# Bringing Web 2.0 to the UCSC Genome Browser

Larry Meyer
UCSC Bioinformatics Dept.



http://hgwdev.cse.ucsc.edu/~larrym/presentations/genecats.ppt

# **Apologies**

Sorry for using the phrase "Web 2.0".

A short history of Uls...

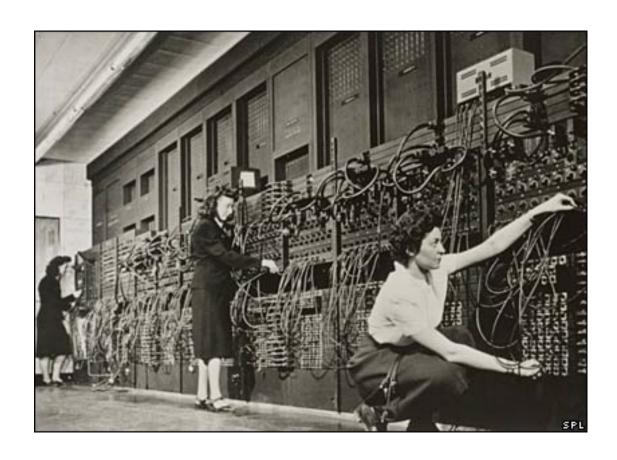
# 1800s



- Slow
- Didn't work

Charles Babbage's Difference Engine

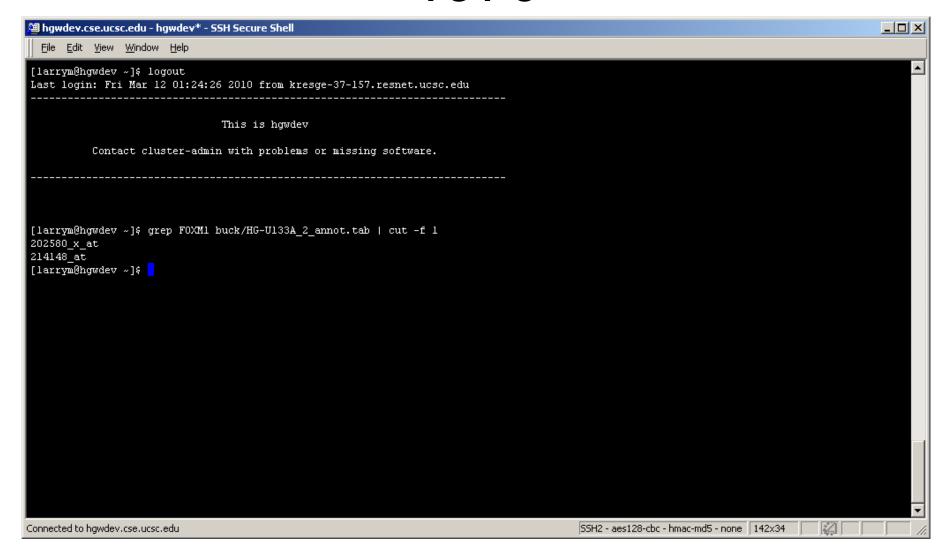
# 1940s



# 1960s

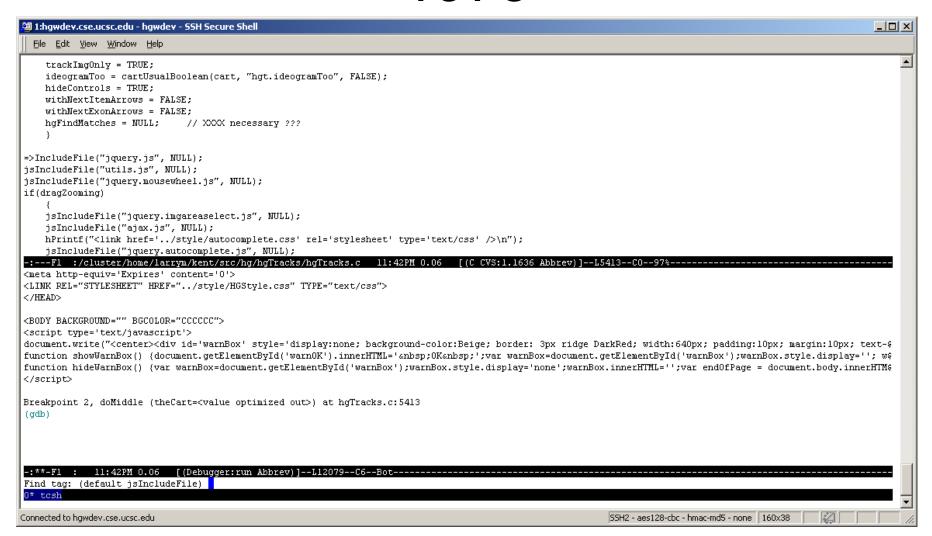


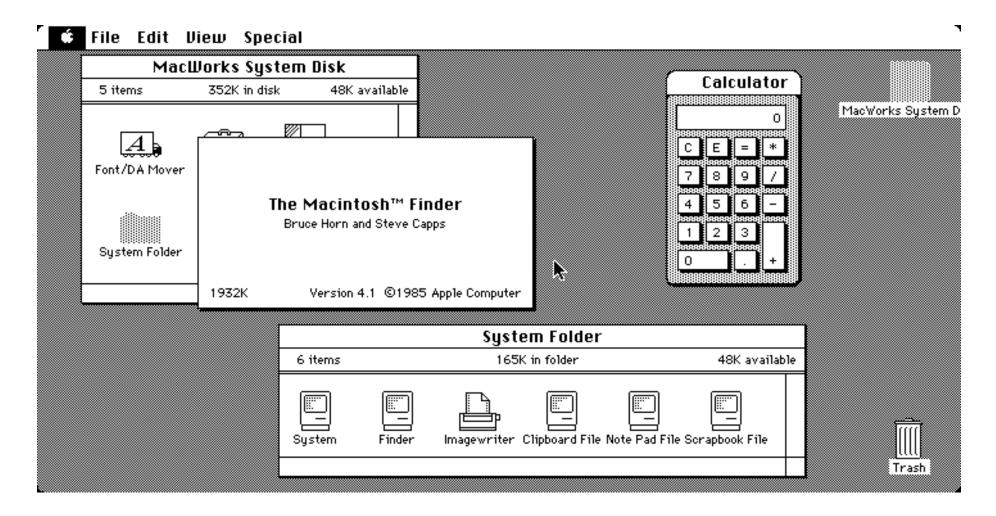
IBM 360 Series 2A/753x



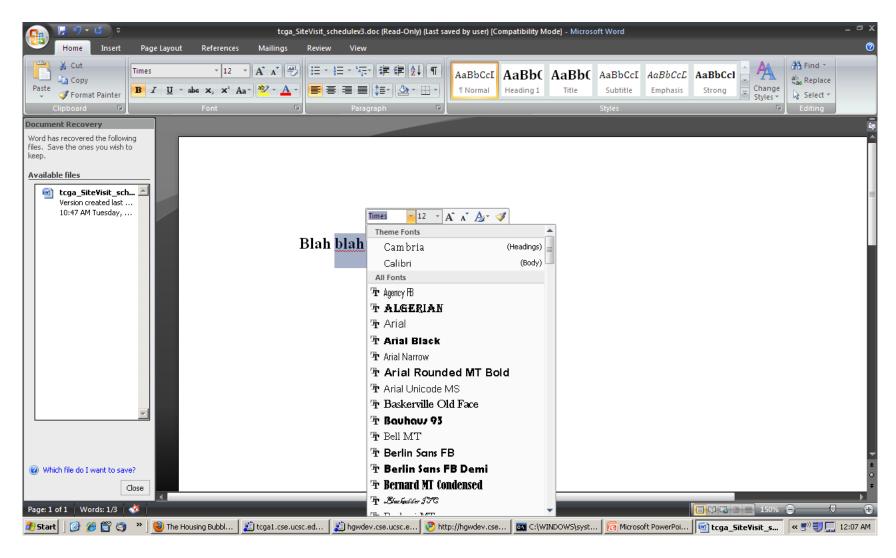
Unix shell

```
04/06/07
                         PATENT ENQUIRY SYSTEM
                                                              18:55:35
                                                              PAEN02MA
Enter the required key : [ ( ? - Help )
 Key may be : - Application Id
                               (nnnnn/yy),
             - Patent Number
                                (nnnnnn),
             - Provisional Number (Pxnnnn),
                               (PCT/ccyy/nnnnn),
             - PCT Number
                               (WOyy/nnnnn),
             - W.I.P.O. Number
                               - Search Name
                               (surname; given names ) for personal name
Enter Comment
     Print Details : N
     Print Location : EM Number : 1_
Optional: You can restrict Search Name results to those applications
           filed since __ / __ / __ OR filed in the Year __
 WARNING: Print via Internet access using email only
 PAEN02CA V4.0 (1.1.1
                                XGUEST
                                         Command
```

