The minfi User's Guide Analyzing Illumina 450k Methylation Arrays

Kasper D. Hansen Martin J. Aryee

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1 Introduction

The minfi package provides tools for analyzing Illumina's Methylation arrays, with a special focus on the new 450k array for humans. At the moment Illumina's 27k methylation arrays are not supported.

The tasks addressed in this package include preprocessing, QC assessments, identification of interesting methylation loci and plotting functionality. Analyzing these types of arrays is ongoing research in ours and others groups. In general, the analysis of 450k data is not straightforward and we anticipate many advances in this area in the near future.

The input data to this package are IDAT files, representing two different color channels prior to normalization. It is possible to use Genome Studio files together with the data structures contained in this package, but in general Genome Studio files are already normalized and we do not recommend this.

Chip design and terminology

The 450k array has a complicated design. What follows is a quick overview.

Each sample is measured on a single array, in two different color channels (red and green). Each array measures roughly 450,000 CpG positions. Each CpG is associated with two measurements: a methylated measurement and an "un"-methylated measurement. These two values can be measured in one of two ways: using a "Type I" design or a "Type II"

design". CpGs measured using a Type I design are measured using a single color, with two different probes in the same color channel providing the methylated and the unmethylated measurements. CpGs measured using a Type II design are measured using a single probe, and two different colors provide the methylated and the unmethylated measurements. Practically, this implies that on this array there is *not* a one-to-one correspondence between probes and CpG positions. We have therefore tried to be precise about this and we refer to a "methylation position" (or "CpG") when we refer to a single-base genomic locus. The previous generation 27k methlation array uses only the Type I design.

In this package we refer to differentially methylated positions (DMPs) by which we mean a single genomic position that has a different methylation level in two different groups of samples (or conditions). This is different from differentially methylated regions (DMRs) which imply more that more than one methylation positions are different between conditions.

Physically, each sample is measured on a single "array". There are 12 arrays on a single physical "slide" (organized in a 6 by 2 grid). Slides are organized into "plates" containing at most 8 slides (96 arrays).

Workflow and R data classes

A set of 450k data files will initially be read into an RGChannelSet, representing the raw intensities as two matrices: one being the green channel and one being the red channel. This is a class which is very similar to an ExpressionSet or an NChannelSet.

The RGChannelSet is, together with a IlluminaMethylationManifest object, preprocessed into a MethylSet. The IlluminaMethylationManifest object contains the array design, and describes how probes and color channels are paired together to measure the methylation level at a specific CpG. The object also contains information about control probes (also known as QC probes). The MethylSet contains normalized data and essentially consists of two matrices containing the methylated and the unmethylated evidence for each CpG. Only the RGChannelSet contains information about the control probes.

The process described in the previous paragraph is very similar to the paradigm for analyzing Affymetrix expression arrays using the affy package (an AffyBatch is preprocessed into an ExpressionSet using array design information stored in a CDF environment (package)).

A MethylSet is the starting point for any post-normalization analysis, such as searching for DMPs or DMRs.

Getting Started

```
> require(minfi)
> require(minfiData)
```

2 Reading Data

This package supports analysis of IDAT files, containing the summarized bead information.

In our experience, most labs use a "Sample Sheet" CSV file to describe the layout of the experiment. This is based on a sample sheet file provided by Illumina. Our pipeline assumes the existence of such a file(s), but it is relatively easy to create such a file using for example Excel, if it is not available.

We use an example dataset with 6 samples, spread across two slides. First we obtain the system path to the IDAT files; this requires a bit since the data comes from an installed package

```
> baseDir <- system.file("extdata", package = "minfiData")
> list.files(baseDir)

[1] "5723646052" "5723646053" "SampleSheet.csv"
```

This shows the typical layout of 450k data: each "slide" (containing 12 arrays) is stored in a separate directory, with a numeric name. The top level directory contains the sample sheet file. Inside the slide directories we find the IDAT files (and possible a number of JPG images or other files):

```
> list.files(file.path(baseDir, "5723646052"))

[1] "5723646052_R02C02_Grn.idat" "5723646052_R02C02_Red.idat"
[3] "5723646052_R04C01_Grn.idat" "5723646052_R04C01_Red.idat"
[5] "5723646052_R05C02_Grn.idat" "5723646052_R05C02_Red.idat"
```

The files for each array has another numeric number and consists of a Red and a Grn (Green) IDAT file. Note that for this example data, each slide contains only 3 arrays and not 12.

