2010

**ENCODE whole-genome data in the UCSC Genome Browser**

Kate R. Rosenbloom  
*University of California, Santa Cruz*

Ting Wang  
*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

et al

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/open_access_pubs](https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/open_access_pubs)

**Recommended Citation**  
[https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/open_access_pubs/8345](https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/open_access_pubs/8345)

This Open Access Publication is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@Becker. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Becker. For more information, please contact engeszer@wustl.edu.
ENCODE whole-genome data in the UCSC Genome Browser

Kate R. Rosenbloom1,*, Timothy R. Dreszer1, Michael Pheasant1,2, Galt P. Barber1, Laurence R. Meyer1, Andy Pohl1, Brian J. Raney1, Ting Wang3, Angie S. Hinrichs1, Ann S. Zweig1, Pauline A. Fujita1, Katrina Learned1, Brooke Rhead1, Kayla E. Smith1, Robert M. Kuhn1, Donna Karolchik1, David Haussler1,4 and W. James Kent1

1Center for Biomolecular Science and Engineering, School of Engineering, University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), Santa Cruz, CA 95064, USA, 2Queensland Facility for Advanced Bioinformatics, Brisbane, Queensland 4072, Australia, 3Department of Genetics, Center for Genome Sciences, Washington University in St. Louis, 4444 Forest Park Pwky, St. Louis, MO 63108 and 4Howard Hughes Medical Institute, University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC), Santa Cruz, CA 95064, USA

Received September 21, 2009; Revised October 12, 2009; Accepted October 13, 2009

ABSTRACT

The Encyclopedia of DNA Elements (ENCODE) project is an international consortium of investigators funded to analyze the human genome with the goal of producing a comprehensive catalog of functional elements. The ENCODE Data Coordination Center at The University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) is the primary repository for experimental results generated by ENCODE investigators. These results are captured in the UCSC Genome Bioinformatics database and download server for visualization and data mining via the UCSC Genome Browser and companion tools (Rhead et al. The UCSC Genome Browser Database: update 2010, in this issue). The ENCODE web portal at UCSC (http://encodeproject.org or http://genome.ucsc.edu/ENCODE) provides information about the ENCODE data and convenient links for access.

BACKGROUND

With the completion of the draft sequence of the human genome in 2003, the ENCODE project (http://www.genome.gov/ENCODE) (1) was initiated as a follow-on project focused on identifying functional elements in the genome using a variety of experimental methods.

ENCODE pilot phase

ENCODE began as a pilot project focusing on 1% of the human genome. Results from this phase of ENCODE were reported in Nature (2) and a special issue of Genome Biology in June 2007 (3).

Data from this phase are available at UCSC in designated ENCODE ‘track groups’ within the UCSC browsers for the hg16, hg17 and hg18 human genome assemblies (NCBI Builds 34–36) (4–6). The pilot section of the UCSC ENCODE web portal (http://genome.ucsc.edu/ENCODE/pilot.html) supplies information about this phase of ENCODE, and a ‘Regions’ link on this page (http://genome.ucsc.edu/ENCODE/encode.hg18.html) provides convenient access to the areas of the genome with ENCODE pilot phase annotations.

ENCODE production (scale-up) phase

In September 2007, the ENCODE project scaled up to production mode, with the goal of generating high-throughput annotations on the full human genome. In addition to the increased scale and data volume, other aspects of the project expanded in an effort to standardize results and facilitate integrative analysis. Significant differences from the pilot phase include:

- Common cell types (http://www.genome.gov/26524238) and approved cell culture protocols
- Specification of standards for experiment verification and reporting
- Capture of experiment metadata using controlled vocabularies
- New experimental technologies based on high-throughput sequencing
- A data release policy restricting use of data for nine months following release

*To whom correspondence should be addressed. Tel: +1 831 459 7748; Fax: +1 831 459 1472; Email: kate@soe.ucsc.edu

© The Author(s) 2009. Published by Oxford University Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.5/uk/) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
To accommodate the increased scale and volume of ENCODE data submissions, the ENCODE project at UCSC was expanded to include a more formal data submission process with substantial automation. The browser and download sites were expanded to include new data types, the capture of additional metadata, and new track organization features (described below).

