Case Study

Developing a generic, high-throughput assay for characterization of DuoBody® Bispecific Ab samples using Genedata Expressionist®

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Genmab

About Genmab
Genmab is an international biotechnology company specializing in the creation and development of differentiated antibody therapeutics for the treatment of cancer.

Industry
Biotechnology

Website
www.genmab.com

Key Challenges
Replace laborious CEX-based technologies and increase screening throughput

Solution
Automated MS data processing using Genedata Expressionist®

Results
95% reduction in data acquisition and processing time, 70% reduction in person hours required for manual data processing

Background

Genmab is an international biotechnology company that specializes in creating and developing antibody biotherapeutics for treating cancer. The innovative DuoBody technology platform facilitates generation of human IgG1 bispecific antibodies (bsAb) using a fast, scalable process.

Predicting the behavior of bsAbs based on the activity of their parent antibodies is difficult, and therefore Genmab has developed a specific method for screening bsAb libraries (Figure 1). Briefly, two IgG1 antibody libraries (X and Y) are produced separately (Step 1), purified (Step 2), and recombined to generate a bsAb library containing the complete set of parent antibody permutations (Step 3). After recombination, the bsAb library is screened for desired functionalities (Step 4).

Targeted mutations in the heavy chain third constant (CH3) domain allow heterodimerization under mild reducing conditions, with the process being essentially unidirectional with typical yields of >95%[1–3]. The homogeneity of the final bsAb product is determined to monitor process efficiency and product quality. To process multiple bsAb screening libraries, such a characterization would ideally be highly generic, provide unbiased and relevant molecular information, and operate efficiently in a high-throughput manner.

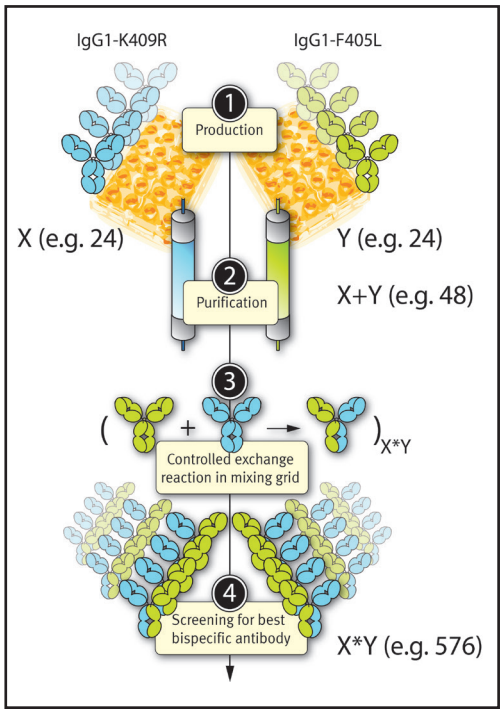

Figure 1: The DuoBody bsAb library screening process

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Main Challenges

Replacing inefficient existing LC-based assay technologies

A commonly used conventional method for characterizing antibody products is cation-exchange (CEX) chromatography. However, due to substantial charge heterogeneity, this method frequently requires retesting. The alternative orthogonal method hydrophobic-interaction (HIC) chromatography also has limitations and peak resolution is usually low. These methods are laborious and require lengthy eluent profiles and buffer exchanges. In addition, they also require internal control runs using homodimers to assign peaks, further increasing the time required for analysis.

Speeding and simplifying data processing and analysis

In CEX profile analysis, charge heterogeneity can lead to overlapping peak profiles that frequently require manual peak integration. In HIC profiles, overlapping peaks caused by low resolution are often impossible to interpret.

Increasing throughput to accommodate increasing numbers of samples

The large number of bsAb variants generated in a screening library (Figure 1) means that ideally, the analysis method should be as fast as possible. The laborious nature of CEX-based methods means that such approaches would represent a significant bottleneck in screening.

Achieving standardization and reproducibility

The unpredictable behavior of antibody variants during CEX chromatographic separation and the frequent requirement for an additional orthogonal separation means that analyses using CEX-based methods are not standardized.

The Solution

Switching to analysis methods based on mass spectrometry (MS)

Compared to CEX-based methods, MS-based analysis provides significantly more information on the physical composition of samples. In addition to the relative ratios of expected molecular species, the presence and relative ratios of additional species (for example, sequence variants or glycosylated forms) can be determined.

Efficiently processing large volumes of MS data

The additional levels of information provided by MS analysis lead to larger volumes of data. As an enterprise level platform designed to facilitate and accelerate MS data processing in biopharmaceutical characterization, Genedata Expressionist was an enabling component in developing an MS-based assay for automated analysis of bsAb variants.