This was done because of file size limitations and because we only need 6 arrays to illustrate the package's functionality.

First we read the sample sheet. We provide a convenience function for reading in this file read.450k.sheet. This function has a couple of attractive bells and whistles. Let us look at the output

> targets <- read.450k.sheet(baseDir)</pre>

Found the following CSV files:

[1] "/loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/SampleSheet.csv"

> targets

	Sample_Name	Sample_Well	${\tt Sample_Plate}$	${\tt Sample_Group}$	Pool_ID
1	GroupA_3	H5	NA	GroupA	NA
2	GroupA_2	D5	NA	GroupA	NA
3	GroupB_3	C6	NA	GroupB	NA
4	GroupB_1	F7	NA	GroupB	NA
5	GroupA_1	G7	NA	GroupA	NA
6	GroupB_2	Н7	NA	GroupB	NA
	Array	Slide			
1	R02C02 5723	646052			
2	R04C01 5723	646052			

- 3 R05C02 5723646052
- 4 R04C02 5723646053
- 5 R05C02 5723646053
- 6 R06C02 5723646053

Basen

- 1 /loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/5723646052/5723646052_R02
- 2 /loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/5723646052/5723646052_R04
- 3 /loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/5723646052/5723646052_R05
- 4 /loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/5723646053/5723646053_R04
- 5 /loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/5723646053/5723646053_R05
- 6 /loc/home/biocbuild/bbs-2.9-bioc/R/library/minfiData/extdata/5723646053/5723646053_R06

First the output: this is just a data.frame. It contains a column Basename that describes the location of the IDAT file corresponding to the sample, as well as two columns Array and Slide. In the sample sheet provided by Illumina, these two columns are named Sentrix_Position and Sentrix_ID, but we rename them. We provide more detail on the use of this function below. The Basename column tend to be too large for display, here it is simplified relative to baseDir:

```
> sub(baseDir, "", targets$Basename)
```

- [1] "/5723646052/5723646052_R02C02"
- [2] "/5723646052/5723646052_R04C01"
- [3] "/5723646052/5723646052_R05C02"
- [4] "/5723646053/5723646053_R04C02"
- [5] "/5723646053/5723646053_R05C02"
- [6] "/5723646053/5723646053_R06C02"

(This is just for display purposes).

With this data.frame, it is easy to read in the data

```
> RGset <- read.450k.exp(base = baseDir, targets = targets)
```

Let us look at the associated pheno data, which is really just the information contained in the targets object above.

> RGset

```
RGChannelSet (storageMode: lockedEnvironment)
assayData: 622399 features, 6 samples
element names: Green, Red
protocolData: none
phenoData
sampleNames: 5723646052_R02C02 5723646052_R04C01 ...
5723646053_R06C02 (6 total)
varLabels: Sample_Name Sample_Well ... filenames (9 total)
varMetadata: labelDescription
featureData: none
experimentData: use 'experimentData(object)'
Annotation: IlluminaHumanMethylation450k
```

```
> pd <- pData(RGset)
> pd[,1:4]
```

	Sample_Name	Sample_Well	Sample_Plate
5723646052_R02C02	GroupA_3	H5	NA
5723646052_R04C01	GroupA_2	D5	NA
5723646052_R05C02	GroupB_3	C6	NA
5723646053_R04C02	GroupB_1	F7	NA
5723646053_R05C02	GroupA_1	G7	NA
5723646053_R06C02	GroupB_2	Н7	NA
	Sample_Group		
5723646052_R02C02	Group <i>l</i>	A	
5723646052_R04C01	Group <i>l</i>	A	
5723646052_R05C02	GroupB		
5723646053_R04C02	Group	3	
5723646053_R05C02	Group <i>l</i>	A	
5723646053_R06C02	Group	3	

