the local database, hence local Blast.

4 Discussion

5 Conclusion

Acknowledgements

Funding

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