

MASCOT: Protein Family Result Report

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## Room for Improvement

#### Reporting large searches

- HTTP timeouts
- Browser hanging
- Out of memory

#### **Protein Inference**

- Need to use ions score cut-off and 'Require bold red' to create minimal list
- Proteins related by shared peptide matches could be widely separated in the report

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There were two areas that we really felt needed improvement in the result reports in Mascot 2.2 and earlier.

First, although you could run very large searches on any supported platform, even 32-bit and with limited amounts of memory, trying to display the result report would often lead to problems due to an HTTP timeout or the web browser becoming slow to respond or hanging completely or simply running out of memory on either the server or the client.

Second, protein inference was not smart enough, and left too much of the hard work to the user. To create a minimal list of proteins, you had to tweak the score cut-off and use 'Require bold red'

Of course, these two issues are related, because it is with very large search results that protein inference needs to be as automated as possible.

## **Protein Family Summary**

### Fixes both problems

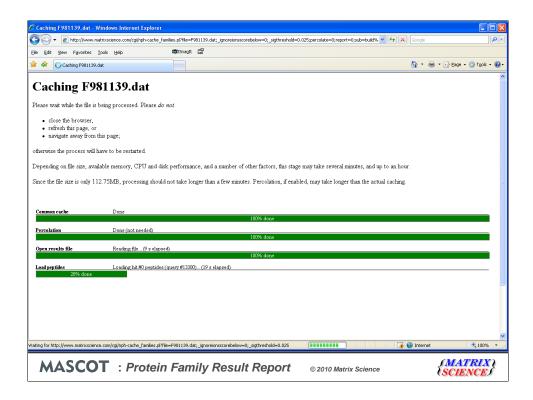
- Index files are created and cached to speed loading in future
- Paged report to conserve memory
- Detailed information is shown 'on demand'
- Proteins grouped into families by means of shared peptide matches
- Only significant matches considered
- Hierarchical clustering within each protein family

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To address both problems, we have developed a brand new report that loads most of the information 'on demand': the Protein Family Summary. This requires some index files to be created on the server, and these index files are cached, so that the report loads much faster on the second and subsequent occasions. It is a paged report; we don't try to display all the protein hits at once. And, detailed information is shown 'on demand'. Proteins are grouped into families by means of shared peptide matches and, within each family, hierarchical clustering is used to illustrate which proteins are closely related and which are more distant.

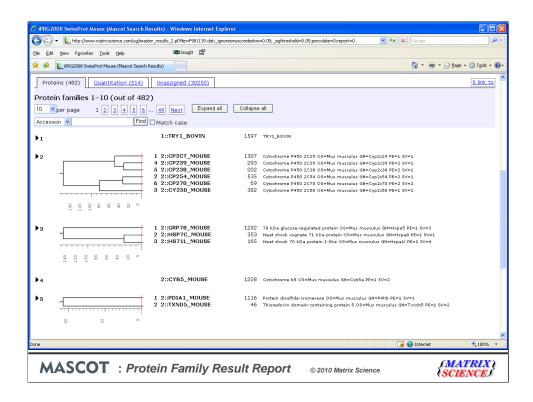


Lets begin by looking at the features that conserve memory and increase the speed of loading.

The Protein Family Summary is the default report whenever there are there are 300 or more spectra. This is controlled by a setting in mascot.dat, so you can easily change this threshold or even make the old report the default, if you prefer.

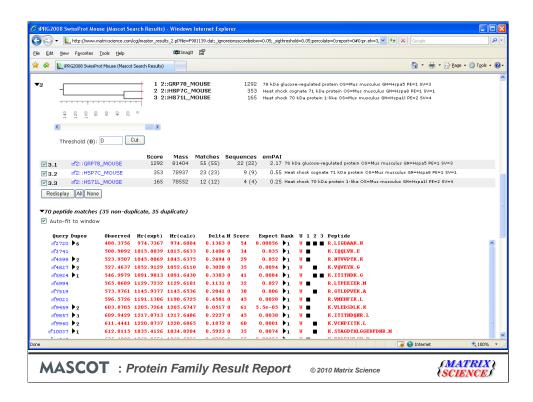
If you are running the search interactively, before the report loads for the first time, you'll see this progress page while the cache files are created. These cache files make loading much faster on subsequent occasions.