The read.450k.exp also makes it possible to read in an entire directory or directory tree (with recursive set to TRUE) by using the function just with the argument base and targets=NULL, like

```
> RGset2 = read.450k.exp(file.path(baseDir, "5723646052"))
> RGset3 = read.450k.exp(baseDir, recursive = TRUE)
```

Advanced notes on Reading Data

The only important column in sheet data.frame used in the targets argument for the read.450k.exp function is a column names Basename. Typically, such an object would also have columns named Array, Slide, and (optionally) Plate.

We used sheet data files build on top of the Sample Sheet data file provided by Illumina. This is a CSV file, with a header. In this case we assume that the phenotype data starts after a line beginning with [Data] (or that there is no header present).

It is also easy to read a sample sheet "manually", using the function read.csv. Here, we know that we want to skip the first 7 lines of the file.

```
> targets2 <- read.csv(file.path(baseDir, "SampleSheet.csv"), stringsAsFactors = FALSE
> targets2
```

```
Sample_Name Sample_Well Sample_Plate Sample_Group Pool_ID
1
     GroupA_3
                                                 GroupA
                         Н5
                                                              NA
2
     GroupA_2
                                                 GroupA
                         D5
                                       NA
                                                              NA
3
     GroupB_3
                                                 GroupB
                         C6
                                       NA
                                                              NA
4
     GroupB_1
                         F7
                                       NA
                                                 GroupB
                                                              NA
5
                         G7
     GroupA_1
                                       NA
                                                 GroupA
                                                              NA
6
     GroupB_2
                         H7
                                       NA
                                                 GroupB
                                                              NA
  Sentrix_ID Sentrix_Position
1 5723646052
                         R02C02
2 5723646052
                         R04C01
3 5723646052
                         R05C02
4 5723646053
                         R04C02
5 5723646053
                         R05C02
6 5723646053
                         R06C02
```

We now need to populate a Basename column. On possible approach is the following

Finally, minfi contains a file-based parser: read.450k. The return object represents the red and the green channel measurements of the samples. A useful function that we get from the package Biobase is combine that combines ("adds") two sets of samples. This allows the user to manually build up an RGChannelSet.

3 Quality Control

minfi provides several plots that can be useful for identifying samples with data quality problems. These functions can display summaries of signal from the array (e.g. density plots) as well as the values of several types of control probes included on the array. Our understanding of the expected sample behavior in the QC plots is still evolving and will improve as the number of available samples from the array increases. A good rule of thumb is to be wary of samples whose behavior deviates from that of others in the same or similar experiments.

The wrapper function qcReport function can be used to produce a PDF QC report of the most common plots. If provided, the optional sample name and group options will be used to label and color plots. Samples within a group are assigned the same color. The sample

group option can also be used as a very cursory way to check for batch effects (e.g. by setting it to a processing day variable.)

```
> qcReport(RGset, sampNames = pd$Sample_Name,
+ sampGroups = pd$Sample_Group, pdf = "qcReport.pdf")
```

The components of the QC report can also be customized and produced individually as detailed below.

Density plots

The densityPlot function produces density plots of the methylation Beta values for all samples, typically colored by sample group. While the density plots in Figure 1 are useful for identifying deviant samples, it is not easy to identify the specific problem sample. If there is a concern about outlier samples, a useful follow-up is the "bean" plot (Figure 2) that shows each sample in its own section. While the shape of the distribution for "good" samples will differ from experiment to experiment, many conditions have methylation profiles characterized by two modes - one with close to 0% methylation, and a second at close to 100% methylation.