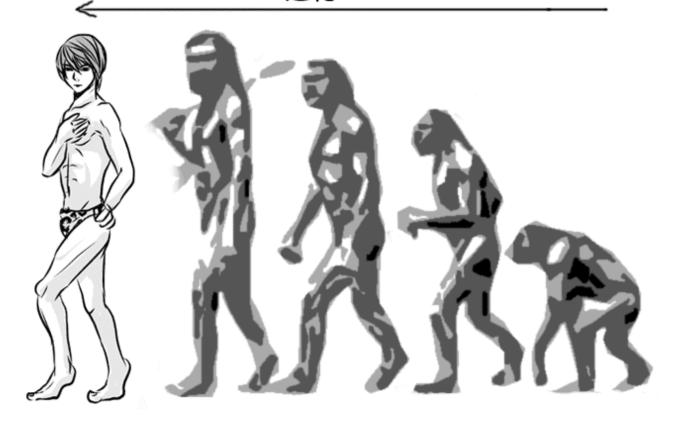




MacOS



#### 進化

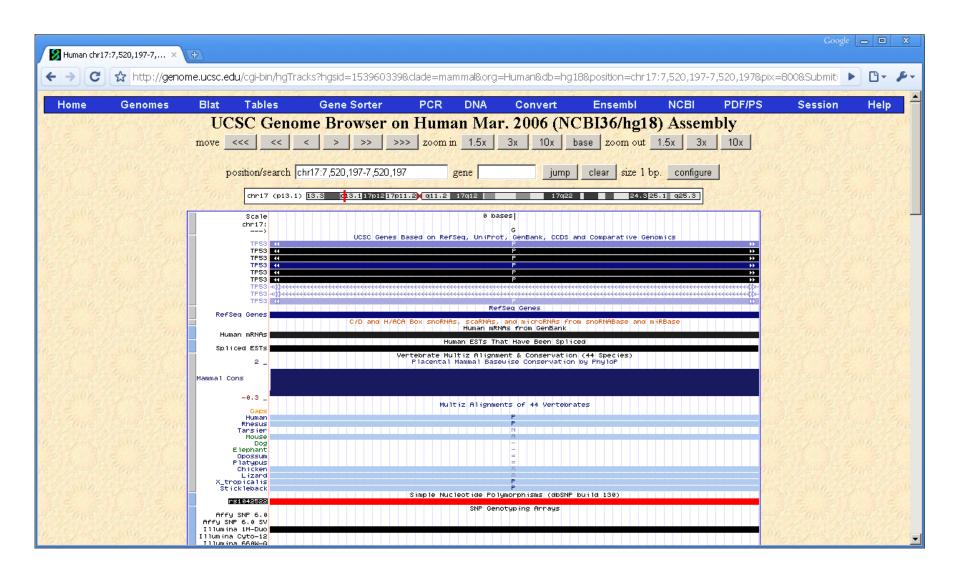






#### HTML is Lame

- Very primitive UI elements
- No dialogs
- Click and wait UI:
  - Every user action requires round trip to the server and redrawing the whole page
- Javascript very poorly supported until early/mid 2000s, so there was little that developers could do, other than using Flash or Java (which require plugins and are poorly integrated with the browser).



- Donna encouraged Tim and I to start using Javascript to improve the UI:
  - Open/Close of track groups without doing a page refresh
  - Subtrack setting widget in hgTrackUi
- Zack and Steve used jQuery to do the Cancer Browser UI
  - I saw Steve's demo and started using jQuery in the GB

#### What is "Web 2.0"?

- web 1.0 == IBM 3270 with colors
- web 2.0 == client-server with a really hard to program client

Mark Diekhans

#### What is "Web 2.0"?

- Javascript to improve UI
- AJAX: Client side code interacts with the server without explicit user action
- Web Services: JSON based API

#### What is JSON?

- Javascript Serialized Object Notation
- Serialized Javascript objects
- Supported types:
  - Scalar (string, number or boolean)
  - Array
  - Hash
- De facto standard used by Javascript programs to fetch data from servers

## JSON vs. XML



vs. <?xml?>

#### **JSON**

```
"firstName": "John",
"lastName": "Smith",
"age": 25,
"address":
    "streetAddress": "21 2nd Street",
    "city": "New York",
    "state": "NY",
    "postalCode": "10021"
},
"phoneNumber":
    {"type": "home", "number": "212 555-1234" },
    { "type": "fax", "number": "646 555-4567" }
```

#### **XML**

#### **JSON**

#### Pros

- Parsing is built into javascript implementations
- Maps better to data structures
- More succinct (no closing tags)
- Easier to read
- Much simpler syntax
- Only one way to do it

#### Cons

- Less powerful (e.g. can't embed binary data)
- No built in schemas

## JBrowse JSON example

```
"headers": ["start", "end", "strand", "id"],
"histBinBases":1000,
"featureCount": 2462,
"featureNCList":
  [28734,16400072,
  {"path":"data/tracks/chr1/CpGIslands//lazyfeatures-0.json", "state":"lazy"},
      null, null],
  [16464375,43251082,
  {"path":"data/tracks/chr1/CpGIslands//lazyfeatures-493.json","state":"lazy"},
      null, null],
],
"key": "CpG Islands",
"histogram": [0,0,0, ... ],
"className": "basic",
"clientConfig": { "featureCss": "background-color: #0D0;
      height: 8px", "histCss": "background-color: #3D3"},
"rangeMap":[],
"label": "CpGIslands",
"type": "FeatureTrack",
"sublistIndex":4
```

