

SBOL Stack: The One-stop-shop for Storing and Publishing Synthetic Biology Designs

Curtis Madsen¹, Goksel Misirli¹, Matthew Pocock^{1,2},
Jennifer Hallinan¹, and Anil Wipat¹

¹School of Computing Science, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

²Turing Ate My Hamster Ltd., Newcastle upon Tyne, UK



August 20, 2015
IWBDAs

- Synthetic biology is a growing field that combines ideas from biology and engineering.
- It is, however, often difficult to utilize the extensive amount of biological data for design in synthetic biology:
 - Efforts are usually individual and carried out by teams in different geographic locations.
 - The interests of researchers can vary greatly.
 - Typically, biological data relevant to the design of genetic circuits is not exchanged.

Synthetic Biology Open Language (SBOL)

- To aid in the interpretation and exchange of biological information, standards are necessary.
- An emerging standard in synthetic biology is the *Synthetic Biology Open Language* (SBOL):
 - Designed to allow for the exchange of descriptions of genetic parts, devices, modules, and systems.
 - Facilitates storage of genetic designs in repositories.
 - Allows for designs of genetic parts and systems to be embedded in publications.

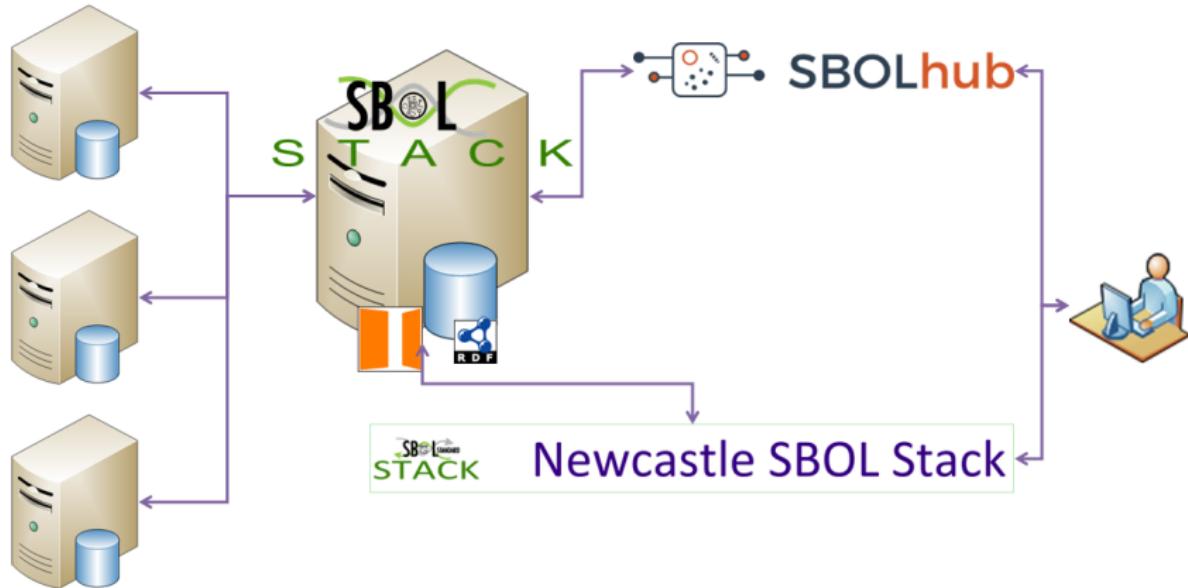
- The SBOL language is based on the XML variant of the Resource Description Framework (RDF/XML) and can be stored in triplestore repositories where it can be searched using SPARQL queries.
- Additionally, SBOL automatically integrates into Semantic Web technologies allowing for linking to other biological data not contained within SBOL.
- However, most existing repositories do not take advantage of this infrastructure and simply store individual SBOL files.



Newcastle SBOL Stack

- We have developed the SBOL Stack to allow researchers to better store, retrieve, exchange, and publish SBOL data.
- The SBOL Stack is a Sesame RDF database specifically designed for:
 - Publishing a library of synthetic parts and designs as a service.
 - Sharing SBOL with collaborators.
 - Storing designs of biological systems locally.
- Additionally, it includes two Web clients that allow for uploading, downloading, searching, and visualizing SBOL data.

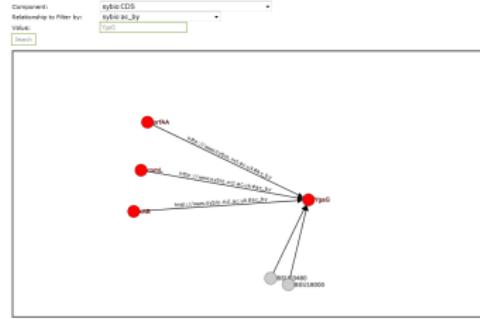
SBOL Stack



SPARQL Queries

- Data in SBOL Stack can be accessed via SPARQL queries that produce either tables or graphs.
- A *table query* results in a set of tuples and returns specific values (URIs, blank nodes, literals) from the stored RDF data.
- A *graph query*, on the other hand, returns a graph of RDF triples in the form: *Subject* → *Predicate* → *Object*.