If you run searches using Mascot Daemon, the index files are created automatically and the search results should appear instantly when you click on the link in Daemon



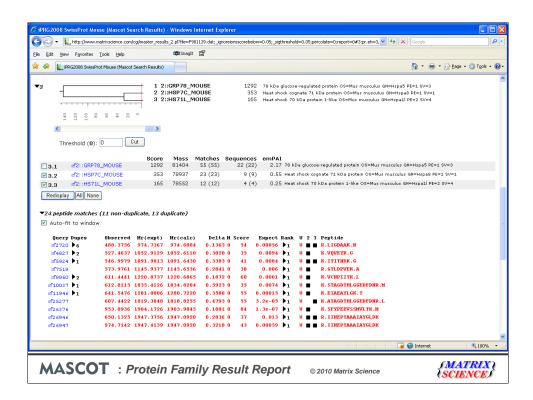
This is the appearance of a typical family report immediately after loading. The body of the report consists of three tabs, one for protein families, one for quantitation, and one for unassigned matches. The report is paged, with a default page size of 10 families. If you wish, you can choose to display a larger number of families on a single page.

Proteins are grouped into families using a novel hierarchical clustering algorithm. We'll return to this later. If a family contains a single member, the accession string, protein score and description are listed. If a family contains multiple members, the accessions, scores and descriptions are aligned with a dendrogram, which illustrates the degree of similarity between members. To see complete information about the proteins in the family and the peptide matches assigned to each family member, click on the family number link. We'll click on family 3

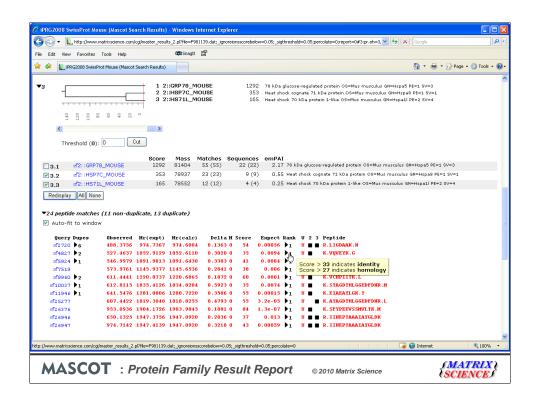


Immediately under the dendrogram is a list of the proteins. In this example, because SwissProt has low redundancy, each family member is a single protein. In other cases, a family member will represent multiple same-set proteins.

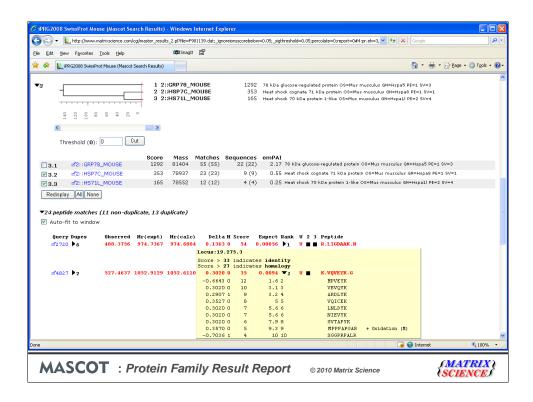
Below this is the table of peptide matches, which contains very similar information to that found in the other result reports. The black squares to the right show which peptides are found in which protein. To see only the peptides that distinguish HSP7C\_MOUSE and HS71L\_MOUSE, clear the checkbox for GRP78\_MOUSE and choose Redisplay.



The number of columns and rows in the table is reduced to the matches to the two selected proteins.

