EMBnet.journal
Bioinformatics in Action

Falquet (2026) EMBnet.journal 30, e1085
http://dx.doi.org/10.14806/ej.30.0.1085

In Memoriam – Prof. Amos Bairoch

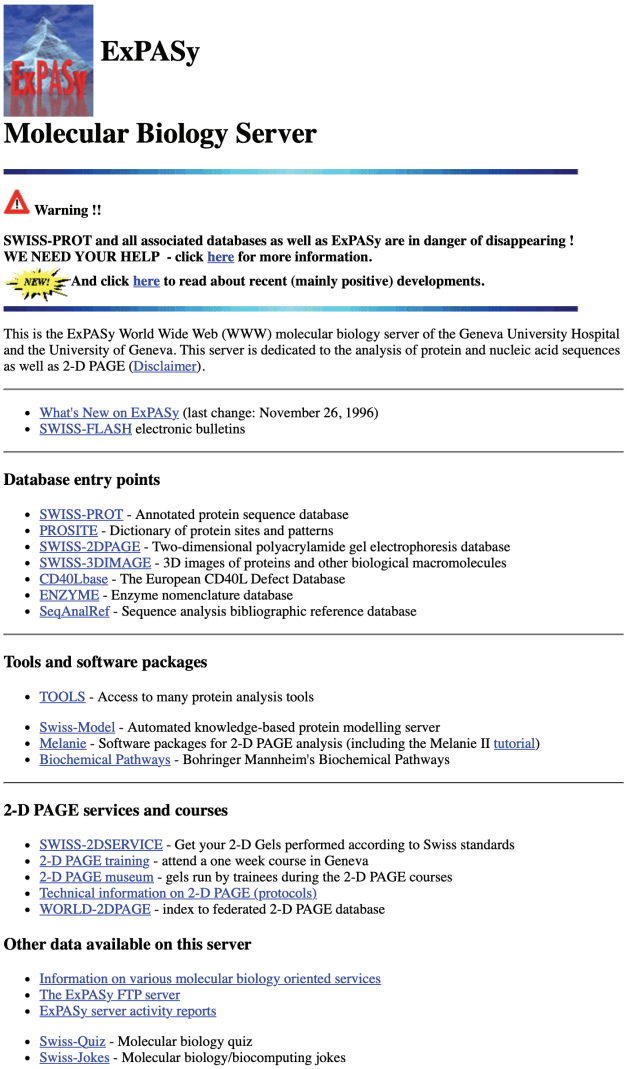
A visionary pioneer of bioinformatics and a giant of the Life Sciences

by Laurent Falquet & the EMBnet community

Prof. Amos Bairoch

Prof. Amos Bairoch (1957–2025) was one of the most influential and transformative figures in modern bioinformatics, a scientist whose vision reshaped how biological information is curated, accessed, and understood. As the creator of Swiss-Prot, UniProtKB/Swiss-Prot, PROSITE, ENZYME, and several other foundational databases, he defined the gold standard for accuracy, manual curation, and open accessibility in protein knowledgebases. His work enabled generations of researchers and laid the groundwork for breakthroughs across genomics, proteomics, biotechnology, precision medicine, and systems biology.

A professor at the University of Geneva and a driving force at the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics (SIB), Prof. Bairoch dedicated his life to building high-quality, sustainable, community-oriented resources that serve millions of users worldwide. He was not only an exceptional innovator but also a generous mentor and a passionate advocate for open science, training and inspiring countless scientists who continue to carry forward his vision.



ExPASy

Molecular Biology Server

Warning !!

SWISS-PROT and all associated databases as well as ExPASy are in danger of disappearing !
WE NEED YOUR HELP - click here for more information.

NEW! **And click here to read about recent (mainly positive) developments.**

This is the ExPASy World Wide Web (WWW) molecular biology server of the Geneva University Hospital and the University of Geneva. This server is dedicated to the analysis of protein and nucleic acid sequences as well as 2-D PAGE (Disclaimer).