http://jbrowse.org/ucsc/hg19/data/tracks/chr1/CpGlslands/trackData.json

# jQuery: Javascript Library

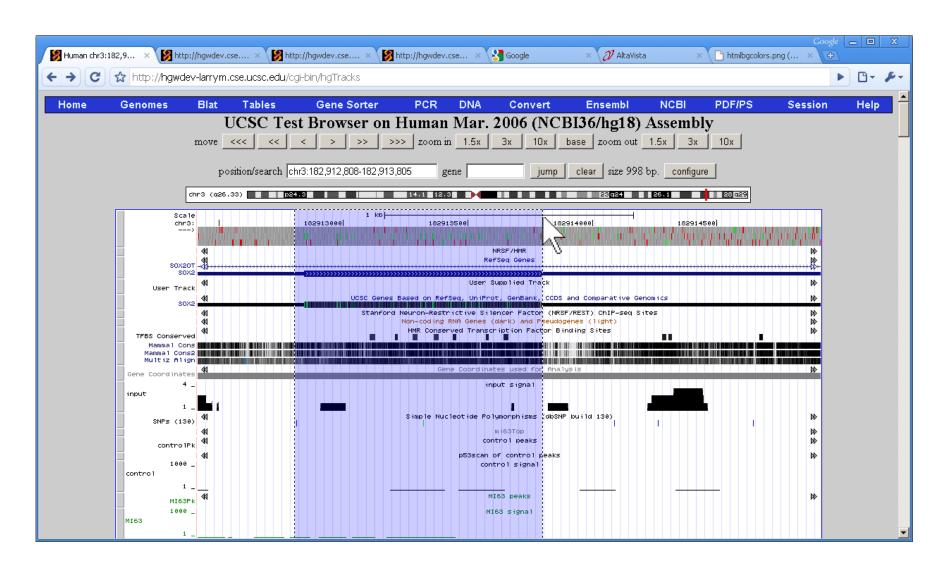
- Hides most cross-browser differences
- Lots of built in functionality (ajax etc.)
- Very active user community (hundreds of user contributed UI widgets)
- Lots of books and online resources
- Hopefully will become the de-facto UI toolbox for web browsers (analogous to Mac Toolbox, Windows GDI and X Windows API).
- jQuery UI library supports modal dialogs

# jQuery (cont.)

Powerful DOM element selector syntax:

This code snippet applies the parseMap function to each map element whose name is not "ideoMap".

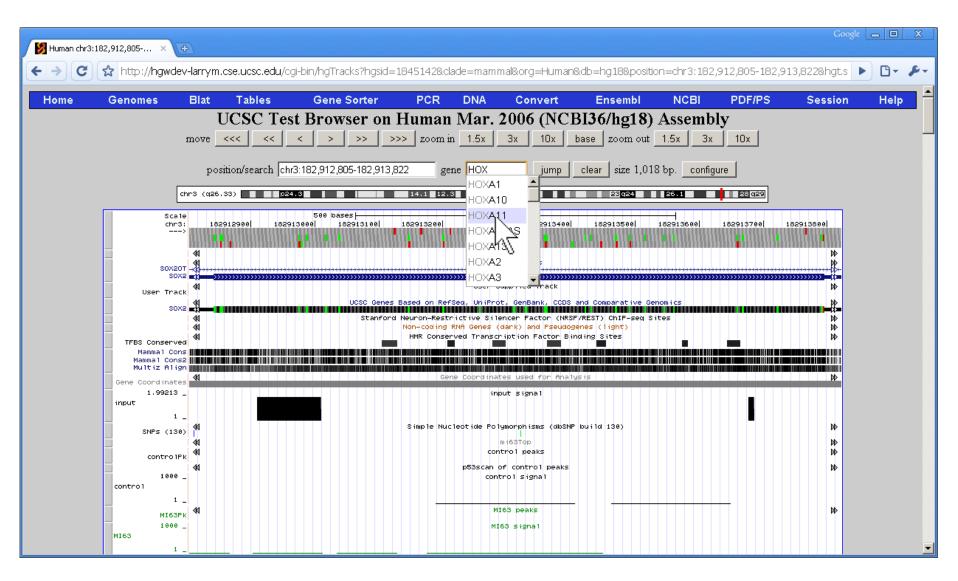
# Drag and Select



# Drag and Select

- Hiram suggested this to me
- Ideal application of Javascript: simple, valuable UI addition that has to be implemented on the client side
- Issues:
  - Track Image is very crowded, so currently you have to select at the top of the image
  - We have had a least one serious browser issue: a bug in Chrome/Safari that we couldn't work around; bug was fixed relatively quickly because a genome browser user complained to the AppleWebKit team

