‘Amazon’ for DNA democratizing CRISPR gene editing research

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

The gene-editing technology called CRISPR is probably the fastest-spreading technology in the history of biology.

Here’s one reason why: each weekday at 8 a.m. at the offices of AddGene in Cambridge, Massachusetts, interns start loading UPS packages containing the raw DNA material needed for gene-editing, sending it as far away as Zimbabwe and Croatia.

AddGene is a nonprofit that exists to help scientists share their DNA inventions. Think of it as an Amazon.com for biological parts. Anyone can submit one—or order someone else’s part for $65.

Easy access to gene-editing technology is what has allowed labs everywhere to get into the game. In 2015, there were more than 1,300 scientific papers on CRISPR, and it’s been used to do everything from curing muscular dystrophy in mice to making super-muscled beagles.

AddGene was started in 2004 by a graduate student, Melina Fan, who got tired of trying to beg and barter for key materials she needed. Why not create a central repository to which everyone can contribute?

To be sure, there’s a nasty patent battle playing out over who controls the commercial rights to CRISPR. But that doesn’t affect sharing between labs, since patents don’t directly restrict what basic scientists can do.

Read full, original post: The Scientific Swap Meet Behind the Gene-Editing Boom