Related projects
In parallel with the ENCODE project, the modENCODE project (http://www.modencode.org/) (7) aims to similarly study the genomes of two model organisms: worm (Caenorhabditis elegans) and fruitfly (Drosophila melanogaster).

ENCODE DATA AT UCSC
As of September 2009, the ENCODE DCC has processed a full year of production-phase data submissions from the ENCODE data providers, representing four defined data freezes (Nov08, Feb09, Jul09 and Sep09). A total of 341 experiments have been submitted to the DCC, and 207 of these—in 18 browser tracks—have been released to the UCSC public server after quality review. These tracks include chromatin immunoprecipitation experiments for transcription factor binding or regions of histone marks; maps of open chromatin, chromatin interactions, and DNA methylation; transcriptome profiling of whole cell and cellular compartments by RNA-seq and microarray; and identification of transcript ends together with high-quality gene annotations.

Table 1 summarizes the experiments submitted to the ENCODE DCC as of mid-September 2009. See the ‘Data submission status spreadsheet’ (Supplementary Data S1) for a complete list of submitted experiments with status. The ENCODE Consortium defined these two cell lines as ‘Tier1’, required for use by all ENCODE groups. This standardization ensures greater consistency between different tracks. An additional five cell types (HeLaS3, HepG2, NHEK, HUVEC and H1ES) were designated ‘Tier2’, shared by many groups. Finally, individual labs have registered for use an additional 68 cell types designated ‘Tier3’. The full list of cell types in use by ENCODE, with vendor IDs and cell culture protocol documentation, is available from the ‘Cell Types’ link at the UCSC ENCODE portal (http://genome.ucsc.edu/ENCODE/cellTypes.html).

For each experiment type (ChIP-seq, DNase-seq, etc.), the ENCODE investigators conduct multiple experiments, using different cell lines, tissue samples and (as appropriate) other variables for the experiment type. Transcriptome experiments typically vary the RNA extracts (e.g. polyA+), polyA−, total or short) and the subcellular compartment from which the extract was obtained (e.g. nucleus, cytosol, nucleolus or whole cell). Chromatin immunoprecipitation to localize transcription factor binding or regions of histone marks is performed with differing antibodies. ENCODE investigators have registered 59 antibodies with the DCC.

Table 1. Summary of ENCODE datasets, as of 15 September 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Investigators</th>
<th>Number of experiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BiP</td>
<td>Bi-directional promoters</td>
<td>NHGRI</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAGE</td>
<td>5′ cap analysis gene expression</td>
<td>Riken</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChIP-seq</td>
<td>TF and polymerase binding, histone marks by ChIP</td>
<td>Yale, UC Davis, HudsonAlpha, Broad, UW, UNC</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA-seq</td>
<td>DNA fragment sequencing</td>
<td>Genome Inst Singapore</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNase-seq</td>
<td>DNase hypersensitivity</td>
<td>UW, Duke</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exon-array</td>
<td>Gene expression by all-exon microarray</td>
<td>Affymetrix/CSHL</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRE-seq</td>
<td>Formaldehyde Assisted Isolation of Regulatory Elements</td>
<td>U. Texas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genes</td>
<td>High-quality gene annotations</td>
<td>Gencode/Sanger</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapability</td>
<td>Uniqueness of short read nmers</td>
<td>Broad, Duke, UMass</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl27</td>
<td>DNA methylation by Illumina 27K</td>
<td>HudsonAlpha</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl-seq</td>
<td>DNA methylation by restriction enzymes</td>
<td>NHGRI</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRE</td>
<td>Negative regulatory elements</td>
<td>Genome Inst. Singapore</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PET</td>
<td>5′- and 3′-paired-end tags</td>
<td>SUNY Albany</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIP-chip</td>
<td>RNA-binding proteins</td>
<td>Affymetrix/CSHL</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNA-chip</td>
<td>RNA microarray</td>
<td>Caltech, CSHL, GIS, Yale</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNA-seq</td>
<td>RNA sequencing</td>
<td>NHGRI</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TbaAlign</td>
<td>Multi-species alignment with TBA</td>
<td>HudsonAlpha</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNV</td>
<td>Copy number variation</td>
<td>U Washington</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS-SC</td>
<td>Chromatin interactions: DHS versus TSS</td>
<td>U Mass</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5C</td>
<td>Chromatin interactions: pilot region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
been active in developing file formats, database designs and browser track displays to accommodate these new data types. The ‘Sample ENCODE Session’ in the Supplementary Data S2 provides a Genome Browser screen shot showing a broad sampling of ENCODE data.