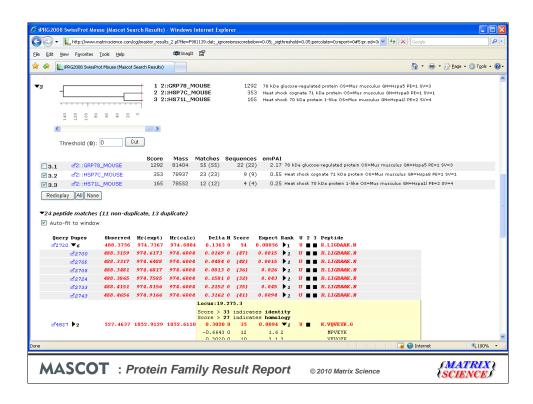


Tooltips are used to display additional information. For example, if the mouse cursor rests over the rank column, the score thresholds are displayed.

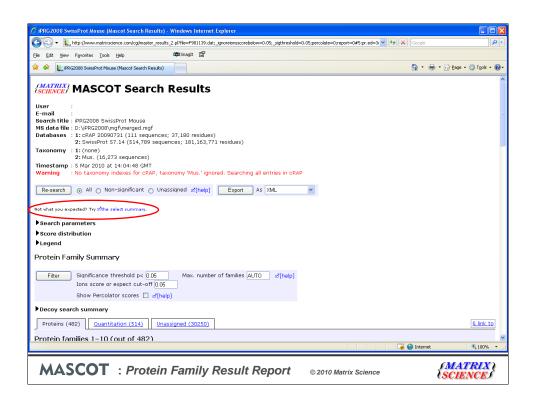


If you click on a marker in the rank column, it expands to show the 'yellow popup', containing the top 10 matches for this particular spectrum, except that this is no longer a pop-up. It is being displayed in-line so that you can print it, if you wish. You can also expand the top 10 for more than one match if you want to compare them

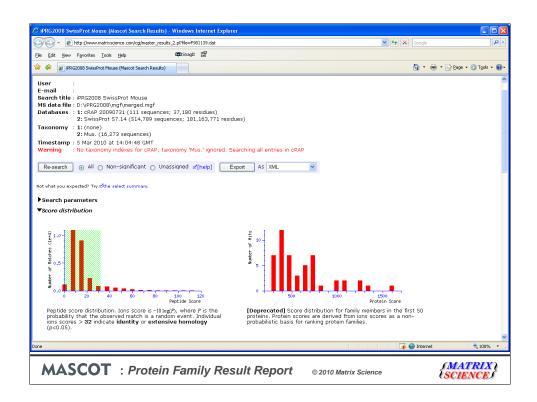
Duplicate matches to the same sequence are collapsed into a single row.



Usually, we are not very interested in lower scoring duplicate matches. But, if you want to see them, click on the marker in the duplicates column to expand. Obviously, clicking on either of these markers a second time causes the additional rows to collapse back to a single row

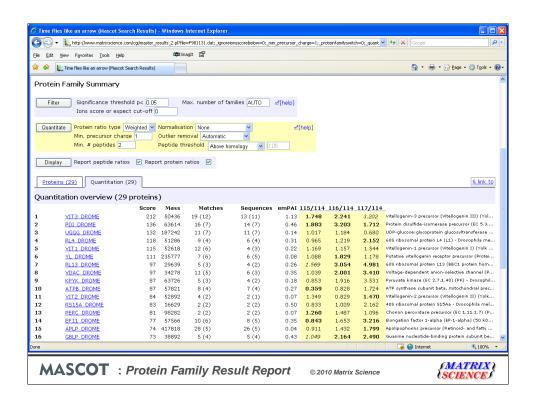


Scrolling back to the top of the report, we can see the header information and format controls. This is mostly similar to the existing reports except that sections can be expanded or hidden, as required. Note that, if you want the older reports, the Select Summary and the Protein Summary, these are still available by clicking on this link.

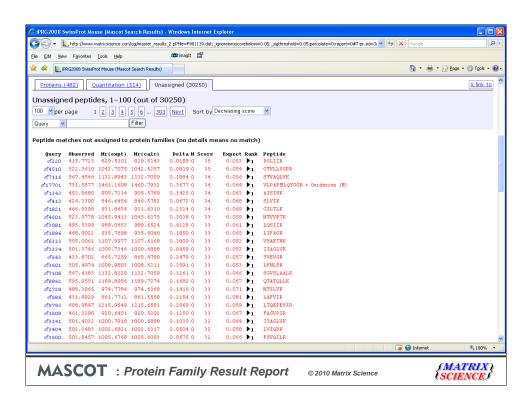


For example, we can expand to show two score distributions: one for the peptide match scores and one for the protein scores The old reports just have the protein score distribution, which isn't very meaningful, and is now marked deprecated (a software term meaning obsolete).