DataComponent	label	subComponent	NA
http://www.bacflondex.org#28536	lfa	http://www.bacflondex.org#3573	ATGCACTTCATCAAAACG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28536	fseD	http://www.bacflondex.org#3573	ATGCACTTCATCAAAACG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28536	BSU28960	http://www.bacflondex.org#3573	ATGCACTTCATCAAAACG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28624	atok	http://www.bacflondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAACCG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28624	BSU28060	http://www.bacflondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAACCG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28624	TYP-Japaneselpha subunit	http://www.bacflondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAACCG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28624	yfB	http://www.bacflondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAACCG
http://www.bacflondex.org#32111	BSU12300	http://www.bacflondex.org#3587	ATGAAACCTTCATGGC
http://www.bacflondex.org#32111	unrG	http://www.bacflondex.org#3587	ATGAAACCTTCATGGC
http://www.bacflondex.org#32111	yphA	http://www.bacflondex.org#3587	ATGAAACCTTCATGGC
http://www.bacflondex.org#32149	kdpG	http://www.bacflondex.org#3572	ATGAGATCCAAAGTGG
http://www.bacflondex.org#32149	BSU12110	http://www.bacflondex.org#3572	ATGAGATCCAAAGTGG
http://www.bacflondex.org#28932	BSU138770	http://www.bacflondex.org#3393	ATGGGAGAGCTTCACAC
http://www.bacflondex.org#28932	cmhE	http://www.bacflondex.org#3393	ATGGGAGAGCTTCACAC
http://www.bacflondex.org#28932	ykiQ	http://www.bacflondex.org#3593	ATGGGAGAGCTTCACAC



Example Table Query

SPARQL Query:

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX owl: <http://www.w3.org/2002/07/owl#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX xsd: <http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema#>
PREFIX sbol: <http://sbols.org/sbol.owl#>
PREFIX so: <http://purl.org/obo/owl/SO#>
PREFIX sybio: <http://www.sybio.ncl.ac.uk#>