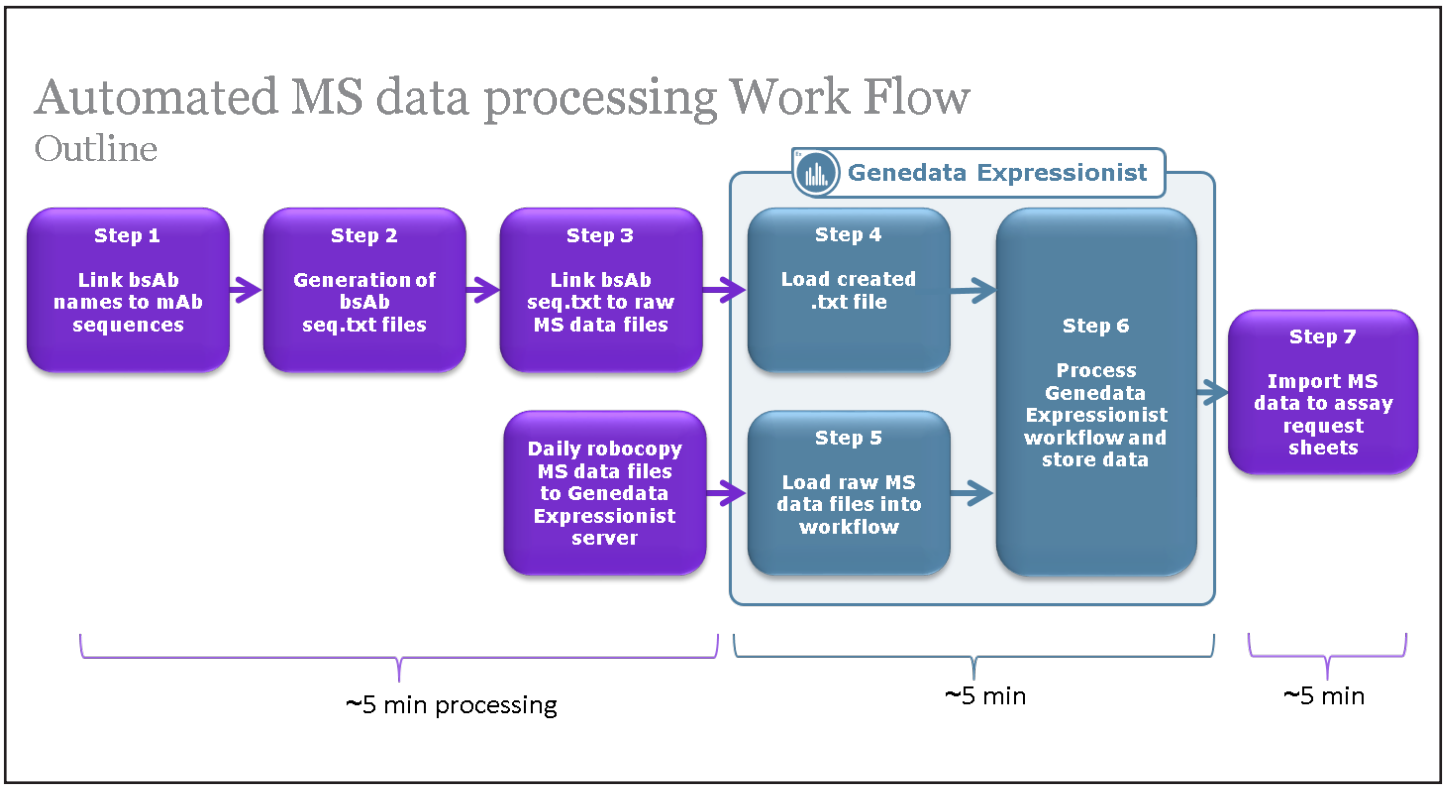

Figure 2: The Genmab DuoBody bsAb data analysis procedure (slide presented by Dr Ewald van den Bremer at PEGS Summit 2017 and PepTalk 2018)

Benefits

Accelerated processing and analysis using generic LC-MS–based methods

The LC method used in the LC-MS analysis of bsAbs is a generic, fast-gradient method suitable for analysis of any antibody. This means that no time-consuming buffer exchange, chromatographic separation optimization, or additional orthogonal methods are required.

Fast and efficient data processing and analysis through automation of the workflow

The Genmab DuoBody bsAb data analysis procedure can be divided into three stages (Figure 2). First, FASTA-format files containing the sequences of the respective parent antibody heavy and light chains are created (Steps 1–3).