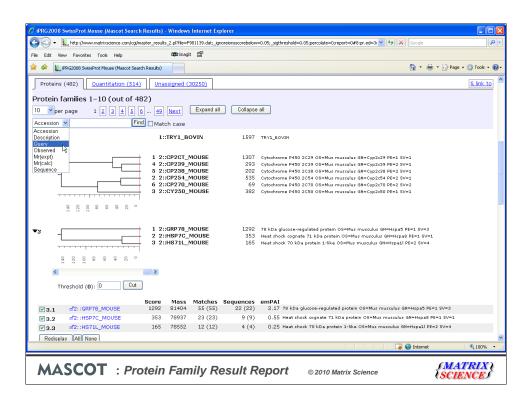
Lets take a quick look at the other two tabs. First, quantitation:



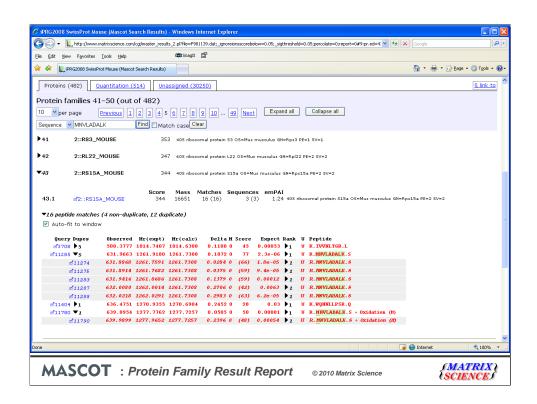
The quantitation tab is always populated for a large result report, even if you didn't choose a quantitation method, because emPAI values are calculated automatically. This tab is also useful if you want a simple, single level table of the protein hits. In Mascot 2.3, all MS/MS reports give counts of both the number of peptide matches and the number of distinct sequences. The numbers in parentheses are the counts above the specified significance threshold. If you wanted a table of proteins that conformed to the MCP guideline concerning one-hit wonders, you would exclude any protein that didn't have a count of at least two significant sequences, so VIT2\_DROME would to be dropped



Back to the original report, this is the unassigned peptide match tab. Again, it is paged, with a default of 100 peptide matches per page. As you can see, we have over 30,000 unassigned matches in this particular search, so displaying them all in a single list would use a large amount of memory. Up at the top of both the proteins and unassigned tab, you'll find a text search control

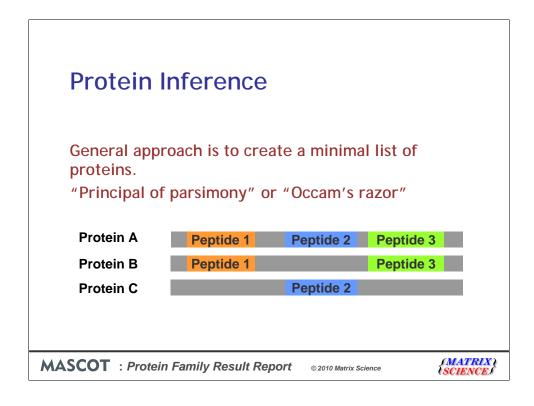


This is particularly important for a paged report. You can search by accession or description sub-string, or by query number, mass or sequence.



Here, for example, we searched for a peptide sequence. The display jumps to the first instance of the sequence, expands, and highlights (in green) the target peptides.

I hope you'll agree that this new report is a step in the right direction. Using cache files and displaying information 'on demand' allows even the largest search result to be displayed without memory or time-out problems



Now let's turn to the other aspect of the new report: improved protein inference.