- What's New on ExPASy (last change: November 26, 1996)
- SWISS-FLASH electronic bulletins

Database entry points

- SWISS-PROT - Annotated protein sequence database
- PROSITE - Dictionary of protein sites and patterns
- SWISS-2DPAGE - Two-dimensional polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis database
- SWISS-3DIMAGE - 3D images of proteins and other biological macromolecules
- CD40Lbase - The European CD40L Defect Database
- ENZYME - Enzyme nomenclature database
- SeqAnalRef - Sequence analysis bibliographic reference database

Tools and software packages

- TOOLS - Access to many protein analysis tools
- Swiss-Model - Automated knowledge-based protein modelling server
- Melanie - Software packages for 2-D PAGE analysis (including the Melanie II tutorial)
- Biochemical Pathways - Bohringer Mannheim's Biochemical Pathways

2-D PAGE services and courses

- SWISS-2DSERVICE - Get your 2-D Gels performed according to Swiss standards
- 2-D PAGE training - attend a one week course in Geneva
- 2-D PAGE museum - gels run by trainees during the 2-D PAGE courses
- Technical information on 2-D PAGE (protocols)
- WORLD-2DPAGE - index to federated 2-D PAGE database

Other data available on this server

- Information on various molecular biology oriented services
- The ExPASy FTP server
- ExPASy server activity reports
- Swiss-Quiz - Molecular biology quiz
- Swiss-Jokes - Molecular biology/biocomputing jokes

Figure 1. Oldest screenshot of Expasy server on Wayback Machine (Nov 29, 1996), when Amos called for help to save SwissProt (web.archive.org), Wayback Machine started in 1996...

