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INTRODUCTION

The programs included in the FORECASTER Platform have been developed within the Moitessier group at McGill University.

Team leader: Prof. Nicolas Moitessier

Development and support team leader: Dr. Eric Therrien

http://www.molecularforecaster.com/support.html

Please refer to the FORECASTER platform by citing the following publication:

Therrien E., Englebienne P., Arrowsmith A.G., Mendoza-Sanchez R., Corbeil C.R., Weill N., Campagna-Slater V., Moitessier N. Integrating medicinal chemistry, organic/combinatorial chemistry, and computational chemistry for the discovery of selective estrogen receptor modulators with FORECASTER, a novel platform for drug discovery "Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling" 2012, 52, 1, 210-224

Please refer to the FITTED program by citing the following publication:

Corbeil C.R., Englebienne P., Moitessier N. Docking ligands into flexible and solvated macromolecules. 1. Development and validation of FITTED 1.0 "Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling" 2007, 47, 2, 435-449

Please refer to the IMPACTS program by citing the following publication:

Campagna-Slater V., Pottel J., Therrien E., Cantin L.-D., Moitessier N. Development of a computational tool to rival experts in the prediction of sites of metabolism of xenobiotics by P450s "Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling" 2012, 52, 9, 2471-2483.
THE REGULAR USER INTERFACE

GENERAL COMMENTS – PROPER USAGE

When using the platform, it is important to avoid any white space in filenames. The platform might recognize the file, but the programs will fail to read the correct filename. Use “_” or “-” instead.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CLIENTS

FORECASTER has been tested on Internet Explorer 7 and higher, Firefox 3.6 and higher, Chrome, and Safari 4 and higher. Other browsers including Internet Explorer 6 are not fully compatible with the interface FORECASTER. However, they can still be used but some logos, fonts and other visual details may be affected.

LOGIN INTERFACE

When loaded in a browser, FORECASTER will display the login interface. User inputs login name and password to log into the system. The default account is “admin” with password “fitted” (without the quotes).

HOME INTERFACE

When logged in, the user will see the home page. This page presents the main features of the application.
THE SECTIONS

When on the home page, the user can see the various sections (i.e., workflows manager, jobs manager) appearing on the top. Clicking on them can give access to the other functionalities as discussed below.

WORKFLOW MANAGER

The workflow manager shows existing workflows.

It allows users to view details of existing workflows and to create new ones. Users can only edit and delete workflows that have been created in addition to the out-of-the-box workflows. The workflows can be edited and deleted only when they are not used by any job. In the Figure below Docking 1 is hard-coded and is given as an example by the developers and cannot be edited nor deleted. Workflow 1 was created by a user and can be edited/modified and/or deleted.
To view the schematic details of an existing workflow, click on **Show Workflow**.

### ADDING A NEW WORKFLOW

Clicking on the **Add a new workflow** icon allows the user to create a new workflow. A window appears where the user enters a name and a description of the new workflow to be created.

![Add Workflow](image)

After clicking on **Save**, the user may create a diagram that represents the flow of actions to be executed by clicking on **Start the diagram**.

### BUILDING A WORKFLOW DIAGRAM

A new workflow diagram is opened by clicking on **Start the diagram**.

![Diagram Board](image)

User can add boxes and connectors to the diagram by clicking on the green arrows. A **creates a split**, **creates a merge**, **and** **create boxes above and below the current one**. By clicking on the **icon the user can delete a box from the diagram.**

![Diagram Board](image)

A workflow represents a sequence of actions to be executed. **This sequence runs from left to right and from top to bottom.** In order to create a workflow, the user assigns actions to each
boxes by clicking on the box to be edited and clicking on the \( \text{+} \) next to one of the actions located on the right hand-side or directly on the action label (i.e., Add descriptors). 

Once the diagram is complete, user makes it active and available in the job manager section. The user created workflows become available to all the users on the platform. There is no validation for the compatibility of the actions within the workflow. The user needs to know which actions can be connected together (see the actions section below).

**JOBS MANAGER**

The job manager allows users to create a job based on a workflow. The first step is to parameterize the job, the second step is to execute the job, and the final step is to visualize the results.