#### Gene Search Box



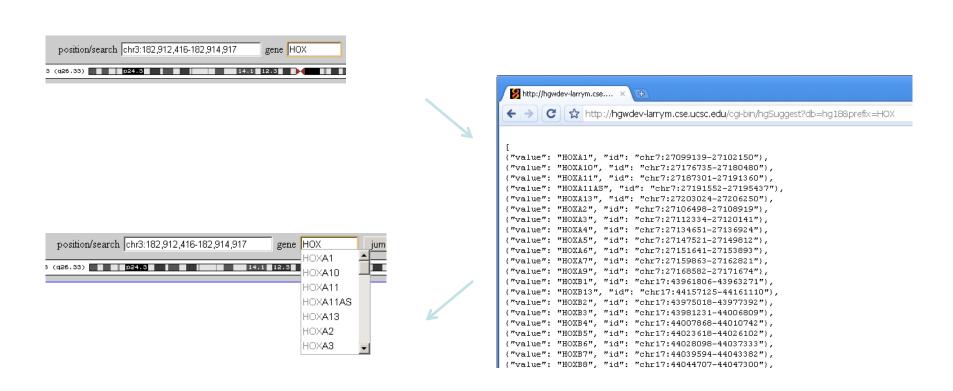
#### Gene Search Box

- Inspired by me getting tired of searching for "TP53" 20 times a day
- Dent Earl suggested the google suggeststyle interface
- Fast Uptake showed that it was self explanatory (~10k uses/day within a week)

#### JSON/RPC

- Gene search box is a classic AJAX application
  - As user types, client side Javascript code sends prefix to server, which responds with a list of genes
  - Server side code is very fast (simple select on an indexed field in knownGenes/refGene tables)
  - Avoids search page, so it eliminates a whole web page refresh
  - Self explanatory functionality
  - Client/Server interaction is via a JSON interface
- Interaction b/n client and server is essentially an asynchronous RPC
  - char \*\*getGeneList(char \*prefix)

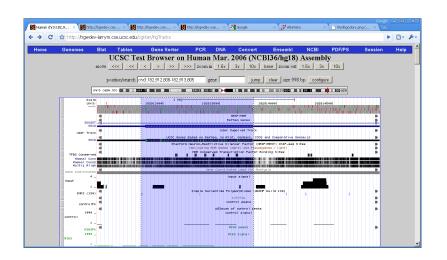
# Example of a JSON RPC

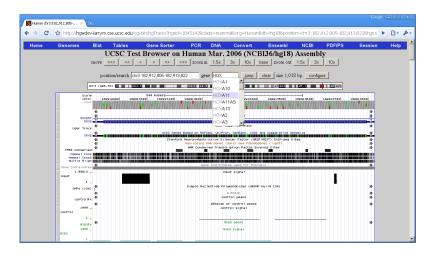


**Client Side** 

**Server Side** 

```
🗐 hgwdev.cse.ucsc.edu – hgwdev – SSH Secure Shell
                                                                                                                                                              File Edit View Window Help
// requires utils.js
var suggestCache;
function ajaxGet(getDb, cache)
// Returns jquery.autocomplete.js ajax_get function object
// getDb should be a function which returns the relevant assembly (e.g. "hgl8")
// cache is an optional object used as a hash to cache responses from the server.
    suggestCache = cache;
    return function (key, cont) {
        if(suggestCache == null || suggestCache[key] == null)
            $.ajax({
                       url: "../cgi-bin/hgSuggest",
                       data: "db=" + getDb() + "&prefix=" + key,
                       // dataType: "json", // XXXX this doesn't work under IE, so we retrieve as text and do an eval to force to an object.
                       trueSuccess: handleSuggest,
                       success: catchErrorOrDispatch,
                       error: function (request, status, errorThrown) {
                           if (typeof console != "undefined") {
                                console.dir(request);
                                console.log(status);
                           var msg = "ajax call failed";
                           if(status != "error")
                                msg = msg + "; error: " + status;
                           showWarning(msg + "; statusText: " + request.statusText + "; responseText: " + request.responseText);
                       key: key,
                       cont: cont
                   });
        } else {
-:---Fl :/cluster/home/larrym/kent/src/hg/js/autocomplete.js 11:16PM 1.10 [(JavaScript-IDE CVS-1.3 Abbrev)]--L17-- 4%-------
 0* tcsh
Connected to hgwdev.cse.ucsc.edu
                                                                                                             55H2 - aes128-cbc - hmac-md5 - none 160x36
```





#### **Client Side only**

No network I/O, so not susceptible to network latency

#### **AJAX**

Susceptible to network latency, which limits utility for more interactive functionality