Control probe plots

The controlStripPlot function allows plotting of individual control probe types (Figure 3). The following control probes are available on the array:

Ι	12
ΙΙ	4
	4
	3
	614
	4
	32
	61
	32
	61
	12
	3
	I

> densityPlot(RGset, sampGroups = pd\$Sample_Group, main = "Beta", xlab = "Beta")

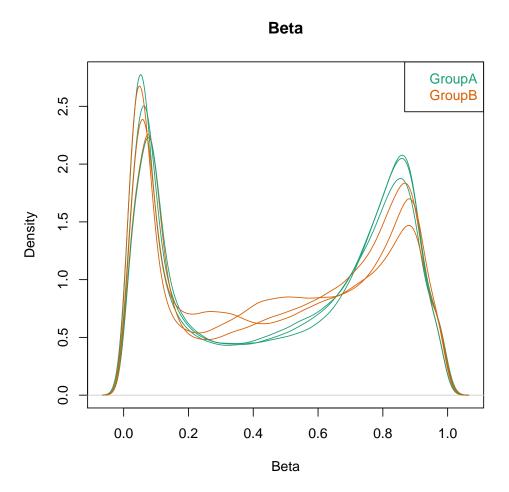


Figure 1: Beta density plots

- > par(oma=c(2,10,1,1))
- > densityBeanPlot(RGset, sampGroups = pd\$Sample_Group, sampNames = pd\$Sample_Name)

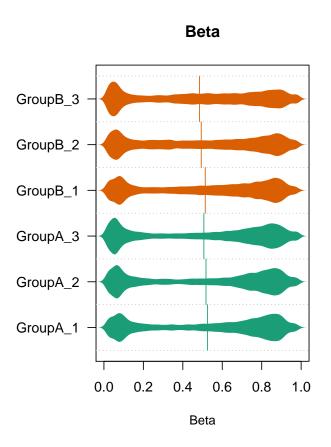


Figure 2: Beta bean plots

STAININ	IG	6
TARGET	REMOVAL	2

4 Preprocessing (normalization)

Preprocessing (normalization) takes as input a RGChannelSet and returns a MethylSet.

A number of preprocessing options are available (and we are working on more methods). Each set of methods are implemented as a function preprocessXXX with XXX being the name of the method. Each method may have a number of tuning parameters.

"Raw" preprocessing means simply converting the Red and the Green channel into a Methylated and Unmethylated signal

```
> MSet.raw <- preprocessRaw(RGset)</pre>
```

We have also implemented preprocessing choices as available in Genome Studio. These choices follow the description provided in the Illumina documentation and has been validated by comparing the output of Genome Studio to the output of these algorithms, and this shows the two approaches to be roughly equivalent (for a precise statement, see the manual pages).

Genome studio allows for background subtraction (also called background normalization) as well as something they term control normalization. Both of these are optional and turning both of them off is equivalent to raw preprocessing (preprocessRaw).

The reference = 2 selects which array to use as "reference" which is an arbitrary array (we are not sure how Genome Studio makes its choice of reference).

Operating on a MethylSet

Once a MethylSet has been generated, we have a various ways of getting access to the methylation data. The most basic functions are getMeth and getUnmeth, which returns

> controlStripPlot(RGset, controls="BISULFITE CONVERSION II", sampNames = pd\$Sample_Na

Control: BISULFITE CONVERSION II

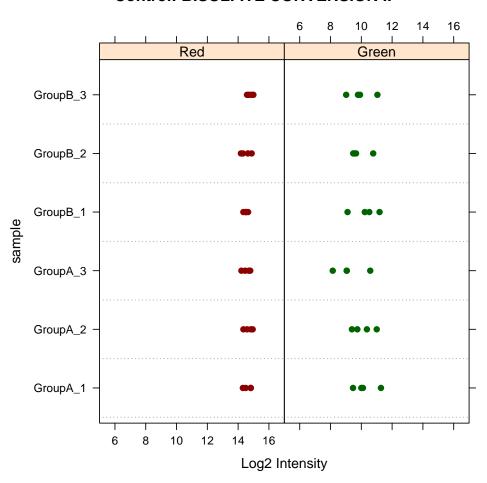


Figure 3: Beta stripplot

unlogged methylation channels. The function getBeta gets "beta"-values which are values between 0 and 1 with 1 interpreted as very high methylation. If type = "Illumina" (not the default) these are computed using Illumina's formula

$$\beta = \frac{M}{M + U + 100}$$

Finally, we have the "M-values" (not to be confused with the methylation channel obtained by getMeth). M-values are perhaps an unfortunate terminology, but it seems to be standard in the methylation array world. These are computed as $logit(\beta)$ and are obtained by getM.

