**Assignment 8: Blast, dotplots, and mummer to compare genomes**

**Your name:    
Your email address:**

### Aside: *Check the discussion board on the CURE project*.

### In the first part of today’s exercise, we will analyze a couple of phage genomes. These are available in today’s zip archive [here](https://j.p.gogarten.uconn.edu/mcb3421_2023/lab8archive.zip). The file we will analyze contains 11 genomes of phages that infect *Paenibacillus* sp.. It is a multiple fasta formatted file.

### 1) Comparing phage genomes

### The genomes are in the file all\_ordered\_renamed4.fasta. Check the file format using a text editor.

### 1A) GENOME PAIR RAPID DOTTER (GEPARD)

### If Gepard is installed on your computer, open it and load the file all\_ordered\_renamed4.fasta for both sequence 1 and 2.

### If gepard is not installed, follow the instruction in this document (from the archive) to install it *Dotplot\_Learning Activity Instructions-7146.docx*. Briefly, go to <https://cube.univie.ac.at/gepard> ; scroll to the bottom of the page, download gepard via the gepard1.3 link. Move the folder to the application folder. Open it and click on gepard.jar. You need to go to settings and allow the program to run.

### A screenshot of a computer screen Description automatically generatedClick in Advanced Mode, in the plot menu, place a Check in “Auto params”, then click create dotplot. Check the dotplot. If you hover with the pointer over the plot, it lists at the bottom to which genomes the windows under the pointer belong. If you click, the cross hair will move to that location (and the sequences corresponding to the two windows under the cross should be listed at the bottom, this works in version 1.4, but often fails in version 2.1). In the example on the right the cross hair is over the comparison between the Dash and Lilo genomes.

### Which phages have similar genomes? (You can use the number 1st, 2nd ... to denote the genomes).

### In the plot menu, uncheck the auto params and explore the impact of different word lengths -- you need to click on update plot every time. (8 , 10, 15, 30, 80, >100 are good choices. -- Depending on the power of your computer values below 8 might take too long to calculate.) In case the program zooms in onto a small section of the plot, click on the magnifying glass (with a -) repeatedly to zoom out until you see the complete plot.

### Which word length choices highlight the similarities between the first three phages?

### Which work to highlight the similarities between the next three (Lilo, Callan, Dash)

### 1B) Mummer

### Open filezilla, connect to your account on xanadu.

**Start  Filezilla**Open the site manager (under the file menu, or the left most icon in the bar on top of the application window).

A screenshot of a computer

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Click on the NewSite button at the bottom left of the site manager window.  
On the right   
under **protocol** select **SFTP**under**host**enter **transfer.cam.uchc.edu**  
under **LogOn** Type select **normal**  
under **User** enter **mcb3421usrXX** (Do not use a leading 0 if your number is below 10).  E.g., your username would be mcb3421usr1.)  
under **Password** enter your xanadu password  
Hit connect.

### Create a lab8 directory and enter it. (Right or shift click on your home directory in filezilla, select “create directory and enter it”, in the window that pops up, replace “New directory” with lab8).

### Transfer the file all\_ordered\_renamed4.fasta (from the lab8archive) into the lab8 directory on xanadu.

### Establish an ssh connection to your account on Xanadu:

Open an ssh terminal window (either using PuTTY or Terminal), log into Xanadu:

**ssh mcb3421usrXX@xanadu-submit-ext.cam.uchc.edu**

Enter your password

### To run nucmer, we move to a compute node and load the necessary modules:

**srun --pty -p mcbstudent --qos=mcbstudent --mem=2G bash  
module load MUMmer**/4.0.2   
**module load gnuplot**  
**module load perl**

### The only different to last week’s exercise is that we want all matches, not only the best ones. This is accomplished using the --maxmatch option in nucmer (for more info try nucmer -h)

### The following command runs nucmer comparing the multiple fasta file against itself:

**nucmer --maxmatch all\_ordered\_renamed4.fasta all\_ordered\_renamed4.fasta**

### To get the plot we again use mummerplot:

### A blue and green arrows Description automatically generatedmummerplot --postscript --prefix maxmatch\_renamed4 out.delta

Use filezilla to transfer the postscript file (remember of refresh the directory listing in filezilla) to your laptop and open it in preview or GIMP.

How does the image compare to the gepard analysis?

Which do you like better? Are there any instances where the genomes are not colinear? (inversions/recombinations).