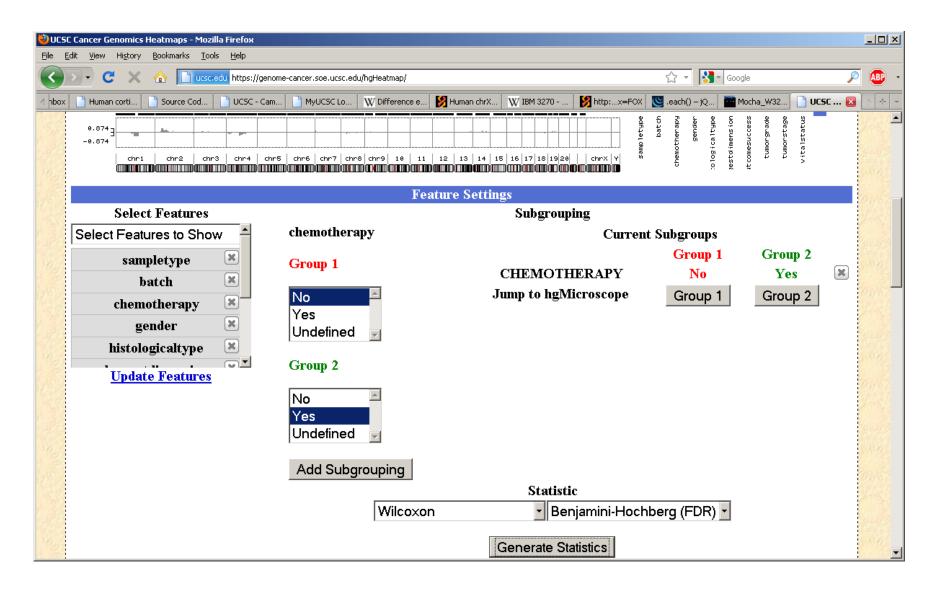
# Alternative Gene Search Box Implementation (ala jBrowse)

- Could pre-compute lookup lists for all assemblies and store them as static JSON files (~ 1 meg each)
- Client retrieves assembly specific lookup file when page is loading (cached after first time)
- Client side code does the lookup synchronously
- Pros
  - No delay on client side
  - Removes CGI hits, so less overhead on server
- Cons
  - Client side code is more complex
  - More complex build environment

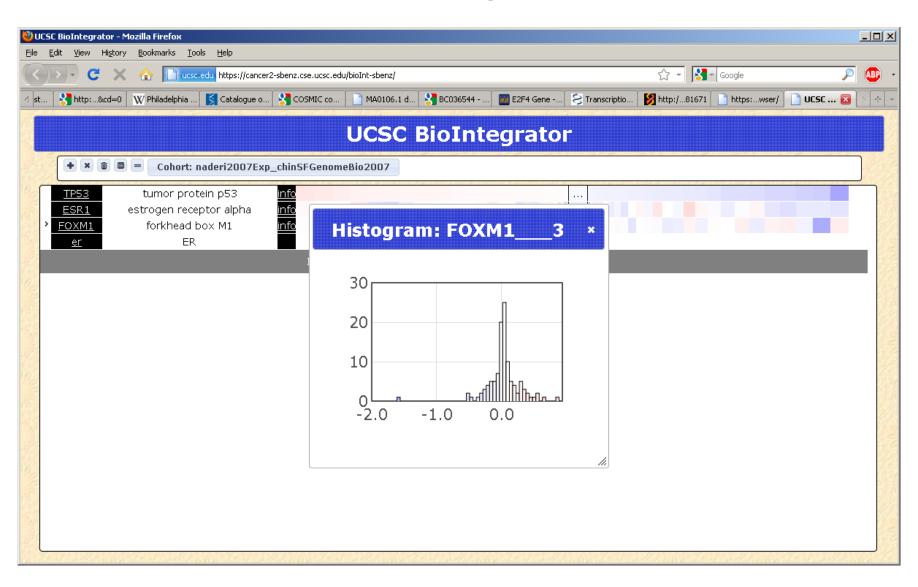
# Pure AJAX App

- All of the UI is constructed and run on the client side; there are no HTML form submissions; e.g. the cancer browser, modern email apps (gmail, yahoo, zimbra)
- Pros
  - Usually yields a better UI
  - Forces separation between UI code and data, so it's easier to plugin a different UI (e.g. iPad/android)
  - Easier to pull in 3<sup>rd</sup> party data
- Cons
  - GB already has a lot of server side UI code
  - History is complicated (no more back button; this may actually be a good thing)
  - Javascript may cause performance issues (e.g. if you try to render on the client side)