> getMeth(MSet.raw)[1:4,1:3]

	5723646052_R02C02	5723646052_R04C01	5723646052_R05C02
cg00050873	22041	588	20505
cg00212031	679	569	439
cg00213748	1620	421	707
cg00214611	449	614	343

> getUnmeth(MSet.raw)[1:4,1:3]

	5723646052_R02C02	5723646052_R04C01	5723646052_R05C02
cg00050873	1945	433	1012
cg00212031	6567	300	2689
cg00213748	384	461	295
cg00214611	4869	183	1655

> getBeta(MSet.raw, type = "Illumina")[1:4,1:3]

	5723646052_R02C02	5723646052_R04C01	5723646052_R05C02
cg00050873	0.91509591	0.5245317	0.9485590
cg00212031	0.09243126	0.5872033	0.1359975
cg00213748	0.76996198	0.4287169	0.6415608
cg00214611	0.08287191	0.6845039	0.1634890

> getM(MSet.raw)[1:4,1:3]

	5723646052_R02C02	5723646052_R04C01	5723646052_R05C02
cg00050873	3.502348	0.4414491	4.340695
cg00212031	-3.273751	0.9234662	-2.614777
cg00213748	2.076816	-0.1309465	1.260995
cg00214611	-3.438838	1.7463950	-2.270551

MDS plots

After preprocessing the raw data to obtain methylation estimates, Multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) plots provide a quick way to get a first sense of the relationship between samples. They are similar to the more familiar PCA plots and display a two-dimensional approximation of sample-to-sample Euclidean distance. Note that while the plot visualizes the distance in epigenomic profiles between samples, the absolute positions of the points is not meaningful. One often expects to see greater between-group than within-group distances (although this clearly depends on the particular experiment). The most variable locations are used when calculating sample distances, with the number specified by the numPositions option. Adding sample labels to the MDS plot is a useful way of identifying outliers (figure 4) that behave differently from their peers.

The validation of preprocessIllumina

By validation we mean "yielding output that is equivalent to Genome Studio".

Illumina offers two steps: control normalization and background subtraction (normalization). Using output from Genome Studio we are certain that the control normalization step is validated, with the following caveat: control normalization requires the selection of one array among the 12 arrays on a chip as a reference array. It is currently unclear how Genome Studio selects the reference; if you know the reference array we can recreate Genome Studio exactly. Background subtraction (normalization) is almost correct: for 18 out of 24 arrays we see exact equivalence and for the remaining 6 out of 24 arrays we only see small discrepancies (a per-array max difference of 1-4 for unlogged intensities). A script for doing this is in scripts/GenomeStudio.R.

5 Finding differentially methylated positions (DMPs)

We are now ready to use the normalized data to identify DMPs, defined as CpG positions where the methylation level correlates with a phenotype of interest. The phenotype may be

> mdsPlot(MSet.norm, numPositions = 1000, sampGroups = pd\$Sample_Group,
+ sampNames = pd\$Sample_Name)

Beta MDS 1000 most variable positions

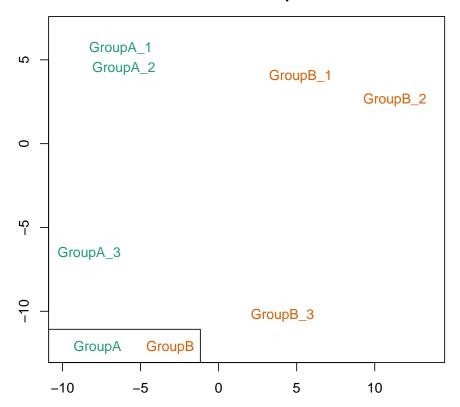


Figure 4: Multi-dimensional scaling plot

categorical (e.g. cancer vs. normal) or continuous (e.g. blood pressure).