SELECT ?DnaComponent ?label ?subComponent ?NA
WHERE
{
?DnaComponent rdf:type sbol:DnaComponent ;
    rdf:type so:SO_0000316 ;
    rdfs:label ?label ;
    sbol:dnaSequence ?dnaSequence ;
    sbol:annotation ?SequenceAnnotation.
?dnaSequence sbol:nucleotides ?NA ;
    a sbol:DnaSequence.
?SequenceAnnotation sbol:subComponent ?subComponent.
}
```

SPARQL Query



Example Table Query

DnaComponent	label	subComponent	NA
http://www.bacillondex.org#28536	lcfA	http://www.bacillondex.org#3573	ATGCAGTCTCAAAAGCC
http://www.bacillondex.org#28536	fadD	http://www.bacillondex.org#3573	ATGCAGTCTCAAAAGCC
http://www.bacillondex.org#28536	BSU28560	http://www.bacillondex.org#3573	ATGCAGTCTCAAAAGCC
http://www.bacillondex.org#28624	acoA	http://www.bacillondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAAAACG
http://www.bacillondex.org#28624	BSU08060	http://www.bacillondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAAAACG
http://www.bacillondex.org#28624	TPP-dependent alpha subunit	http://www.bacillondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAAAACG
http://www.bacillondex.org#28624	yfjK	http://www.bacillondex.org#3549	ATGAAATTGTTAAAACG
http://www.bacillondex.org#32611	BSU12300	http://www.bacillondex.org#3587	ATGGAACCCCTTCATGGC
http://www.bacillondex.org#32611	uxaC	http://www.bacillondex.org#3587	ATGGAACCCCTTCATGGC
http://www.bacillondex.org#32611	yjmA	http://www.bacillondex.org#3587	ATGGAACCCCTTCATGGC
http://www.bacillondex.org#32669	kdgA	http://www.bacillondex.org#3572	ATGGAGTCCAAGTCG
http://www.bacillondex.org#32669	BSU22100	http://www.bacillondex.org#3572	ATGGAGTCCAAGTCG
http://www.bacillondex.org#28932	BSU38770	http://www.bacillondex.org#3593	ATGGGAGAGCTTCAAAC
http://www.bacillondex.org#28932	cimH	http://www.bacillondex.org#3593	ATGGGAGAGCTTCAAAC
http://www.bacillondex.org#28932	yxlJ	http://www.bacillondex.org#3593	ATGGGAGAGCTTCAAAC
http://www.bacillondex.org#28932	BSU19570	http://www.bacillondex.org#3597	ATGAAAAAAAGTTTATGAC

- Since graph queries return well formed RDF, the graph can be downloaded and used in another tool that supports RDF data.
- As the SBOL language is RDF, these types of queries can return SBOL data.
- The SBOL Stack contains a search option that automatically performs graph queries without the need to write SPARQL directly.
- All a user needs to specify is a type of Subject, a type of Predicate, and an optional Object.

Example Graph Query

Component: sbol:DnaSequence

Relationship to Filter by: sbol:nucleotides

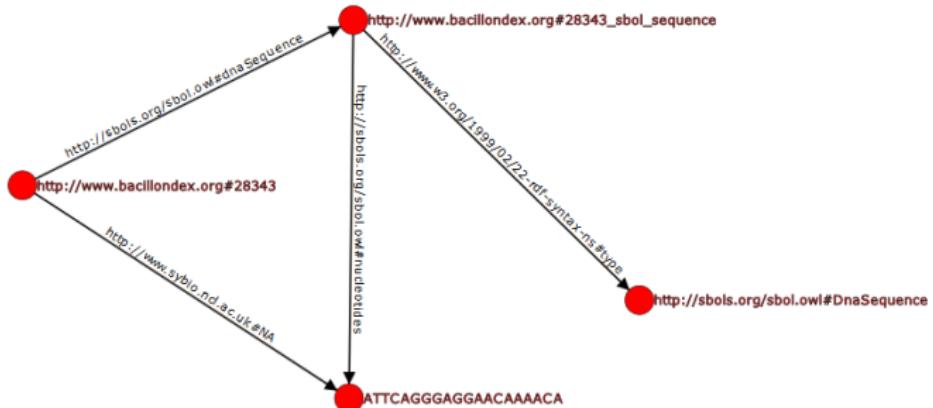
Value (Optional): ATTCA
GGGAGGAACAA
AACA



Searching Selected Nodes

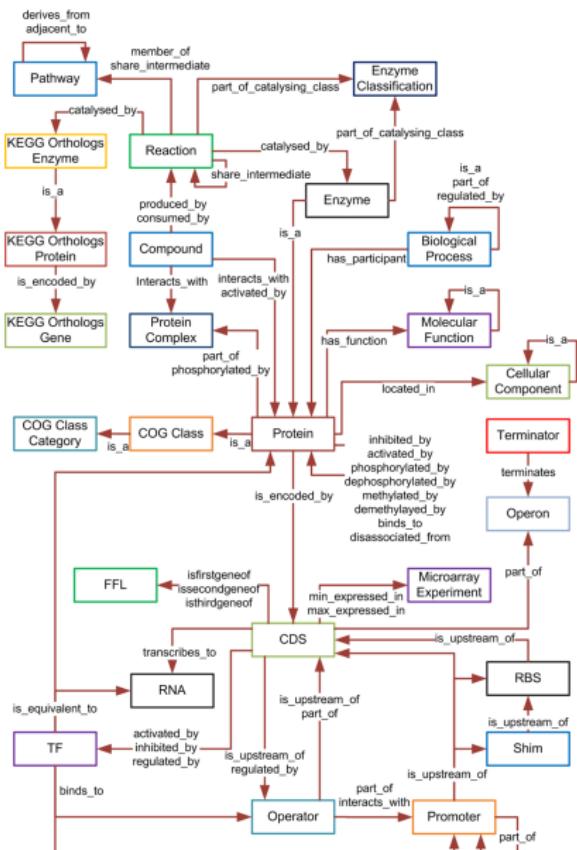
- The SBOL Stack contains the option to further search selected nodes in the results of a graph query.
- This option is very useful for someone who is interested in searching for more data about a particular element.
- For example, a user may be interested in:
 - Interactions with other elements;
 - The DNA sequence of the element; or
 - Components the element is contained within among others.

