On Wednesday, February 29, 2012 8:15:30 PM UTC-5, David Fanning wrote:
> Folks,
>
> PLoS Computational Biology has a good article on how
> to get help from on-line scientific communities. It
> occurs to me that this might be good advice for our
> community. :-)
>
>   http://www.ploscompbiol.org/article/info:doi%2F10.1371%
> 2Fjournal.pcbi.1002202

It's a nice article, and it's cute that the article was written collaboratively on a wiki.

<rant>
But how did this get into a computational biology journal? The editor should have flagged this as an off-topic paper to begin with. What next, "How to remove bio-slime from your indoor plumbing?" I strongly believe how-to information doesn't belong in scientific journals.

And beyond that, 99% of what is said in that paper is redundant to Eric S. Raymond's "How to Ask Questions the Smart Way" from a decade ago. Why write a whole 2000 word paper about this subject when the following paper would have sufficed?

 > Do this: [1].
 >
 > [1] Raymond, Eric S. 2001, "How to Ask Questions the Smart Way"

The bio-unique element of the paper, a list of 15 vaguely bioinformatics-related mailing lists, is tucked away in a separate supplemental document without any real commentary or editorial basis. Why did they choose some mailing lists and not others? How about including a map between bio-informatics specialties and mailing lists?

I think the authors' article strongly deserves to be written, but it should have stayed on a wiki or on the web, not in a scientific journal.
</rant>