We will create a 20,000 CpG subset of our dataset to speed up the demo:

```
> mset <- MSet.norm[1:20000,]</pre>
```

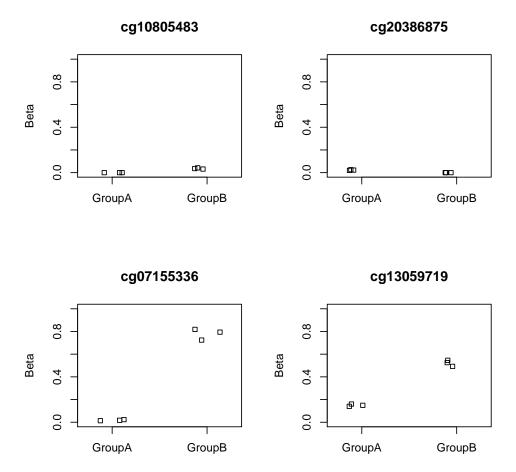
Categorical phenotypes

The dmpFinder function uses an F-test to identify positions that are differentially methylated between (two or more) groups. Tests are performed on logit transformed Beta values as recommended in Pan et al. Here we find the differences between GroupA and GroupB.

dmpFinder returns a table of CpG positions sorted by differential methylation p-value.

We can use the plotCpG function to plot methylation levels at individual positions:

```
> cpgs <- rownames(dmp)[1:4]
> par(mfrow=c(2,2))
> plotCpg(mset, cpg=cpgs, pheno=pd$Sample_Group)
```



Continuous phenotypes

We can also identify DMPs where the mean methylation level varies with a continuous covariate using linear regression. Since the sample dataset does not contain any continuous phenotypes we will simulate one for demonstration purposes:

> continuousPheno <- rnorm(nrow(pd))</pre>

We now search for DMPs associated with this phenotype.

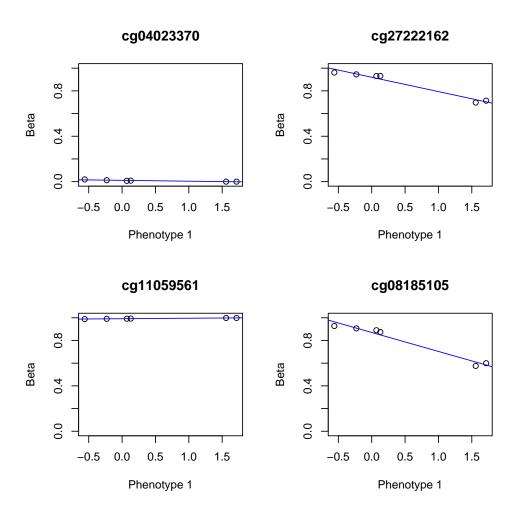
> dmp <- dmpFinder(mset, pheno=continuousPheno, type="continuous")
> dmp[1:3,]

```
intercept beta t pval cg24397815 -3.351423 -0.7331320 -25.81199 1.338235e-05 cg24683414 -3.211661 -0.9242404 -25.45945 1.413518e-05 cg04023370 -6.745985 -1.9617996 -22.75518 2.209323e-05 qval cg24397815 0.07591624 cg24683414 0.07591624 cg04023370 0.07591624
```

The beta column gives the change in mean phenotype for each unit increase of methylation. We can filter the DMP list to exclude positions with a small effect size:

```
> dmp <- subset(dmp, abs(beta)>1)
```

The plotCpg function can be used to visualise these continuous DMPs:



6 Advanced: The manifest object

In order to preprocess the data we need a "manifest" object. This object is similar to the union of a CDF environment and a probe package (and may be restructured). Essentially it describes what probes are on the array and how they are matched together.

