Boardroom Minutes
LIFE SCIENCES
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Sun microsystems
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Your Invitations

Free Hardware with "Finch on Sun" Solution from Geospiza and Sun

Geospiza and Sun Microsystems have teamed up to offer life science firms a cost-effective platform for managing the production and analysis of DNA sequencing and genotyping data. The solution, Finch on Sun, is fully integrated from instrument to result, and easy to upgrade. If maintaining a custom-built system is hurting your productivity, it's time to learn more about Finch on Sun. For a limited time only, each new Finch on Sun system is delivered with a free Sun Fire V20z server based on the AMD Opteron processor—about a $3,000 value! Get details.

Simplify the Storage and Management of DNA Sequencing Data

Geospiza's Web-based system for managing the production analysis of DNA sequencing data and results lets sequencing data producers focus on their work, not IT.

In 1998, the Interdisciplinary Center for Biotechnology Research (ICBR) at the University of Florida began development of a large-scale DNA sequencing program. Today ICBR, a service organization within the university, serves the sequencing needs of several hundred client researchers working in approximately 150 labs at the University of Florida and affiliated research facilities.

As the sequencing lab was being set up, Bill Farmerie, Ph.D., scientific director of the ICBR Genomics Program, recognized a looming challenge that, if unaddressed, would compromise the genomics and informatics potential of ICBR.

"Unless we solved our data management issues, we couldn't sustain a DNA sequencing program," recalls Farmerie. "We could give researchers their DNA sequence data, but without effective data management, they wouldn't be able to really use it. Failing to help researchers manage their data would eliminate repeat business; it would force research clients to look elsewhere for their DNA sequencing needs."

Putting Data in Its Place

The data management challenge Farmerie identified is hardly unique to ICBR. While the genomics and proteomics revolution has opened up exciting new avenues for discovery, it has also unleashed a tidal surge of data that continues to inundate

A One-Two Punch for Sequencing Data Production

The demand for knowledge from DNA sequencing is growing rapidly and, with it, the need for more integrated systems to manage the information. Organizations can now bring down the cost of sequencing by establishing processes and developing reliable automation.

Geospiza has teamed with Sun Microsystems to offer standardized hardware, software, and processes that will improve the productivity and

researchers, often dragging them away from their core goals. How well organizations manage this flood of data can determine whether scientists sink or swim as they pursue research objectives.

To help him tame the torrent of data at ICBR, Farmerie went hunting for software that would allow him to manage and provide data to researchers in a format they could use. "At the time, there weren't too many commercial applications available, but my evaluation process led me to Geospiza," says Farmerie. "They delivered the system in early 1999, and it was up and running the day it arrived. In retrospect, selecting the Finch Sequencing Center was probably the smartest thing I ever did."

The Geospiza Finch Sequencing Center provides customers with a suite of server-based software products for managing DNA sequencing data production and results. Offered in both Enterprise and Laboratory editions, the Web-based Finch system is a logical replacement for custom-built systems that are increasingly difficult to build, upgrade, and maintain.

"The majority of Geospiza customers, from large enterprises to research laboratories, are collecting increasing amounts of data; across the industry the amount of data is growing faster than Moore's Law," says Kevin Banks, Ph.D., vice president of business development at Geospiza.

"Many of these organizations have tried to manage all this data with custom-built solutions. That process is wrought with inefficiencies as facilities shift focus from their core mission—producing high-quality sequencing data—to solving complex IT and data distribution issues. With Finch, we offer clients an out-of-the box Web-based solution for managing the collection, processing, storing, and distribution of data that can easily double their throughput and capacity.

"For example, one of the most common things we hear from customers is that they're drowning in complexity," says Banks. "Typically, they're using a variety of methods to distribute information—FTP, e-mail, CDs, and even printed paper. Finch puts all that data into a centralized database and makes it available automatically through Web-based forms. That enables researchers and customers to get the information they need more efficiently, now in seconds as opposed to hours, and dramatically reduces the number of human touches."

The Finch core components include data management, data processing, order management, laboratory workflow, and system administration. Customers can also select other components—including an assembly manager, a BLAST search manager, a genotyping manager, an invoicing manager, and an Oligo order manager—to tailor the system to their unique needs.

An Evolving Solution

efficiency of their facilities. Now through the Sun Customer Ready Systems (CRS) program, customers can purchase the Finch Sequencing Center bundled with the Sun Fire V20z server, which outperforms most of its direct competitors on the market according to a number of industry standard benchmarks.

This limited-time offer includes the complete Finch Sequencing Center Laboratory Edition, a standard configuration of the Sun Fire V20z server (with an AMD Opteron 1.6Ghz CPU), one year of technical support and software assurance, system installation, and shipping for $13,995.

As a longtime Geospiza customer, Farmerie has seen the software evolve significantly over the years. "They've added so many convenient features. In particular, it's become very much a self-service product. Today, our research clients can access data using the Finch interface; they can rank it, sort it, and search it however they like without even thinking about what's going on in the background from an IT perspective. All they need to know is how to use wildcards. That's important, because our clients are point-and-clickers. They aren't coders.

"Our role at ICBR is to lead our clients to the threshold where they can apply their expertise, knowledge, and data," concludes Farmerie. "Finch allows them to focus on using their data rather than generating it."