#### Cancer Browser



# BioIntegrator

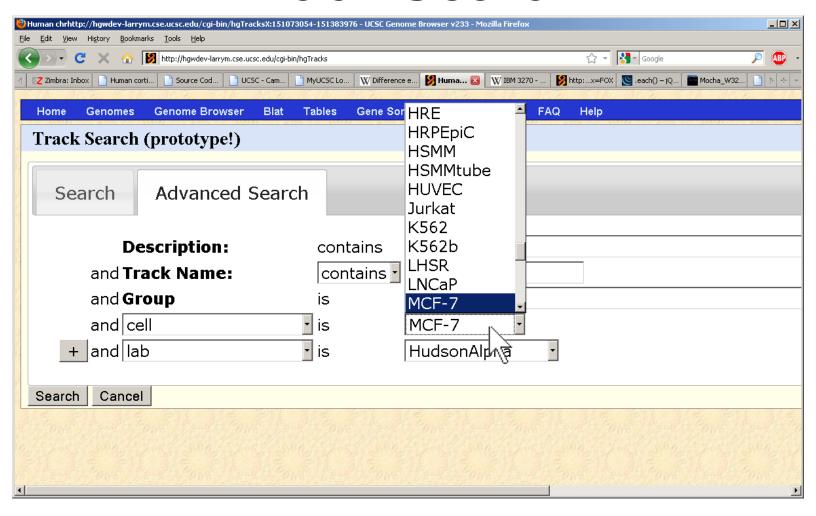


## Coming Attractions

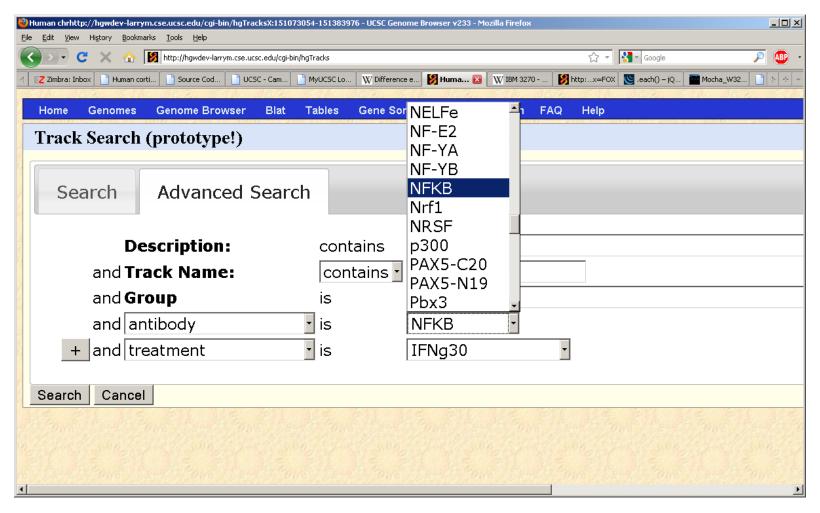
- Track settings dialog
- Context menu for track items
- Track search
- Drag panning
- Drag reorder of tracks