**If you have time, calculate a dotplot in Gepard for one of the intein-free and intein invaded homologs identified in lab 6.**

**2. Comparing divergent genomes using blastp from the command line**

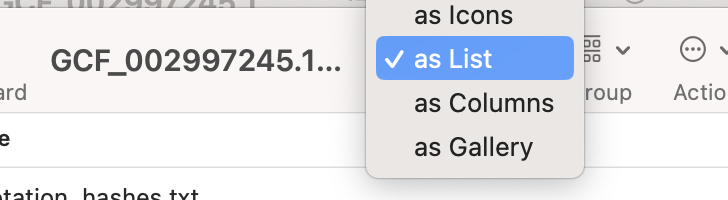
For today's first exercise you will the protein sequences from two completely sequenced genomes as multiple fasta formatted files. One bacterium, one archaeon or one Eukaryote should work nicely. The lab8 zip archive includes a few examples, but please feel free to go after an organism that you are interested in.

Go to the NCBI’s genome browser at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genome/browse/ ; select prokaryotes, find the completely sequenced organism (same as last week). Once you have located the organism of interest, move to the last (most right) column of the table. Right (or shift, or command)click on the “R” and copy the link.

A screenshot of a calendar

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Open finder. In the menu on top select the “Go” pulldown menu, select “Go To Server”. In the window that pops up, paste the address you copied from the “R” link. Click connect. In the next pop-up menu, select guest. In the folder that opens, select list view



We want to download the file ending in \*\_protein.faa.gz .

Double clicking downloads the file and usually unpacks it. (If not we can gunzip it on the cluster). Rename the file into something recognizable and meaningful. Remember no spaces in the name!

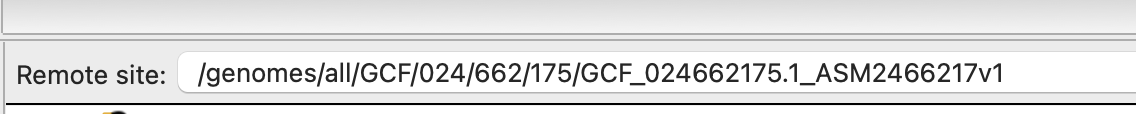
Repeat for another genome.

Alternative:

In filezilla, connect to ftp://ftp.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov A screenshot of a computer

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Once connected, past the link into the remote site, and delete everthing upto /genomes.



This opens a file with all data available at NCBI on the genome.

Use filezilla to transfer the .faa files into your account on Xanadu.

In case your ssh section was terminated, log in again:

Open an ssh terminal window (either using PuTTY or Terminal), log into Xanadu:

**ssh mcb3421usrXX@xanadu-submit-ext.cam.uchc.edu**

Enter your password

**cd** into the directory into which you had transferred the genomes

move to a compute node:  
**srun --pty -p mcbstudent --qos=mcbstudent --mem=2G bash**

Check the beginning of your \*.faa files:

**head \*.faa**

Check the available modules – in case of blast you need to use the version number.

**module avail**

Load the modules for blast and perl:

**module load blast/2.13.0  
module load perl**

Pick one of your “genomes” to turn into a searchable databank (in this example Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa):

**makeblastdb -in Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa -dbtype prot** **-parse\_seqids**

or

**makeblastdb -in Saccharomyces\_cerevisiae\_S288C\_protein.faa -dbtype prot** **-parse\_seqids**

or

**makeblastdb -in Homo\_sapiens\_protein.faa -dbtype prot** **-parse\_seqids**

This should be pretty fast. And report how many sequences were added to the databank.

To search the databank we will use one "genome" as "query", the the databank created above as databank.

In the example the databank is Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa and the genome from Haloferax is the query:  **blastp -query Haloferax\_volcanii\_DS2\_protein.faa -db Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa -out blast\_all.txt -outfmt 6 -evalue 10**

or

**blastp -query Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa -db Saccharomyces\_cerevisiae\_S288C\_protein.faa -out blast\_all.txt -outfmt 6 -evalue 10**

Note: If you use a large genome as query that has many paralogs, you get the same match in the smaller genome over and over again. You need to make the databank first.

or

**blastp -query Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa -db Homo\_sapiens\_protein.faa -out blast\_all.txt -outfmt 6 -evalue 1**

(the first is fast, the 2nd will take 5 minutes, the 3rd ....)

Depending on the size of the databank and the size of the query this might take a few minutes to finish. If you want your command-line prompt back, type ctrl z to halt the process, and then enter bg to continue the search in background. ps gives you a list of things that are still running.

You can check the progress in filezilla watching the size increase in the output file.

-outfmt 6 specifies a tabular output format. (We use an e-value of 10 to also obtain some insignificant hits.)

