The Informatics for Integrating Biology and the Bedside Hive

Informatics for Integrating Biology and the Bedside (i2b2) is one of the sponsored initiatives of the NIH Roadmap National Centers for Biomedical Computing (http://www.bist.nigh.gov/ncbc/). One of the goals of i2b2 is to produce a comprehensive set of software tools to enable clinical investigators to collect and manage their project related research data, including clinical and genomic data; that is, a software suite for the modern clinical research chart. Since different applications from different sources must be able to communicate with each other, a distributed computing model is needed, one that integrates multiple web-based applications in a standardized way.

The i2b2 hive and associated web services are the infrastructure used to create this integration. The hive is comprised of a collection of cells representing unique functional units. Cells in the hive have an array of roles, such as data storage, data analysis, ontology or identity management, natural language processing, and data conversion, derivation or de-identification. Each cell is a self-contained modular application that communicates with other cells via XML web services. A common i2b2 messaging protocol has been defined to enable the cells to interact with each other, sharing business logic, processes and data.