As we all know, database matching of MS/MS spectra identifies peptides. Using these peptide sequences to deduce which proteins were present in the original sample is surprisingly difficult because many of the peptide sequences in a typical search result can be assigned to more than one protein.

The goal of protein inference is to create a minimal list of proteins. That is, the minimum number of proteins that can account for the observed peptides

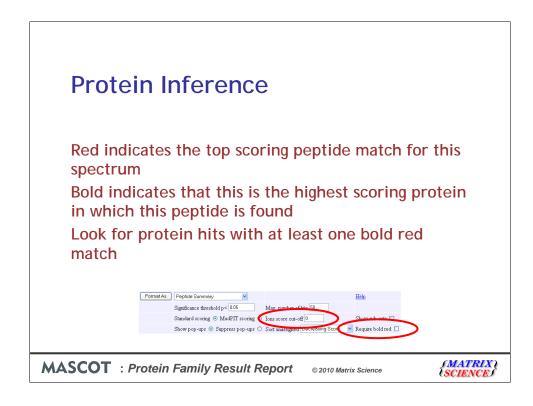
Some people call this approach the principal of parsimony, others call it Occam's razor.

Imagine the very simple case we have three peptide matches, which can be assigned to three proteins, as illustrated here. Do we have evidence for all three proteins, or just one?

Mascot will report that the sample contained protein A. Proteins B and C are defined as sub-set proteins, and given an inferior status.

This is certainly a reasonable decision, but there is no guarantee that it is correct. It is possible that the sample actually did contain a mixture of proteins B and C, but not protein A. Another thing to watch for is the possibility that peptide 2 is a very weak match, maybe a random match. If so, then there is nothing to choose between Proteins A and B.

This ambiguity is made worse in a shotgun proteomics or MudPIT experiment, where the proteins from a cell lysate are digested to peptides without any prior fractionation or separation.



In the Peptide Summary and Select Summary reports, the interpretation of the results from a large LC-MS/MS search can be tricky, because it is not always clear which proteins are "real" and which are just alternative groupings of peptide matches that are better assigned to other proteins.

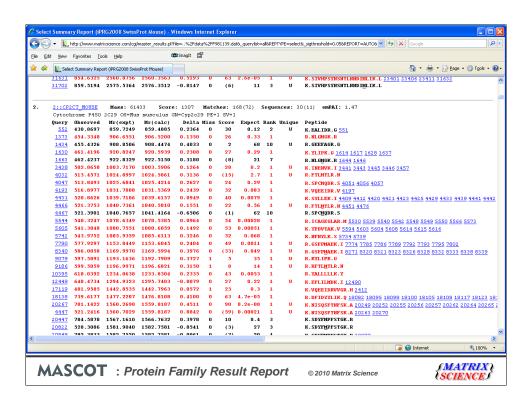
We use red and bold typeface to highlight the most logical assignment of peptides to proteins. Whenever the top scoring peptide match for an MS/MS spectrum appears, it is shown in red. Note that this does not mean that the match is necessarily significant. It is just the best match. A peptide match is shown in bold face when this is the highest scoring protein in which a match to this spectrum has been found. This means that peptide matches that are both bold and red are the most likely assignments of the best matches. Conversely, if a protein hit doesn't have any bold red matches, either the assigned spectra have better scoring matches to other sequences or matches to the same spectra are assigned to higher scoring proteins elsewhere.

Usually, a protein hit without any bold red matches would collapse into a higher scoring protein hit were it not for the presence of one or more weak, random matches. Such hits can be filtered out of the report by ticking the 'require bold red' checkbox.

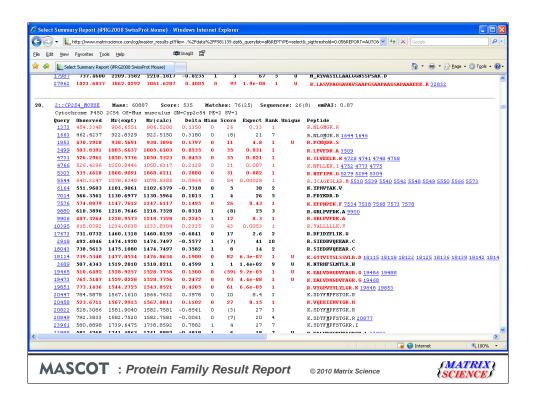
It is also a good idea to set a score cut-off, because this will make eliminate the weak, random matches that prevent proteins collapsing into a minimum number of hits. If the number entered into the lons score cut-off is a number between 0 and 1 it is treated as a cut-off on the expect value. So, entering 0.05 will remove all non-significant matches.