**ADDING A NEW JOB**

Users add new jobs by clicking on \( \text{+} \) Add a new job icon, entering the job name, choosing the workflow to be used and clicking continue.
EDITING THE PARAMETERS AND SELECTING THE FILES TO PROCESS

The editing screen displays the diagram created previously in the workflow manager. In this section, the user has to setup each action of the workflow. This setup is done using a form, which allows users to modify settings and select files to be processed in the job.
First, users have to upload files to be processed by directly uploading them to the system or by copying them from My Files folder. There are two possibilities to add files to the job. Files can be uploaded or transferred from My Files folder using the right-hand side bar.

Alternatively, clicking on the container labeled `Upload Molecular Files` brings a window with different possibilities such as drawing directly the molecule, downloading from the web, retrieving from the PDB database or performing a local upload.

Once the files are uploaded, users can then configure actions. In a workflow, each action (i.e., box) outputs a result file which then becomes the input file for the following action. As the file does not exist yet (the job has not been run yet), an internal predictor guesses the name of these files. As a consequence, the boxes should be configured from top to bottom.
A **pause** feature is implemented which allows the user to stop the execution of a job before a specified action during the workflow so the output of an action can be visualized or edited. The job can then be **resumed** in order to proceed to completion. **This sequence runs from left to right and from top to bottom.** The figure below shows an example where the job will stop after the **Prepare protein – pdb to mol2** action from which the protein in mol2 and the ligand in mol2 are generated.
EXECUTING AND VIEWING JOBS

Once a job is correctly setup, it can be started. The job manager allows users to monitor the job and as each action completes its execution, color led will indicate its status. Output files can be viewed as soon as they are available.

FILE PREVIEW

Once a job is completed (or running), the resulting files can be viewed directly in the job manager, unless the output is too large. In this latter case, the file should be viewed or downloaded in the file manager. A job can be stopped or reset at any time to allow users to re-parameterize and restart it at their convenience. When a job is running, a corresponding folder is created in the file manager where all input and output files are stored. Each job belongs to a particular user and cannot be viewed by other users.
The files in the file manager can be deleted or downloaded. Users can also zip the entire folder or just several selected files. In order to be visualized by the Open Astex Viewer plugin, multiple mol2 files can be combined by clicking on the `COMBINE mol2` icon. This function assembles several mol2 files (i.e., a protein and a docked ligand) into a single file compatible with Open Astex Viewer. The Icon and List View buttons allow users to change how they view their files.

**FOLDER - MY FILES**

Each user has a personal folder called “My Files” in which files from different jobs can be saved to be reused in other jobs. It is used as a transfer folder between a given user’s jobs.
Each user has a personal folder called “My Proteins” in which proteins files (prepared for docking) from different jobs can be saved to be reused in other docking jobs. It is used inside the “Docking with previously prepared protein files” workflow.

**JOB-SPECIFIC FOLDERS**

Files used by each job are saved in the job’s folder using a naming convention such as WF-{id number} e.g. WF-8. The job-specific folder will then read “Not synchronized with the system” and it is at user’s discretion to delete files contained in that folder.

**FILES AND ACTIONS**

Files are viewed with different programs depending on their type. All text files are opened in a text editor directly integrated into the interface, while mol2 and pdb files are visualized using the Open Astex Viewer java applet. Files that are bigger than one megabyte (1 Mb) must be downloaded in order to be viewed or edited.

Files located in all folders other than “My Files” folder can be copied to “My Files” by clicking on the “Copy to My Files” icon.
SKETCHER

The sketcher is a tool that allows users to draw molecules using the SketchEl java applet.

SAVING AND LOADING FILES

Users can save all molecules they draw using the sketcher in their “My Files” folder. The platform provides an action called “Convert 2D to 3D” which converts the two dimensional drawings (“mol” or “sdf” file format) into three dimensional mol2 files that can subsequently be used as inputs in workflows.

Any molecule that is drawn and saved can later be loaded and reopened in the applet for viewing and editing.
The reactions manager is a tool that allows users to define reaction rules used in the “Combinatorial Library from 3D Structures” plugin. This section is in its development phase; we are currently improving the automated reaction rules definitions and developing REACT 2.0 (now in beta version) which will soon fully replace this first version.

Creating Reactions

Users have two options when it comes to creating new reaction rules. They can either write the rules themselves or use the SketchEl java applet to draw the reaction.

