



GeneGo Reinforces E-Commerce Efforts with Sigma-Aldrich, Signs First Software Distribution Deal

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GeneGo has kicked off 2010 with an integration deal with a major reagent provider and an alliance that expands its business model into new territory.

This week, the company announced that it has signed an agreement with Sigma-Aldrich that will allow users of GeneGo's MetaCore 6.0, MetaDrug, and Eureka! products to directly access many of Sigma-Aldrich's life science and chemistry products via GeneGo's "Drug Details" pages.

The company also announced that it will distribute Omicsoft's Array Studio and Array Server software — marking the first third-party product that GeneGo will offer its customers.

Julie Bryant, vice president of business development at GeneGo, told *BioInform* via e-mail this week that the Omicsoft distribution deal grew out of discussions for an integration agreement with the firm.

As the integration between GeneGo's MetaCore and Omicsoft's Array Studio was put in place, the companies decided it would "make sense" for GeneGo to sell Omicsoft's products, Bryant said.

The deal expands the software capabilities that GeneGo can offer its customers and gives Omicsoft, a startup based in Morrisville, NC, a new sales channel via the GeneGo sales team.

Bryant said that GeneGo knows that "we can't do everything," which is why it decided to offer a set of third-party analytical tools rather than develop its own. "We know what our core competency is and we are very strong at curation and annotation of the literature and making that provide value by producing software tools for target identification, validation, biomarker discovery, lead prioritization, competitive intelligence and understanding mode of action."

Through the alliance, GeneGo now offers Array Studio, a software package with statistics and visualization tools for -omics data, and ArrayServer, a data repository for storing, searching, and integrating microarray, SNP, and copy number variation projects and data.

These tools are now integrated with GeneGo's MetaCore and MetaDrug data-mining platforms.

One Stop Science and Shopping

The collaboration with Sigma-Aldrich was a while in the making, Bryant explained.

Several GeneGo customers had asked the firm "to run custom projects to find compounds from vendors for them," she said. Those requests led to the decision to offer direct access to Sigma-Aldrich products from within GeneGo's software.

Making these products accessible via MetaCore, MetaDrug, and Eureka! ensures that researchers have "easy access to Sigma-Aldrich products presented in the appropriate context during the initial stages of experiment preparation," Nathan Allen, Sigma-Aldrich's market segment manager, said in a statement.

In this fashion, "all of our users can find where they can buy compounds from pathways they are interested in," Bryant said.

To achieve this functionality, GeneGo received compound identifiers from Sigma-Aldrich that it mapped to its own identifiers. It then linked those to the corresponding landing pages on the Sigma-Aldrich site. "Then we were good to go," she said. "We turned it around in one release cycle."

For users, this change means that while they are looking at gene lists or pathways, they can click on "drug details" to find absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion and toxicity properties; drug-drug interactions; quantitative structure activity relationship properties; or therapeutic areas.

The "drug details" page includes a link to the Sigma-Aldrich website so that customers can purchase a compound or reagent, Bryant explained.

Bryant said the software also offers access to products from "other vendors," but declined to provide details.

GeneGo is not the first informatics firm that Sigma-Aldrich has partnered with. The company has been working with Ingenuity since 2007 to add the firm's pathway-analysis capabilities to its "Your Favorite Gene" web portal [[BioInform 1-30-2009](#)].

Coming Together

Like the Sigma-Aldrich agreement, the Omicsoft alliance also arose from customer requests, Bryant said.

In a statement, Jack Liu, president of Omicsoft, noted that interpretation of both public and proprietary datasets requires sophisticated bioinformatics tools such as those from GeneGo.

"GeneGo's success in this area is unparalleled," he said.

Interpreting complex -omics datasets means performing statistical analysis of large data repositories and "knowledge-based" functional analysis that is based on manually curated pathways and ontologies, he added. "With this partnership, Omicsoft can continue to focus on new technology developments, including next-generation sequencing enterprise solutions."

Bryant said that she and her colleagues believe that Omicsoft's and GeneGo's products are "best in class" in their corresponding fields, "so bundling our solutions makes perfect scientific and commercial sense."

For example, customers will be able to search and retrieve public domain experimental data, then perform pathway analysis with ontology enrichment, networks, and interactome topology analysis.

"Customers now have access to public domain experimental data sets in [the Gene Expression Omnibus] that can easily be searched for, then uploaded and analyzed in MetaCore for pathway analysis and enrichments that can also be combined with their own proprietary data," she said.

Scientists can use one workflow and "they can purchase all the software and databases they need for this process from one vendor," she added.

Integrating Array Studio and Array Server with GeneGo's software was "straightforward," Bryant said.

Good Will + Business Sense

The recent deals follow a decision that the firm made last year to make 260 of its manually curated pathway maps available free of charge through its website.

The firm "thought long and hard about this and decided we wanted to give something back to our community," Bryant told BioInform.

Last July, the firm donated 41 pathway maps describing the role of interferons and cytokines in the immune response to the International Society for Interferon and Cytokine Research.

The reasoning is a combination of, in Bryant's words, "good will" and business sense. She explained that the firm's website traffic has "quadrupled" since launching the free maps in November. "We will also be seeing more e-commerce activity in 2010," she said.

Overall, the economic turbulence did not spare GeneGo in 2009. Looking back on the year, Bryant said that the firm was "coming off a strong 2008 where we doubled revenues."

In 2009, the privately held firm did "very well considering it was a tough economic year and many of the big pharmas [were] merging," she said.

GeneGo is in the midst of developing a pharmacogenomics software suite that links sequence variation information to pathways. "This is what we are doing in our MetaMiner

projects that have been very successful," she said.

Last year, GeneGo launched MetaMiner disease platforms for oncology, stem cells, dry eye, and central nervous system-related disorders. This year the plan is to launch platforms for respiratory, skin, metabolic diseases, immunology, and inflammation, she said.

This product line comprises "disease-specific" analytical platforms that include manual annotations of gene-disease causative associations, visualization of disease-affected pathways, and the analysis of disease-related -omics data.

The company brings together collaborators from industry and academia to help prioritize which disease pathways it reconstructs from the literature, Bryant explained.

Now, the firm is looking at "pharmacogenomics drug response as well as epigenetics in one centralized, easy-to-use-software tool set," she said.

Genomeweb system

These settings are generally managed by the web site so you rarely need to consider them.

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