Prote	in Inferer	nce		
	20: Q3UWB9	34: Q91WH2	51: Q3UEP4	
	GAAVALNIR			
		GAAVTLNIR AEMWLIR	GAAVTLNIR AEMWLIR	
	IILDELVQR FSPGYQIEK	IILDELVQR FSPGYQIEK		
	DNLENFFIK	DNLENFFIK		
	FETFPTSVSK FVDVWTYEMPR	FETFPTSVSK FVDVWTYEMPR		
			WTYEVPR	
			IILDELK TPATLGPNTR	
	WLPONDLLGHPK	WLPQNDLLGHPK	FSPGYYLEK WLPQNDLLGHPK	
	ANAIAWALAQIPQK		ANAIAWALAQIPQK	
	GHEVTVLRPSAYYVLDPK	GHEVTVLRPSAYYVLDPK		

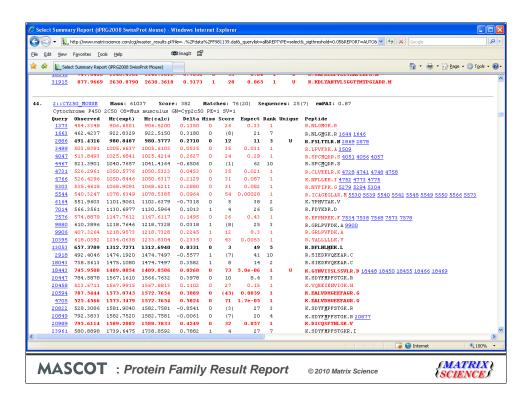
Using bold red and a score cut-off to filter the protein list works reasonably well, but it is far from ideal. In particular, the Peptide Summary and Select Summary reports fail to remove intersection proteins. A good example is shown here. Three proteins appear in the report at positions 20, 34, and 51. All have some bold red matches. And yet, when placed side by side, we can see that all the matches in 34 are found in 20 and 51. In other words, there is no independent evidence for protein 34. It's a sub-set of the combined matches to proteins 20 and 51.



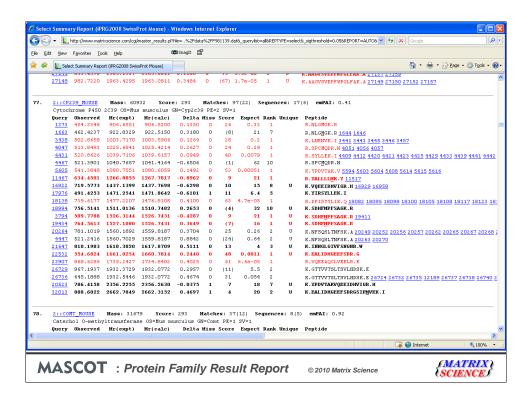
A second shortcoming is that related proteins, that we might want to consider side by side, become separated in the report because it is sorted by protein score. This is the result report we were looking at earlier, but now displayed as a select summary. Hit 2 is one of the highest scoring proteins: a Cytochrome P450 from mouse



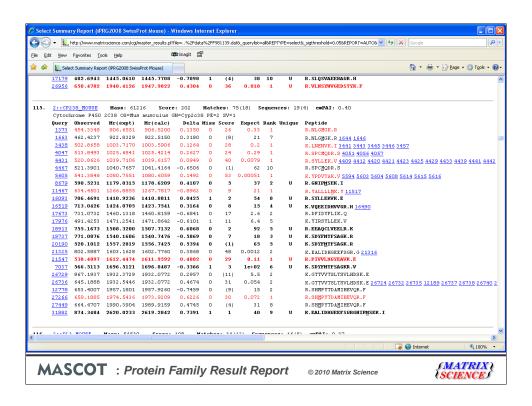
If you were to browse down, you'd find another Cytochrome P450 at hit 28