After assigning a name to the new reaction, user can add as many rules as he likes by clicking on and filling out the appropriate fields. The rule number defines which reactant the rule applies to, the rule name is usually the reactant functional group, the center is the reacting atom center of the molecule, the kept atoms are the atoms that remain in the product of the reaction, the removed atoms are the atoms that are deleted by the reaction, new atoms are atoms the atoms that are created by the reaction. Once the reaction is defined and saved, it can be used in the Create Combinatorial Library plugin.
Alternatively, users can draw and save each reactant and their product using the sketcher, click on Save all to save the drawn structures and have the rules generated automatically by clicking on

In the current version, the use of the java applet has limitations. Most of the coupling reactions (the most widely used reactions when building libraries) should work. However, rules for transesterification (replacement of an alkoxide group by another alkoxide group) are not figured out by the algorithm currently implemented. Similarly, reactions including two reacting atoms (such as double bond reduction) and metals (Grignard addition) are not yet considered. These issues will be addressed in the next version. If the user cannot produce the rules using the applet, the rules can be set manually. Otherwise, contact Molecular Forecaster (info@molecularforecaster.com) for the development of new rules.

Other limitations are regioselectivity (if more than one functional group of a kind is found, the first one will react) and stereoselectivity (it a chiral center is formed, a single isomer is produced). Stereoselectivity will be considered in the future.
The user manager is located under the settings menu tab. It allows the administrator to manage users and their roles in the platform.

Each user has a role that is assigned by the platform administrator. Depending on their roles, users are given authorization to access certain features of the program.

Only the program administrator can add or delete users and edit access settings for existing ones.

Clicking on the + next to “Add a new user” allows the admin to create a new user. By checking the “Enabled” box, the admin allows the new user to access the application.
The plugins interface allows users to modify simple information about existing plugins or to delete them.

New actions (programs) can also be integrated into the application. When creating a new plugin, users define all the necessary parameters required for the plugin to work inside of a workflow, such as name, version, and executable files.

**ADDING NEW PLUGINS**

Users can add new plugins (i.e., new actions) by clicking on "Add a new plugin" and defining fields in the plugin interface. In the example described below an action called “convert file format” will be created. This action can next be used in any workflow. This action uses babel as an executable and we would like to create a form to set it up when preparing jobs. The created form is shown below while the preparation of this form and its implementation as an action is given in the subsequent section.
This form is associated to an action (with a name), an executable (i.e., program) and keywords or arguments (if the executable uses a command line). By clicking on + Add a new plugin and defining the following window appears and needs to be filled.

Each new plugin has to be assigned a unique name and version. The function of the program may also be described. Additional details about the plugin’s purpose may be added in the “diagram box name” field. Users can choose to promote the plugin by checking off the “promote” box, which will ensure that the new plugin is shown on the home page. A description of the plugin’s function that will appear on the home page can also be added.
If the plugin’s executable file is located on the platform’s server, users can use the system install, by checking off “yes” next to “Use system install” and providing a path to the file. If the plugin’s executable file is not located on the platform’s server, users have to provide it and upload it to the platform.

Some programs work by reading the parameters from a keyword file (usually a text file) while others uses various arguments in command line. To instruct the platform to either write a command line or a keyword file, users choose whether or not the arguments for the executable file are located in a keyword file. Selecting “yes” means that arguments are written inside of the keyword file. Selecting “no” means that arguments are specified directly on the command line.

**ADDING PARAMETERS**

Users add plugin parameters by clicking on ![Add a new parameter](add_new_parameter) and filling out the appropriate fields. Each parameter represents a field in the job manager edit screen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Field type</th>
<th>Default</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Input format</td>
<td>Input_Format</td>
<td>Select</td>
<td>mol2</td>
<td>Simple Mode</td>
<td>mol2, mol, sdf, pdb</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The input file</td>
<td>Input_File</td>
<td>File</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Output format</td>
<td>Output_Form</td>
<td>Select</td>
<td>sdf</td>
<td>Simple Mode</td>
<td>mol2, mol, sdf, pdb</td>
<td>-o</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The generic</td>
<td>Output_File</td>
<td>String</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Order** – specify the order in which fields appear on a form

**Label** – describe the field. This label will be used as label in the form

**Name** – specify internal field name in a single word, no spaces.

**Field type** – there are seven possible field types that can be defined.

**Check box, radio button or select** – when defining one of these field types, the options must be specified in the value field, separated by commas, and the default option will be selected.

**String or text** – is a text input to be filled out by the user.

**File** – when this field type is defined, a file is selected from a drop-down menu containing a list of files uploaded to the job using the new plugin.
Hidden – a hidden field contains the keyword value that will be used and that cannot be modified by the user.

Mode – fields can appear in the simple or the advanced mode. The simple mode contains common parameters, modified by most users. Parameters that are less likely to be changed or that are used by more advanced users are placed in the advanced mode.