Example Searching Selected Nodes



Custom Ontologies

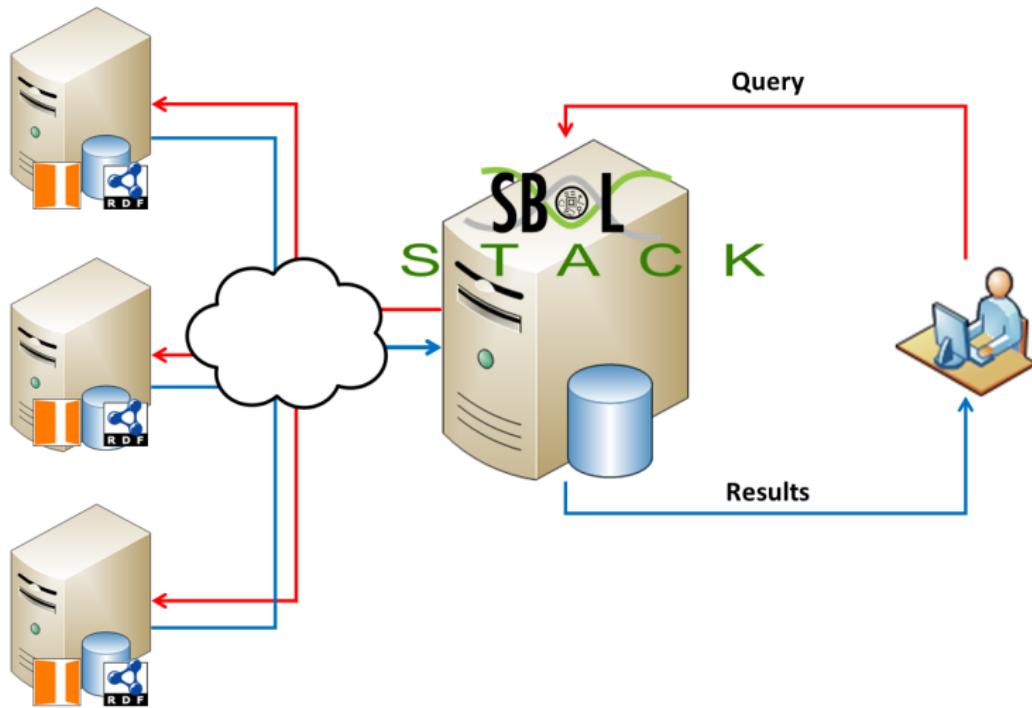
- In addition to SBOL, the SBOL Stack includes an ontology about genetic features, gene products and their annotations, gene regulatory networks, metabolic pathways, and so on.
 - It is possible to include other custom ontologies in the SBOL Stack such as BioPAX.
- Biological entities can be mapped to SBOL objects using the ontology to enrich the data.
- The data model from the ontology can be used to automate the identification of biological parts via SPARQL queries.



- One of the strengths of the SBOL Stack is its ability to register many Sesame RDF databases and perform federated queries for data integration.
- These queries allow for the retrieval and compilation of more complete data from multiple databases without the need to manually query each individual repository.
- Repositories that contain any RDF information about biological parts can be included in the federated queries.
- The SBOL Stack is compliant with and integrates seamlessly with Web2.0 resources.

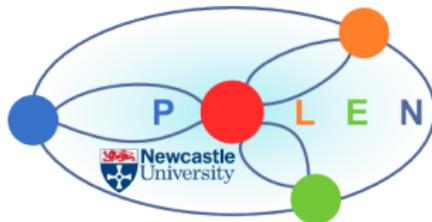
Federated Querying

Sesame RDF Databases



Automatic Updated Data Integration

- The SBOL Stack automatically retrieves the most up-to-date data each time a query is made.
- The SBOL Stack can also take advantage of the cloud-based messaging system, POLEN (PrOtocol for Linking External Nodes) developed for the Flowers Consortium¹, to receive a notification when data is updated.



¹<http://www.synbiuk.org/>



SBOLhub

- We have been developing the SBOLhub, a front end Web application that utilizes the SBOL Stack as a back end.
- The SBOLhub allows users to upload entire SBOL documents along with meta data such as a description and purpose.
- Users can then share their designs with other users or make them publicly available.
- Users can also view each entry and obtain images of the designs rendered using VisBOL².

²<http://visbol.org/design/>

- As more biological data is generated, it will become essential to adopt standards and repositories so computer applications can communicate and exchange data efficiently and in an automated manner.
- Tools and repositories that support standards like SBOL will be required to create workflows for design in synthetic biology.
- The automatic retrieval and integration of SBOL data provided by the SBOL Stack makes it a must-have tool for synthetic biology workflows.
- The SBOL Stack can be integrated into tools and workflows.

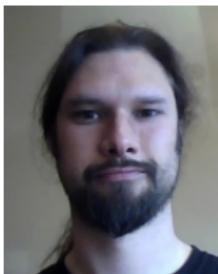
Ongoing Work

- The SBOL Stack can be accessed computationally as a SPARQL endpoint.
 - However, we are creating an API to allow for higher level access to the SBOL Stack through a search interface.
 - This API will eliminate the need to write raw SPARQL queries.
- Additionally, we are working with journals to integrate submission of synthetic biology designs from the SBOLhub into the paper submission process.

Acknowledgements



Goksel Misirli



Matthew Pocock



Jennifer Hallinan



Anil Wipat