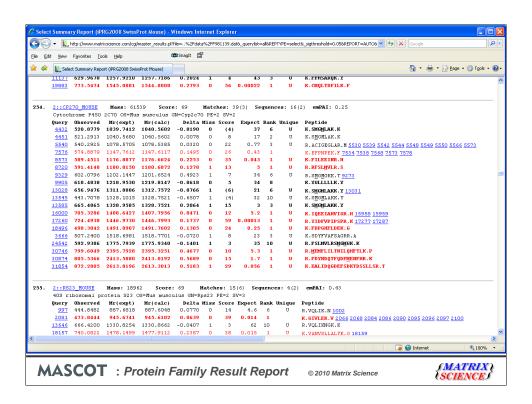
And another at 44



And at 69



And 115



And 254. Apart from the descriptions all containing the words Cytochrome P450, did you spot any other relationships? If you did, you're very smart and have a photographic memory. These 6 proteins are linked by a complex web of shared peptide matches. But, spotting this in the current reports is far from easy. This report, which is not particularly large, runs to 691 proteins. Think how many possible families there are in such a set of proteins.

# **Protein Inference: Family Report**

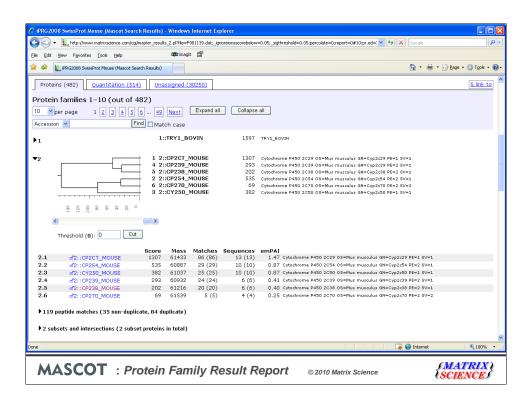
- 1. From the search results, create an initial list of proteins, ordered by protein score
- 2. Take the highest scoring protein on the list
- 3. Find all other proteins in the same family:
  - select all peptide matches with homology score or better
  - for each peptide match, select all the proteins that contain this match and remove from the initial list
  - for each new protein, select all new peptide matches with homology score or better
  - · loop until no further proteins or peptide matches remain
- 4. For each protein in the family, make a list of the distinct peptide sequences. That is, ignoring differences in modification state and precursor charge. Where there are duplicate matches to a sequence, the representative score for the sequence is the highest one
- 5. Using this set of distinct peptide sequences, divide and group the proteins into same-set proteins and sub-set proteins, which includes intersections.
  - · Same-set proteins are collapsed into a single family member
  - Proteins that are sub-sets, including intersections, are relegated to secondary status
  - · Perform hierarchical clustering of the family members
- 6. Loop from step 2 until no more peptide matches remain with homology score or better

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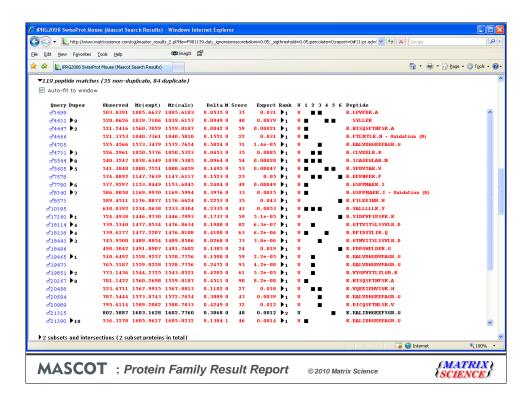
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The grouping algorithm in the new, protein family report clusters proteins into families on the basis of shared peptide matches. Only matches with scores above the homology threshold are used, non significant matches are ignored. An iterative method is used to remove intersection proteins as well as sub-set proteins.