The blast program will now take every sequence in query file and do a blast search against the database (i.e., this performs a couple of thousand blast searches).   
This will take a few minutes. While waiting check in what other students are doing :) Or check [this](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279684/table/appendices.T.options_common_to_all_blast/?report=objectonly) listing of options to use with the blast command.

We are also interested in the best blast hit for each query.  The script [blastTopHit.pl](https://j.p.gogarten.uconn.edu/mcb3421_2021/labs/blastTopHit.pl) goes to thought he output table and for every query only prints out the first entry.    
(It is possible to restrict the blast search to return only one hit, but it is alleged that this only return the first significant hit encountered, not the best one).

To get the perl script you can directly copy the file from the above link:

**curl -O https://j.p.gogarten.uconn.edu/mcb3421\_2021/labs/blastTopHit.pl**

To run the perl script, execute:   
**perl blastTopHit.pl blast\_all.txt > blast\_top.txt**

Check the files blast\_all.txt and blast\_top.txt using more or head:

**head blast\_all.txt blast\_top.txt**

[Here](http://www.drive5.com/usearch/manual/blast6out.html) is a description of the columns in the outfmt -6 option. A text file containing the header is [here](https://j.p.gogarten.uconn.edu/mcb3421_2021/labs/header.txt).   
Use the cat command to add these to the blast output files:  
**cat header.txt blast\_top.txt > blast.top\_h.txt**  
Check the files with header blast\_all\_h.txt and blast\_top\_h.txt using more or head:   
**head blast.top\_h.txt**

Go back to **Filezilla**. Navigate to your lab8 directory, and transfer the blast.top\_h.txt file to your Desktop. Load it into Excel.  On my computer I can right click on the file and select open with and then Excel. On the Macs in the lab this will be slightly more complicated, as office is not installed, thus you will need to either use office 365 (in a browser) or first install MS office in your account.

Click in the top left field of the table, then convert the spreadsheet into a table with headers.

What is the accession ID pair of the most conserved protein between your two genomes (sort the table first on bitscores (higher to lower) , **then** on e-values (lower to higher)?

To learn what the most similar sequence(s) encode, we can copy the Accession numbers for the most similar matches (use the database IDs in the second column), paste them into a text editor (I use BBedit), replace the new line symbols "\n" with "," and copy the comma separated list into the following command:

**blastdbcmd -entry *IDnumber1,IDnumber2,IDnumber3* -db *YourDatabaseName***  
for example (all on one line): **blastdbcmd -entry WP\_002662068.1,WP\_106011477.1,WP\_002557027.1,WP\_002557108.1,WP\_106013134.1,WP\_002656192.1,WP\_106011525.1,WP\_002665762.1,WP\_002657046.1,WP\_106013121.1,WP\_002661984.1,WP\_010883927.1,WP\_002657221.1,WP\_002661428.1,WP\_106011512.1,WP\_002657221.1,WP\_106011512.1,WP\_002661428.1,WP\_002656799.1,WP\_002661757.1,WP\_106011512.1,WP\_002660520.1,WP\_002661852.1,WP\_002656738.1,WP\_002660520.1,WP\_002660666.1,WP\_106011471.1 -db Borreliella\_burgdorferi\_protein.faa**

This should return the fasta formated sequences of the matches.

What is given as function in the fasta annotation lines?

In Excel, select the third column from the left (this is the percent identity for each BLASTp match), and Insert -- Statistic Chart (all-blue column chart icon in the Charts section) -- Histogram   
(Aside: I had problems in editing the histograms this creates on a Mac. It worked much better, when I selected tools, analysis tool pack (you might need to install this first), Histogram. I added a column somewhere that gave the bins from 0 to 100% in 5% increments)

([More](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Create-a-histogram-85680173-064b-4024-b39d-80f17ff2f4e8) about histograms in Excel, including the formula used for default binning.)

You get a histogram of all percent identities. Repeat the histogram for E-values ≤ 10-3, and  E-values >.1

**Do you observe a smooth distribution of % identity values (a distribution with two peaks would be noteworthy)?   
   
  
What can explain the difference (or lack thereof) in the histograms for significant and insignificant hits?**

**Can you explain, why % identity is not a good criterion to distinguish significant from insignificant hits?**

For the following questions, the BLAST Command Line Applications User Manual may be helpful → [link](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279675/)

**How can you get information on the possible parameters in blastp using the command line? (try blastp -h first)   
   
  
How can you set the wordsize to 2 ?   
   
  
How can you filter the query sequence for regions with low complexity?**

**Do not forget to email the completed form!**