**ACCESSING THE ENCODE DATA**

UCSC provides three major methods of accessing the ENCODE data. For viewing multiple ENCODE experiments simultaneously alongside standard annotations such as gene positions, the Genome Browser is the method of choice. The Genome Browser displays the data graphically and works well on regions of up to tens of megabases in size. The Table Browser provides access to the same data in a variety of easily parseable formats, offering basic but useful data analysis as well as the ability to compute intersections and correlations between tracks. The Table Browser interface parallels that of the Genome Browser, which facilitates finding the data tables that correspond to a particular track. Finally, all ENCODE data are available as downloadable files on the UCSC FTP site.

In general, we recommend getting familiar with the data graphically in the Genome Browser first, then using the Table Browser to explore the organization of the database and to download subsets of data no larger than a chromosome. For access to full-genome data, it is best to download the data as files from the FTP site. ENCODE tracks are standard tracks in the UCSC genome database; therefore, all tools available at the site can be applied to ENCODE data.

**Visualizing data in the genome browser**

Whole-genome ENCODE data generated during the ENCODE production phase are loaded into the standard browser track groups in the UCSC genome database (in contrast to pilot phase data, which were placed in ENCODE-specific groups). Nearly all of the ENCODE data can be found in the ‘expression’ and ‘regulation’ track groups; a few ENCODE tracks are located in the ‘mapping’, ‘genes’ and ‘variation’ groups. ENCODE tracks are highlighted in the browser track menus by an NHGRI helix logo (Figure 1). The ‘Release Log’ link at the UCSC ENCODE portal (http://genome.ucsc.edu/ENCODE/releaseLog.html) provides access to the list of released ENCODE tracks, along with links to the methods description and configuration for each track.
To make the hundreds of ENCODE tracks more manageable for users, we have enhanced the UCSC Genome Browser track configuration to provide more power, flexibility and interactivity. Subtracks can now be individually customized, organized into multiple ‘views’, and reordered by column sort or by drag-and-drop. We have incorporated a structured metadata display on Genome Browser track details pages and have added a link to facilitate bulk download of data files associated with a track.

Figure 2 provides a detailed look at these new features. The ‘Views’ section near the top of the track configuration page shows the potentially multiple data representations for a single experiment. Efforts have been made to standardize ‘views’ across similar datasets in ENCODE. Most tracks follow one of two patterns:

(i) Regulatory elements: Peaks (discrete sites) and Signal (continuous graph of enrichment)
(ii) Gene expression: Plus and Minus Signal (coverage graph of reads on forward and reverse strand) and Alignments (short reads aligned to genome)

Below the ‘Views’ section, configuration pages for ENCODE tracks typically include a matrix of checkboxes that allow the selection of subtracks by experimental variables such as cell type or antibody. Subtracks can also be selected individually from the list of all subtracks displayed at the bottom of the configuration section. The column headers of this section (which include the experimental variables shown in the matrix) define the ordering of subtracks within the track display. The subtrack ordering can be changed by clicking the column headers to reorder by group, or by dragging and dropping individual subtracks in the list.