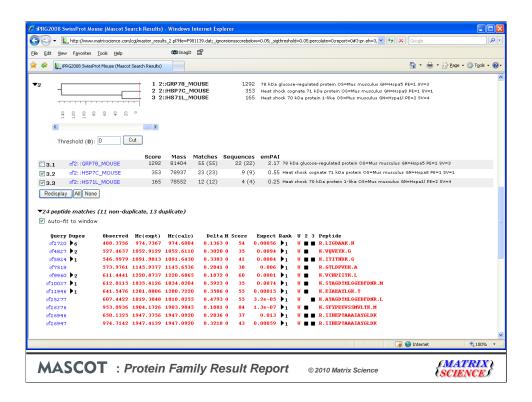
This is how the same 6 cytochrome P450 proteins are presented in the new report. Because they have shared, significant matches, they are grouped into a family.

The dendrogram illustrates the degree of similarity between the members. The scale on the dendrogram is ions score, and CP239\_MOUSE and CP238\_MOUSE join at a score of approximately 30. This represents the score of the significant matches that would have to be discarded in order to make one protein a sub-set of the other. Where there are multiple matches to the same peptide sequence, it is the highest score for each sequence that is used to calculate the distance.



In the peptides table, we can see the complex relationship between the proteins. Each has at least one significant match to a unique sequence. Otherwise, it would become a sub-set of another family member and be relegated to the sub-sets list. If we want to see the relationship between any particular pair of proteins, we simply uncheck the boxes for the others and choose re-display

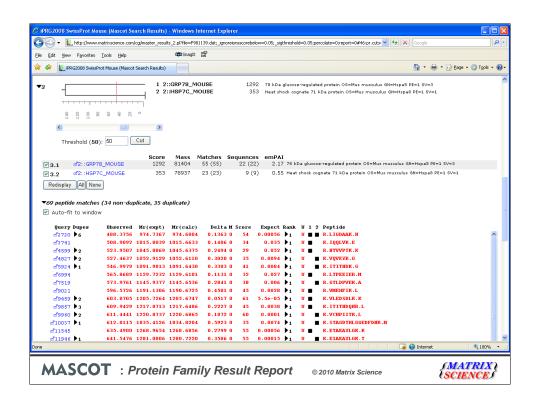
Please note that the use of bold face has changed in the new report. It now means that a match is significant. Not just that it's the first time we have seen a match to that particular spectrum. The meaning of red has not changed, it still indicates a top-ranked match



Here, for example, are a pair of proteins from family 3. You can immediately see that HS71L\_MOUSE would be a sub-set of HSP7C\_MOUSE if it was not for one match, K.ATAGDTHLGGEDFDNR.L. It is the significant score for this match that separates the two proteins in the dendrogram by a distance of 32 (score of 55 - homology threshold score of 23).

If you look a little more closely, you will notice that HSP7C\_MOUSE has a weak match to K.STAGDTHLGGEDFDNR.M. So, the evidence for both proteins being present comes down to a single residue. If S221 in HSP7C\_MOUSE was an A, or A223 in HS71L\_MOUSE was an S, then HS71L\_MOUSE would be a sub-set protein. Interestingly, the stronger match is for the sequence found in the protein with fewer matches. This could be chance or it could be that the analyte sequence was essentially HSP7C\_MOUSE but with an A at this position.

If you decide that this is not sufficient evidence for reporting both proteins, you can simplify the report by "cutting" the dendrogram using the slider control.



By cutting the dendrogram at a score of 50, HS71L\_MOUSE becomes a subset of HSP7C\_MOUSE, and we reduce the family to two members, each of which has a substantial number of unique sequences as evidence. These are different proteins that have sufficient homology to give some shared peptide matches. The strength of the new report is that it gives us a clear and simple overview, which allows us to browse for proteins of interest, as well as a tool for drilling down to the level of detail necessary to make decisions about whether there is evidence for any individual protein.

# **Protein Family Summary**

- Index files are created and cached to speed loading in future
- Paged report to conserve memory
- Detailed information is shown 'on demand'
- Proteins grouped into families by means of shared peptide matches
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- Hierarchical clustering within each protein family

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To summarise