Second, these files are automatically sent together with the MS raw data to the Genedata Expressionist server where they are loaded into a fully automated, custom-built data analysis workflow (Steps 4–6). Within this workflow, individual activities use global and sample-specific parameters to process each raw data file. For example, an Intact Protein activity deconvolutes mass spectra and a Protein Mapping activity rapidly analyzes multiple disulfide variants and screens for glycosylated species.

Finally, the analysis results are reported in a format compatible with automated import into downstream data processing (Step 7).

Standardization providing globally comparable, high-quality results

Always using the same method for analysis and subsequent data processing enables meaningful comparisons of results across and between entire bsAb libraries. This standardized method greatly facilitates benchmarking and process monitoring in the production of bsAb therapeutics for research applications.

Detailed visualization and reporting delivering deeper insights into sample makeup

Using MS-based methods, mass calculations provide an additional level of confidence in the identification of each molecular species. These species can be manually investigated using the software's Spectrum View (Figure 3). The Genedata Expressionist workflow creates a report containing detailed results for each sample, ready for import into existing data infrastructures.

Summary

Using Genedata Expressionist, scientists at Genmab established an automated MS-based high-throughput assay that provides qualitative and quantitative information on a bsAb preparation in a fraction of the time and effort required by conventional CEX-based methods. Compared to the CEX-based process, the time required for data acquisition and processing was reduced by 95% and the number of person hours dedicated to data processing was reduced by 70% (Figure 4).

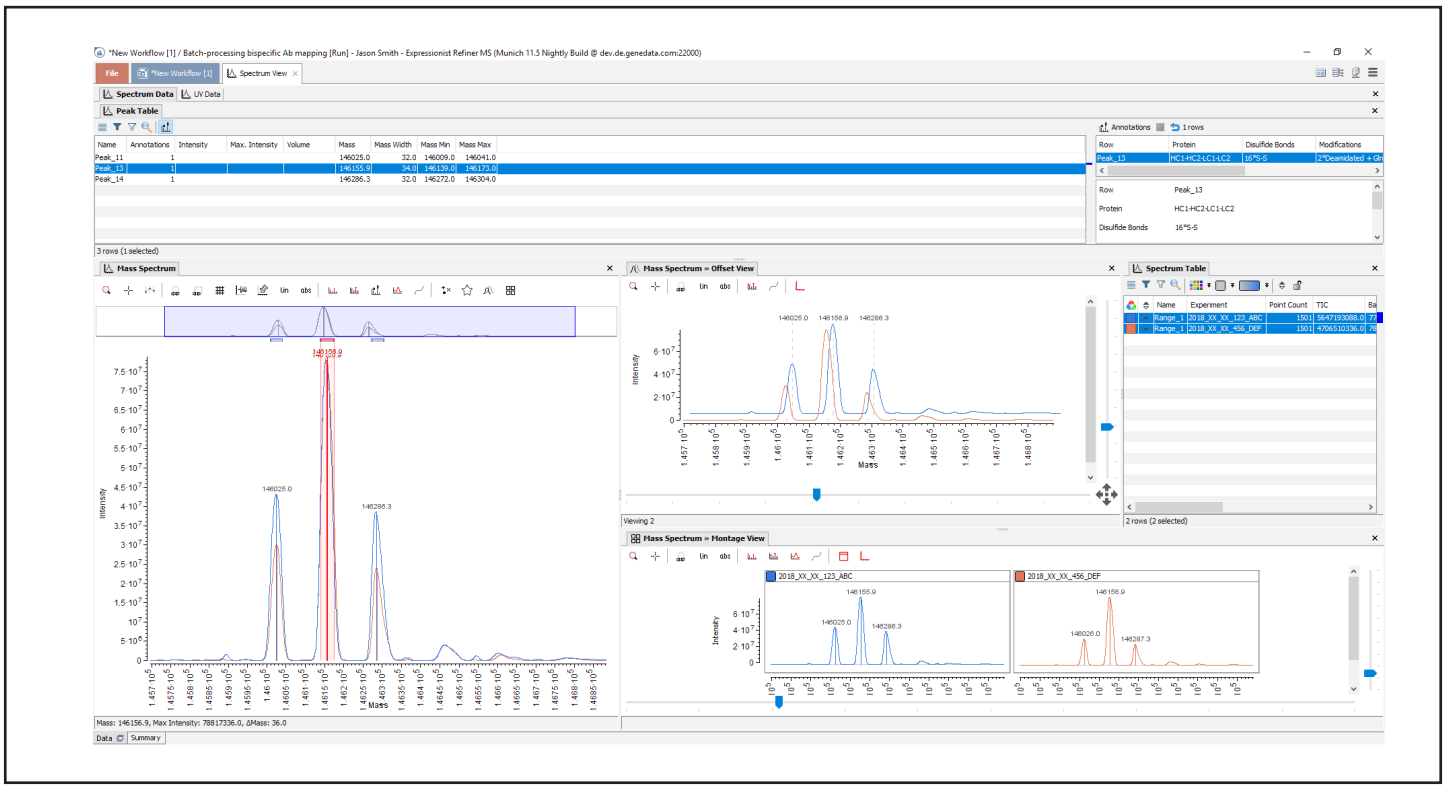

Figure 3: Processing high-content MS information using Genedata Expressionist delivers deeper insights into samples. The displayed samples contain a DuoBody and spiked homodimers.

