

Discussion Notes on

Pathway Databases: A Case Study in Computational Symbolic Theories By Peter Karp

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We discussed the paper by Peter Karp which describes EcoCyc, a metabolic pathway database.

Several interesting themes emerged during our discussion. Brad led us in an understanding of the difference between data representation and knowledge representation. In EcoCyc Karp is trying to put pathway information together so that it is not only a reference encyclopedia, but so that it will also be a mechanism to infer new knowledge. We talked about how that is possible and how he represents the data to make inferences possible.

We also spent some time trying to decipher the diagram and pathway maps produced by the analysis software which accompanies EcoCyc. We found the maps a bit confusing and agreed that there might be a better way to depict metabolic pathways.

We also discussed briefly how pathway information might eventually be a part of Ultrastructure.