Article history
Received: 19 December 2025
Published: 09 January 2026

Falquet (2026) EMBnet.journal 30, e1085
http://dx.doi.org/10.14806/ej.30.0.1085

News

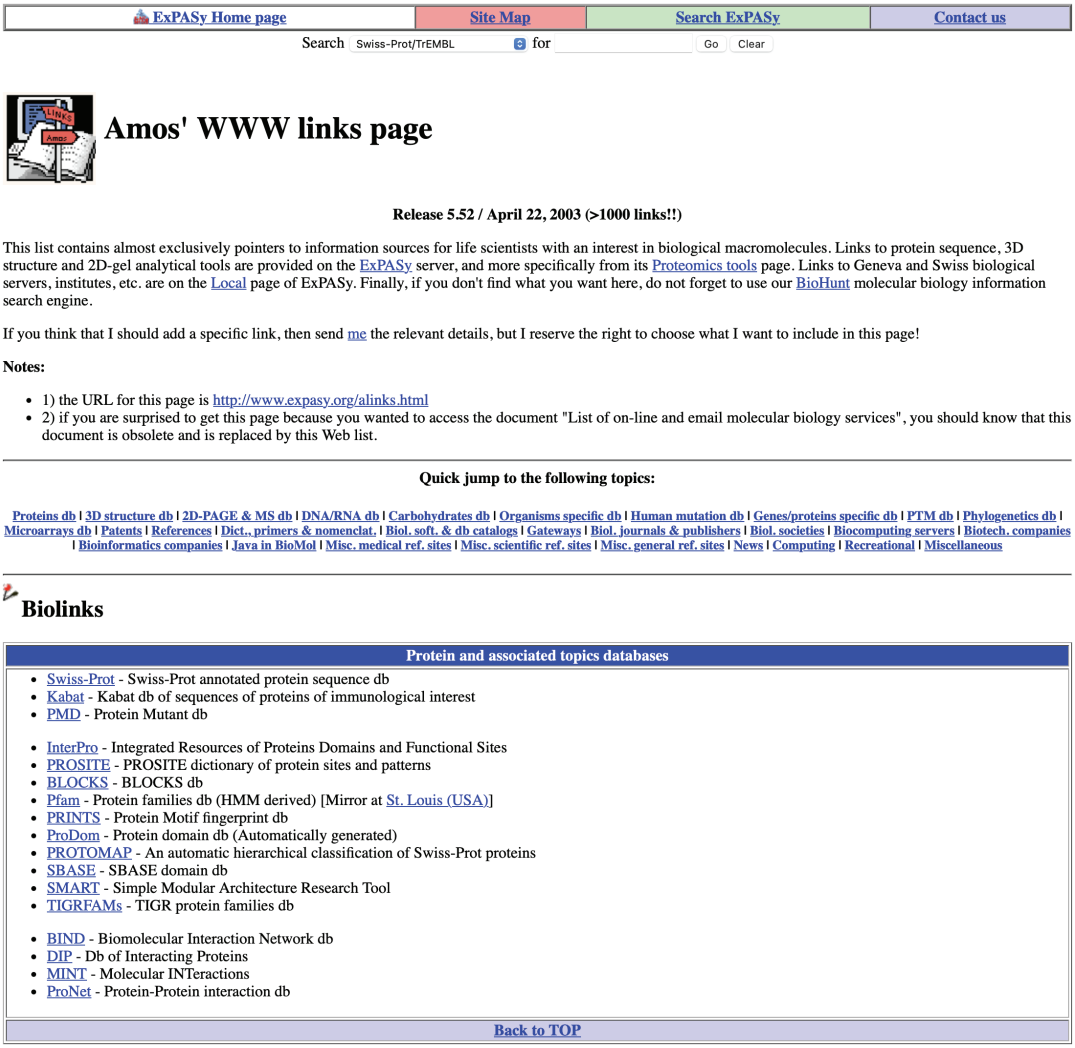


Figure 2. The famous Amos' WWW links page (ultimate version)

The EMBnet community mourns his sudden passing with profound sadness. Amos was a colleague, collaborator, and friend whose impact on our field—and on global Life Sciences—cannot be overstated. His legacy endures in the resources he created, the standards he established, and the many people whose careers he touched. We honour his memory with deep respect, gratitude, and heartfelt sorrow.

I would like to pay tribute to him with a few additional personal memories.

1993 was an exciting year. In January, I started my thesis in biochemistry and Amos Bairoch was working on the same floor of the Department of Medical Biochemistry at the University of Geneva. In September 1993, he suddenly walked into my lab and frantically asked me, «Do you have Mosaic on your Mac? » (He was referring to NCSA Mosaic, one of the very first web browsers). I replied that I did, so he dragged me over to it and told me to type in «http://expasy.hcuge.ch», and suddenly I saw the very first page of the ExPASy server (Expert Protein Analysis System) (Figure 1) before my astonished eyes...

From there, I could click on SwissProt, ENZYME, or PROSITE to access the databases he was developing and lots of other links. It was revolutionary! That first page became later the famous «Amos' WWW links page» (Figure 2) a world reference containing more than 1000 links to bioinformatics tools and servers until 2005. ExPASy[1] is still now the entry page for the tools developed at the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics.

In 1994, we were both at the first proteomics conference in Siena, Italy, entitled «From Genome to Proteome». He was sitting right in front of me with his laptop (the only one in the room) and throughout the conference he was constantly typing away on his keyboard, creating new SwissProt annotation records for the proteins that the speakers were presenting at that very moment. At the same time, he was able to ask the speaker relevant questions. I was amazed, especially when I learned later that Amos' laptop contained the

[1]https://www.expasy.org

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Figure 3. Torremolinos EMBnet AGM2007: from left to right - Amos Bairoch, Francisco Melo, Laurent Falquet (© Erik Bongcam-Rudloff).

only master copy of the SwissProt database until 2003 and the fusion into UniProtKB!

Amos was a strong supporter of the EMBnet organisation, he participated in many courses, workshops and conferences that EMBnet organised, one of them being the Bioinformatics conference in Torremolinos (Spain) in 2007 (Figure 3). He also managed, through the creation of the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics in 1998, to raise the governmental funding to support SwissProt and the Swiss EMBnet node!

He received many awards during his career, the most recent one at the ISMB, and would certainly have deserved the Nobel Prize, but unfortunately his untimely death prevented him from receiving it. Despite all this, Amos kept his modesty. This summer, when he received the ISCB award, he simply introduced himself as a «biocurator», proud to explain the qualities of this profession. And of course, he kept his style of dress in all circumstances: Amos wore a polo shirt.

Thank you, Amos, for your exceptional scientific work and your friendship, we all miss you.

Dr Laurent Falquet
former Swiss EMBnet node manager 2002-2009.

Learn more about Amos personality and work, and deposit your remembrances on his SIB memorial website: https://www.sib.swiss/amos/