The clickable (…) icons expand the display to show the metadata (experiment type and variables, data format and data freeze) for each subtrack. Clicking the ‘schema’ link for any subtrack listed on the track configuration page displays a full description of the data representation. The database representations and file formats for the peaks and alignments data were designed specifically for ENCODE. Signal views use one of the standard UCSC graphing formats: wiggle, bedGraph or bigWig.

Finally, note the ‘restricted until’ date for each subtrack, which shows the date when restricted use of the data expires. The data use policy for ENCODE is described in more detail below.

Bulk downloads of data

The DCC provides both raw data (sequence reads and quality scores) and processed data files (alignments, density graphs and peak calls). The raw data from high-throughput sequencing are provided in FASTQ format when feasible. SOLID colorspace sequences and quality are provided in CSFASTA and CSQUAL format.

ENCODe files can be retrieved by web access or anonymous FTP from the UCSC download server. Due to the large size of most ENCODE data sets, FTP retrieval is recommended.

The ENCODE portal includes a Downloads index page (http://genome.ucsc.edu/ENCODe/downloads.html) that provides convenient web access to data files by track. The top-level download area for ENCODe data is at http://hgdownload.cse.ucsc.edu/goldenPath/hg18/encodeDCC.

For FTP access, connect to the FTP server at ‘hgdownload.cse.ucsc.edu’, then move to the ‘goldenPath/hg18/encodeDCC’ directory. Each of the listed subdirectories contains the data files for an individual ENCODE track (one track for each data type per lab), along with an index.html page listing the data files, metadata describing the experiment, the type, experimental variables, the data format and a data restriction timestamp. An example is shown in Figure 2.

For convenient access to the ENCODE data in the Genome Browser, a Downloads link is included on the track configuration page below the subtrack selection list.

Data use policy

The following guidelines should be followed when using ENCODe data:

(i) Data users may freely use ENCODe data, but may not, without prior consent, submit publications that use an unpublished ENCODe dataset until nine months following the release of the dataset (see time stamp for release date).
(ii) Data users should properly acknowledge the ENCODE Project and resource producer(s) as the source of the data in any publication.

Outreach and tutorials

Additional informational materials, including free tutorials describing access to the ENCODE data and use of the UCSC Genome Browser, are available from OpenHelix at http://www.openhelix.com/.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

HG19 (GRCh37) human genome assembly

As of September 2009, all ENCODE results for the production phase of ENCODE have been reported on the hg18 (NCBI Build 36) genome assembly. The ENCODE Consortium plans to migrate to the newer human genome assembly in late 2009 or early 2010. As part of the migration, the DCC will convert the coordinates on annotations produced in the initial years of the project to the new assembly.

Mouse genome

The ENCODE project plans to expand to include the study of the Mus musculus genome beginning in late 2009.
Figure 2. Example configuration and details pages for an ENCODE track, showing important navigation and informational items.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the members of the ENCODE Consortium for their collaborative spirit and stamina over the six years of data production, submission and analysis that the ENCODE project has required to date. We also acknowledge Hiram Clawson, a core Genome Browser engineer who has contributed greatly to its overall success by his work to keep the browser reliable, fast and annotation-rich. We thank the UCSC CCDS team, Mark Diekhans and Rachel Harte, for their contributions to the Gencode and their tireless advocacy for the best data representations and display for the challenging and high-value RNA-seq data. Nicole Washington and Lincoln Stein at the modENCODE DCC have graciously shared DCC processes and strategies. Melissa Cline provided technical review and editing for this paper, for which we thank her. And finally, we acknowledge our dedicated team of system administrators, Jorge Garcia, Erich Weiler, Victoria Lin and Alex Wolfe, for their relentless provision of more cycles and megabytes, valiant swat-team trouble-shooting and for generally providing an outstanding computing environment.

REFERENCES