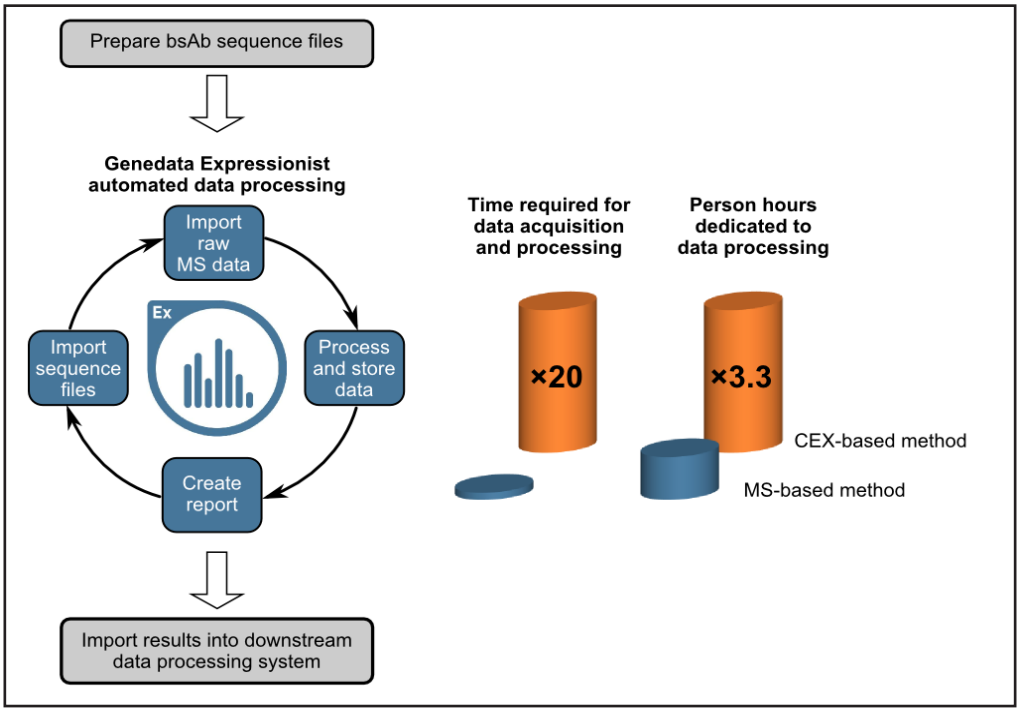

Figure 4: The Genmab DuoBody bsAb data analysis procedure and time savings obtained by the adoption of the automated MS-based data analysis workflow

References

1. Labrijn, A.F., Meesters, J.I. et al. Controlled Fab-arm exchange for the generation of stable bispecific IgG1. Nat Protoc. 2014 Oct;9(10):2450-63. doi: 10.1038/nprot.2014.
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3. Gramer, M.J., van den Bremer, E.T. et al. Production of stable bispecific IgG1 by controlled Fab-arm exchange: scalability from bench to large-scale manufacturing by application of standard approaches. MAbs. 2013 Nov-Dec;5(6):962-73. doi: 10.4161/mabs.26233.

About Genedata Expressionist

As a comprehensive software solution for transforming raw data from any mass spectrometry instrument into insights, Genedata Expressionist offers built-in functionalities that serve all MS applications for biopharmaceutical characterization, proteomics, and metabolomics in a single enterprise platform. Custom-built workflows address specific data processing, analysis, and reporting needs and enable harmonization and standardization between and across organizations. Complete automation, unbiased data interrogation with best-in-class algorithms and cutting-edge statistics, and intuitive visualizations deliver high-quality results with significant time and cost savings. Integrated data and project management enables organizations to streamline methods and efficiently manage data, results, and reports.

Genedata Expressionist is part of the Genedata Biopharma Platform for capturing, organizing, integrating, processing, and analyzing data to increase enterprise-wide productivity and R&D process efficiency.

To learn more about Genedata Expressionist and other customer case studies, visit www.genedata.com/products/expressionist

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