### Track Search

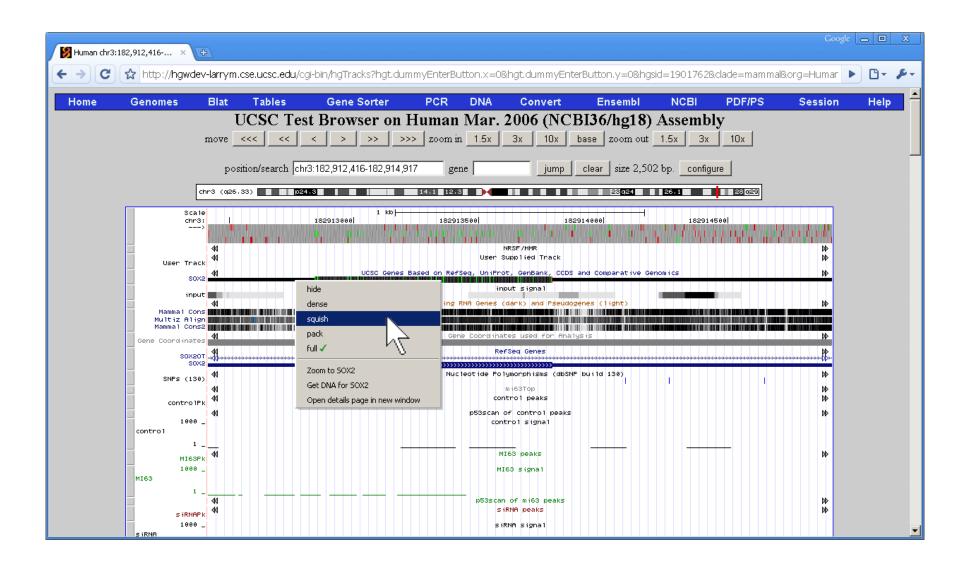


#### Track Search

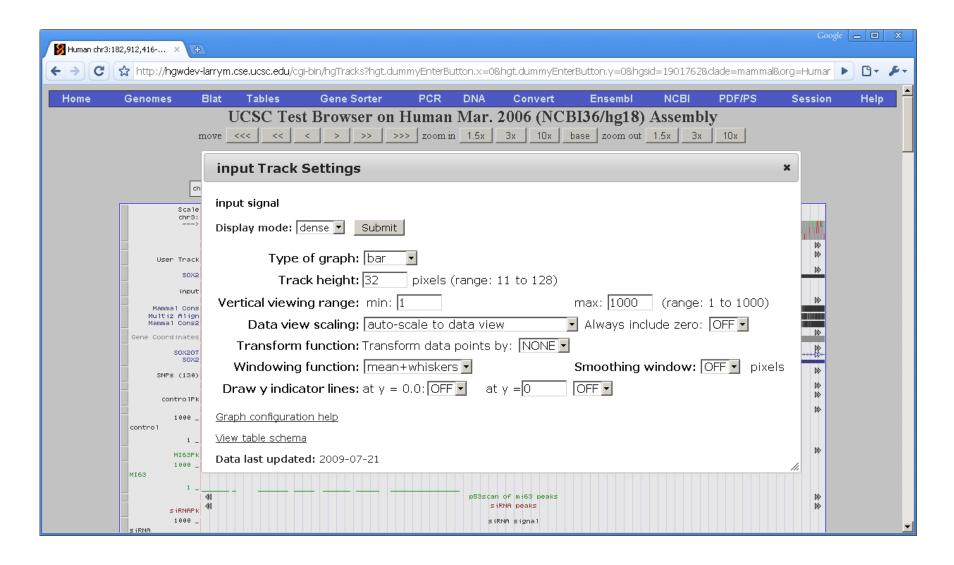


AJAX is used to change select box when user chooses a different metadata field

#### **Context Menus**



# Track Settings Dialog



## hgApi

- Experimental JSON API interface
  - getTrackList (used by steve's experimental integrated CB/GB tool)
  - getMetaData (used by track search)

```
🛂 Mozilla Firefox
File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
                                                                                                                    ☆ - Google
                    http://hgwdev-larrym.cse.ucsc.edu/cgi-bin/hgApi?db=hg18&cmd=trackList
                                                                                                                                                          ABP
      kttp:...&cd=0 W Philadelphia ...
                                Catalogue o... 🔀 COSMIC co...
                                                          MA0106.1 d... 🔀 BC036544 - .
                                                                                                    Transcriptio...
                                                                                                                 https:...wser/ UCSC BioInt.
                                                                                                                                            🥖 htt...ist 🔃
                                                                                      25 E2F4 Gene -.
                 "track": "cytoBandIdeo",
                 "shortLabel": "Chromosome Band (Ideogram)",
                 "longLabel": "Chromosome Bands Localized by FISH Mapping Clones (for Ideogram)",
                 "group": "Mapping and Sequencing Tracks"
        },
                 "track": "benzGenes",
                 "shortLabel": "Gene Coordinates",
                 "longLabel": "Gene Coordinates used for Analysis",
                 "group": "Experimental Tracks"
        },
                 "track": "benzInput",
                 "shortLabel": "input",
                 "longLabel": "input signal",
                 "qroup": "Experimental Tracks"
        },
                 "track": "mi63Top",
                 "shortLabel": "mi63Top",
                 "longLabel": "mi63Top",
                 "group": "Experimental Tracks"
        },
                 "track": "encodeMsaTbaDec07",
                 "shortLabel": "36-Way TBA",
                 "longLabel": "TBA Alignments and Conservation of 36 Vertebrates in the ENCODE Regions",
                 "group": "Pilot ENCODE Comparative Genomics and Variation",
                 "subtracks":
                                  "track": "encodeMsaTbaDecO7Viewcons",
```

http://hgwdev-larrym.cse.ucsc.edu/cgi-bin/hgApi?db=hg18&cmd=trackList

#### **Future Directions**

- Richer JSON RPC interface? (For our own client side apps and perhaps 3<sup>rd</sup> parties as well):
  - getTrackList
  - getTrackImages
  - getTrackDetails
- Requires refactoring of some of our code so it can output either html or json

#### **Pitfalls**

- You can end up DOS'ing yourself (DOS == Denial of Service)
  - Tooltips in very dense track map
- Too much usage and/or too sophisticated an interface can burden your servers; e.g. Gene Suggest for "A" in hg18 yields a list 163kb long.
- Very dependent on Javascript, so your apps can break spectacularly with new browser releases

## Pitfalls (cont.)

- hgTracks startup time is slow; large overhead from loading tracks (100-200 milliseconds)
  - A robust JSON based API would require something faster, perhaps something embedded in the web server (e.g. mod\_perl) or a dedicated process listening on another port (e.g. node.js).
  - This issue can be mitigated by using precomputed static JSON files

# Pitfalls (cont.)

- If you make your APIs public and thirdparties start to use them, then you can't arbitrarily change them (i.e. public APIs have development, support, testing and staging overhead).
  - JSON APIs should be easier to change than binary ones (e.g. adding hash keys shouldn't break existing code)

## Pitfalls (cont.)

 You have to test on all supported browsers:

Browser	January, 2010	June, 2010
Internet Explorer	39.7%	40.6%
IE8	13.1%	15.9%
IE7	15.9%	15.8%
IE6	10.5%	8.5%
FireFox	37.4%	36.2%
Safari	12.7%	10.2%
Chrome	4.3%	5.5%

GB stats from awstats

### Acknowledgments

- Jim Kent, David Haussler, Donna Karolchick, Kate Rosenbloom, Tim Dreszer, Hiram Clawson, Mark Diekhans and Angie Hinrichs
- Dent Earl, Steve Benz and Zack Sanborn