Press folder

€2.6 million fundraising for omicX

November 14, 2017 - Le Petit-Quevilly
The French startup omicX, creator of the OMICtools platform dedicated to researchers and bioinformaticians, has signed a new €2.6 million fund-raising agreement with a Swiss-based private investment bank, Normandie Participations, and Bpifrance.

The digital transformation of science has seen breakthrough innovations in biology and technology, generating ever-increasing volumes of data. The development of bioinformatics tools for storing, processing and sharing massive volumes of biological data is the fastest growing field in biomedical sciences.

Democratizing bioinformatics

Arnaud Desfeux, PhD in Neurosciences, founder and CEO of omicX, recognized early the need to make these tools more readily accessible for researchers, as well as the value of an interconnected and accessible community of bioinformaticians, tool developers, and researchers. “In today’s context of an exponential production of these essential research tools, locating, classifying and documenting them in a single location will solve a major challenge for users and experts alike”.

Launched in 2013, OMICtools is a continuously updated database with a proprietary classification designed by the team. It provides a single platform for finding new tools, encourages collaboration and promotes member expertise. In just a few guided clicks, users can find adapted computational answers to their biological questions. As the current leader in the domain of bioinformatics tools and the reference on the international biology scene, it offers more than 22,000 tools and is consulted by 1,300,000 visitors annually from leading universities and institutions worldwide.

Combining artificial intelligence and collective intelligence

After raising €1 million in 2016, omicX will use the €2.6 million round of fundraising from late 2017 to continue expanding the OMICtools platform. Funds will be funneled into creating a unique and innovative feature which provides a logical sequence of tools to answer complex biological questions. The project is based on algorithms fed by machine learning from OMICtools, and fine-tuned by user feedback. “Combining artificial intelligence with collective intelligence, the pipelines project foreshadows the future of omicX as a global bioinformatics leader” affirms Arnaud Desfeux.

Based in Rouen with nearly 30 employees, the company is currently hiring to reinforce its artificial intelligence capabilities to customize tools pathways.
What is bioinformatics?

Since the beginning of the human genome sequencing project in 1990, we have seen exponential growth in the number and range of bioinformatics tools available. Today, researchers can choose among over 100,000 databases and software tools to exploit their data.

Bioinformatics describes the interface between biology and computational science, where informatics techniques are used to store, process and extract useful information from biomedical data generated from studies using techniques including genomics, proteomics or metabolomics. As one of the fastest growing scientific fields, this recent revolution is producing massive amounts of complex data in many areas, such as genome sequencing, bioimaging, cellular biology and personalized medicine. Bioinformatics tools are indispensable for future biological research, to sort, exploit and visualize large datasets which cannot be analyzed manually.

The challenge today is to handle Big Data!

However finding the right series of programs to solve big data challenges is difficult and time-consuming. Many tools are hard to locate and poorly documented among the mass of scientific publications and information available on the web. Scientists and clinicians have to locate and choose an appropriate tool set for their project and their computational skills, while developers often struggle to reach their full audience or waste time developing existing programs.

OMICtools offers a solution to these major challenges with an online open-access platform making bioinformatics tools more accessible for researchers.
OMICtools in pole position for the bioinformatics revolution

Launched in 2013 by omicX, a French startup founded by Arnaud Desfeux PhD, OMICtools centralizes and categorizes new and existing bioinformatics tools. The platform democratizes bioinformatics by offering a practical and accessible work environment, dedicated to biological data analysis. OMICtools’ strategic positioning developed from an ongoing collaboration with Bruno Gonzalez PhD, from the Institute for Research and Innovation in Biomedicine, Rouen University, and has been strengthened with other active partnerships and collaborative publications with researchers from academic and medical laboratories.

The number of visitors has skyrocketed since its creation, with a constantly growing audience. OMICtools is today a global reference, with visitors from major research and healthcare institutions and top class universities worldwide. Supporting this growth, omicX is expected to have 40 employees by the end of 2018, strengthening the 14-strong pipelines team with high-level bioinformatics profiles, as well as web developers and IT specialists to further develop the platform.

Making bioinformatics tools easy to discover and use

OMICtools has classified over 22,000 bioinformatics tools in a repository equipped with a powerful search engine. New and updated tools are added as they are published. The platform offers users easy access to critical specifications for each tool. Users can search on the platform the same way they search on Google, typing keywords and using filters, with machine-learning methodology ensuring accurate interpretation of user terms. Software tools and databases are ranked according to an algorithm accounting for query-term proximity designed to emphasize tool quality and allow new effective and promising tools to come to the forefront.

Tapping into the collaborative nature of biological research, OMICtools is based on a community model so users can interact directly with tool developers and other users, and open discussions with experts to report bugs or ask advice. They can also share, bookmark and review tools.
OMICtools is an ideal forum for building trust in the field of software development and making bioinformatics projects transparent and publicly accessible. Software developers can directly upload their source code into a version-controlled repository, and are encouraged to use contributorship badges to credit their contribution to tools they design.

A sunburst representation of OMICtools classification, showing the number of tools available for the category "genome annotation"

Designing the future of bioinformatics

Leveraging OMICtools, omicX is already working on new unique features to support the ongoing biological revolution, with the objective to provide researchers with time-saving solutions based on artificial intelligence to forecast their needs and accelerate their analyses.

In early 2018, the company will release a pipeline creator feature allowing users to generate a bioinformatics tools pathway in response to biological problems. This innovation will become the first intelligent decision-making guide to answer scientists’ needs to exploit big data, and will improve research quality standards via reproducibility and traceability of big data analysis.

The second major release concerns a powerful cloud solution able to totally eliminate the need for IT knowledge as well as costly investment in omics programs. This one-click feature will make it possible for any researcher worldwide to run and save all of their analyses on a single platform, regardless of their IT limitations, in a timeframe that defies all competition.
About omicX

Since 2013, omicX, the French start-up founded by Arnaud Desfeux PhD, has been striving to democratize bioinformatics, by offering a practical work environment, dedicated to biological data analysis to assist life scientists identify the optimal tools for exploiting their omics data.

omictools.com

About the investors

Normandie Participations

Normandie Participations is a French regional fund promoting the acquisition of equity stakes in companies located in Normandy. Based on a principle of co-investment with private stakeholders, Normandie Participations, with a 100% Normandy Region capital, supports companies in the fields of startup, innovation, development, transmission and industrial redeployment. The fund has been operational since September 2016 and will have €100 million by 2019. In less than a year, the fund has supported 15 companies for €15M invested.

www.normandie-participations.fr

Bpifrance

Bpifrance, a subsidiary of Caisse des Dépôts and the French State, is a trusted partner of entrepreneurs which provides companies with credit, collateral and equity financing support from startup through to stock exchange listing. In partnership with Business France, Bpifrance also provides guidance and enhanced support services for innovation, external growth, and export. Bpifrance offers companies a range of financing for each key stage in their development, and an offer adapted to regional particularities.

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