Keyword – is the name that will be used in the keyword file. It will be followed by the value selected or written in the field, depending on the field type.

Mandatory – specify whether or not filling out a field is mandatory.

Once the form is saved it can be used to edit parameters used in a job.

---

**ADDING NEW PLUGINS FROM XML**

Users can also create new plugins by uploading and editing their own xml files in the system. They may do so by clicking on + New plugin from XML. Adding a plugin from xml means that users can import an existing or sample definition of a plugin and modify it according to their needs.

The platform provides a sample file to help in the integration process. The file is located in the doc folder of the application. Once an xml file is loaded, the user gets the new plugin screen, identical to the one that appears when a plugin is created from scratch.
CONFIGURATIONS MANAGER

The configurations manager can be found in the setting menu tab. It allows the administrator to edit and create new configurations used in the platform.

DEFAULT SETTINGS

The current settings define the file types that are recognized and can be opened by the application’s text editor. The default settings also identify the maximum file size that can be opened by the application without having to be downloaded.

The platform’s administrator can add settings by clicking on

+ Add a new configuration.

SAVE DATABASE TO FIXTURES

This option allows the administrator to store specified database information into files (called fixtures) which is used to re-create the database after an update of the platform. This action saves information about the workflows, jobs, users, plugins, reactions, and configurations that were modified since the first deployment.
A number of actions are already integrated in the FORECASTER platform. Details about these actions are given below:

**STRUCTURE-BASED**

**DOCK LIGAND(S) USING FITTED**

The action Dock ligand(s) using Fitted takes a ligand or a library of ligands and docks it to a protein. It requires that the ligand(s) are setup properly using the action Setup ligand(s) for docking and that the protein has been prepared as well using the actions Prepare protein – pdb to mol2 and Setup protein for docking as shown below. The format of the input files is therefore taken care of by the platform.
When setting this action in Job manager, a few boxes have to be filled. The number of proteins to be used in the flexible mode is defined in the first box. The protein file name is guessed by the interface as Setup protein for docking should be used in a preceding box.

PREDICT SOM USING IMPACTS

This action uses the IMPACTS program and predicts the most likely site(s) of metabolism (SoM) and transition state (TS) structures of small molecules when reacting with the CYP heme as the activated iron-oxygen species. It uses a significantly modified version of our FITTED docking program to predict CYP-mediated metabolism of small molecules.
The action contains a single box, the molecule can be drawn in 2D within the sketcher (or uploaded as an sdf file). A 3D format is also supported (single or multi-mol2 files). The user can choose between the five implemented CYP 450 namely: 1A2, 2D6, 2C9, 2C19 and 3A4 or all five in a single run.

PROTEINS/NUCLEIC ACIDS

MAKE PROTEINS SIMILAR

This action takes multiple protein pdb files (the proteins need to have greater than ~90% sequence identity) and perform a sequence alignment to superpose all the proteins together. In a second step, all the proteins are made similar by deleting or mutating amino acids to be identical to the first in the list (the reference protein). Corresponding pdb files are then obtained and can be used with the action Prepare pdb to mol2. If the sequence identify is too low, an error message will be given and no structure produced.
SUPERPOSE PROTEIN STRUCTURES

This action takes multiple protein structures (pdb files) and performs a sequence alignment in order to superpose all the proteins together. Corresponding pdb files are then obtained. This action is used in the “Cross docking” workflow.

PREPARE PROTEIN – PDB TO MOL2

This action takes a protein pdb file, add hydrogens to the protein (according to the residue pKa), and to water oxygen atoms, searches for the optimal rotamers for asparagines, glutamines and histidines, reconstructs and optimizes missing side chains, extract the ligand and finally outputs a protein file and a ligand file in mol2 format. This format is appropriate for most programs and required by most actions in FORECASTER as shown below.
When setting this action in job manager, the user will have to provide the ligand name (i.e., TMC A 500 below). This information can be found in the pdb file. By selecting the desired pdb file in the “Identify ligand residues in pdb” section, Open Astex viewer will open and allow the user to click on the ligand and obtain the ligand residues code.
SETUP PROTEIN FOR DOCKING

This action is required to prepare the necessary files for FITTED to work. In the publications describing FITTED [1-3], we refer to the use of a program PROCESS which is the core of this action. It requires a protein mol2 file as input. Providing a ligand mol2 file helps identifying the binding site. The ligand file can be obtained by the action Prepare protein – pdb to mol2.

