

IBM announces free Web services to track DNA

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IBM is giving away free Web services technology to help scientists track down DNA, as the company continues its push into the promising life sciences arena.

Big Blue has also announced that it along with partner Proteome System has landed a multi-million dollar deal to provide Charles River Laboratories International with technology related to proteomics, which is the study of protein structure and function.

In its Web services offer, IBM said it was making available free trial software designed to improve searches for information stored by the National Center for Biotechnology Information. The center hosts public databases PubMed, which contains biomedical journal citations, and GenBank, which contains genetic sequences. According to IBM, searching for information at the center is becoming difficult as its databases grow to a colossal size. GenBank, for example, contains more than 22 million nucleotide sequences.

IBM said its Web services technology allows scientists to do such things as narrow the search for useful genes related to a particular diagnosis in PubMed and retrieve the nucleotide sequences in GenBank. Web services is the name given to many Web-based standards and protocols designed to let organizations connect disparate applications and share data. IBM's Web Services for Life Sciences software is available for download through its AlphaWorks Web site.

The life sciences field is seen as a fertile one for information technology providers. Market research firm IDC estimates that IT spending for biosciences will jump from \$12 billion in 2001 to \$30 billion in 2006. IBM says its life sciences division is its

fastest-growing unit. Formed in 2000, the division enjoyed triple-digit growth last year.