LIGAND-BASED

ADD DESCRIPTORS

As described in ref. 2, SMART can add descriptors that can be used for further filtering. This action has been built from this program. The ligand must be in 3D and have hydrogen atoms added when given to this action. Formats such as sdf and mol2 are accepted and automatically detected by the action. Within the add descriptors action, a number of descriptors and functional groups are automatically identified and added as a bitstring in the resulting mol2 output file.
FILTER BY DESCRIPTORS

Filter by descriptors uses the descriptors prepared using the action mentioned above and keep only the molecules with the appropriate properties. It uses the REDUCE program.

COMBINATORIAL LIBRARY FROM 2D STRUCTURES

This action is based on our program REACT 2.0 that takes two libraries of chemicals (in 2D) and a reaction scheme (either from three separate mol files or a MDL rxn scheme file) to prepare a combinatorial library. In this new action, the reaction is not defined using the
reactions manager. The reaction scheme is given to the interface from the dialog box along with the two libraries of chemicals. To define the reaction, the reactant #1, reactant #2 and the product files in MDL mol format are required.

![Diagram Board](image)

**SEARCH FOR ANALOGUES**

This action takes a library and a hit molecule and creates a new library of molecules from the library that are similar to the hit. It uses the program SELECT. It can take either 2D or 3D structure files as input.

**EXTRACT REPRESENTATIVE LIBRARY**

This action takes a library (either 2D or 3D), clusters the molecules by similarity and outputs a smaller library. It uses the program SELECT. The clustering allows the user to remove similar molecules (e.g., to keep the same diversity while reducing the number of molecules). The number of clusters is the maximum number of molecules extracted based on the value of the Tanimoto coefficient used.
This action is based on our program \textsc{React} 1.0 that takes two libraries of chemicals (in 3D only) and a reaction scheme to prepare a combinatorial library. The reactants name are guessed by the interface as \texttt{Setup reactants for combichem} should be used in a preceding box as shown in the Figure below. The reaction is defined and pre-encoded via the reactions manager.
ADD FRAGMENTS TO MOLECULES

This action is in development and not fully functional yet. Contact us for more information.

PHARMACOPHORE IDENTIFICATION AND SEARCH

This action uses the Reshapes program which is a tool for 3D pharmacophore search. It derives a set of weighted pharmacophores from known actives and uses these pharmacophores to identify potential active molecules in a library. Both the actives and the library files need to be in 3D sdf or mol2 formats. This new program is still in development (beta).
SUBSTRUCTURE SEARCH

This action uses FINDERS to search for molecules featuring a given substructure within a database of chemicals. The database format is a normal sdf file without any preparation. This action is still in development and not yet fully validated.

SMALL MOLECULES

SETUP LIGAND(S) FOR DOCKING.

In the publications describing FITTED [1-3], we referred to SMART as a program to setup the ligand files. This action has been built from this program. The ligand must have hydrogen atoms added when given to this action (the user may use Convert 2D to 3D to add hydrogens or obtain this ligand from the Prepare protein – pdb to mol2 action). 3D structure files in sdf and mol2 formats are accepted and automatically detected by the action.

ADD HYDROGEN TO 2D STRUCTURES

This action adds hydrogens to 2D molecules. It is used by different actions when 3D is not required but hydrogens need to be present.

CONVERT 2D TO 3D
This action takes the input structure(s), adds missing hydrogens, converts from 2D to 3D and optimizes through energy minimization. The file formats compatible with this action are .mol and .sdf (2D).

![Image of 2D to 3D conversion dialog box]

**CLEAN STRUCTURE GEOMETRY**

This action cleans (add missing hydrogens, ...) and optimizes the input structure(s) through energy minimization (optional). It requires 3D structure files (mol2 or sdf).

**SETUP REACTANTS FOR COMBICHEM IN 3D**

This action prepares the reactants for further processing with the program REACT implemented in the action below. The dialog box is similar to the action add descriptors. It requires 3D structure files (mol2 or sdf).

**STRUCTURE OPTIMIZATION**

This action optimizes structures that have been setup for docking (conjugate gradient minimization). It requires 3D structure files (mol2 or sdf).

**OTHER**

**CONVERT FILE FORMATS**

This action uses babel to convert a structure from one format (i.e., mol2) to another one (i.e., sdf).

**FUNCTION LINKER**

This is not a real action. This action adds a connector (i.e., a vertical bar) to the workflow.
REFERENCES