The manifest object only depends on the array design. It is not related to annotating the CpGs measured by the array.

The internal structure of the manifest object should not be of concern to users. However, it may be useful to know something about the array design. First we have a look at the object:

> IlluminaHumanMethylation450kmanifest

IlluminaMethylationManifest object

Annotation: IlluminaHumanMethylation450k

Number of type I probes: 135501 Number of type II probes: 350076 Number of control probes: 850

> head(getProbeInfo(IlluminaHumanMethylation450kmanifest, type = "I"), n = 3)

Name AddressA AddressB Color NextBase

- 1 cg00050873 32735311 31717405 Red A 2 cg00212031 29674443 38703326 Red T
- 3 cg00213748 30703409 36767301 Red A

ProbeSeqA

- 1 ACAAAAAACAACACACAACTATAATAATTTTTAAAATAAATAAACCCCA

ProbeSeqB

- 2 CCCAATTAACCGCAAAAACTAAACAAATTATACGATCGAAAAAACGTACG
- > head(getProbeInfo(IlluminaHumanMethylation450kmanifest, type = "II"), n = 3)

Name Address

- 1 cg00035864 31729416
- 2 cg00061679 28780415
- 3 cg00063477 16712347

ProbeSeq

- 1 AAAACACTAACAATCTTATCCACATAAACCCTTAAATTTATCTCAAATTC
- 2 AAAACATTAAAAAACTAATTCACTACTATTTAATTACTTTATTTTCCATC
- 3 TATTCTTCCACACAAAATACTAAACRTATATTTACAAAAATACTTCCATC
- > head(getProbeInfo(IlluminaHumanMethylation450kmanifest, type = "Control"), n = 3)

Address Type Color ExtendedType

- 1 21630339 STAINING -99 DNP(20K)
- 2 27630314 STAINING Red DNP (High)
- 3 43603326 STAINING Purple DNP (Bkg)

The 450k array has a rather special design. It is a two-color array, so each array will have an associated Green signal and a Red signal.

On the 450k array, a CpG may be measured by a "type I" or "type II" design. The literature often uses the term "type I/II probes" which we believe is unfortunate (see next paragraph).

Each CpG has an associated methylated and un-methylated signal. If the CpG is of "type I", the methylation and un-methylation signal are originating from two different probes (physical location on the array). There is one set of "type I" CpGs where the signal comes from the Green channel for both probes (and the Red channel measures nothing) and another set where the signal comes from the Red channel. If the CpG is of "type II", a single probe (physical location) is being used to measure the methylated/un-methylated signal and the methylated signal is always measured in the Green channel.

This is reflected in the manifest object seen above: "type I" CpGs have "AddressA", "AddressB" (this is a link to the physical location on the array) as well as "ProbeSeqA" and "ProbeSeqB". They also have a "Col" indicator (which channel is the methylated signal coming from). In contrast "type II" CpGs have a single "Address", one "ProbeSeq" and no color information.

Because CpGs of "type I" are measured using two different physical probes, we dislike calling the probes "type I/II" and instead attaches the type to the CpG itself.

Note that Illumina uses a special "cgXXX" name for the CpGs. There is actually a meaning to this, not unlike the meaning associated with "rsXXX" numbers for SNPs. Essentially the XXX is a hash of the bases surrounding the CpG, making the cgXXX numbers independent of genome version. Illumina has a technical note describing this.

7 SessionInfo

- R version 2.14.0 (2011-10-31), x86_64-unknown-linux-gnu
- Locale: LC_CTYPE=en_US.UTF-8, LC_NUMERIC=C, LC_TIME=en_US.UTF-8, LC_COLLATE=C, LC_MONETARY=en_US.UTF-8, LC_MESSAGES=en_US.UTF-8, LC_PAPER=C, LC_NAME=C, LC_ADDRESS=C, LC_TELEPHONE=C, LC_MEASUREMENT=en_US.UTF-8, LC_IDENTIFICATION=C
- Base packages: base, datasets, grDevices, graphics, methods, stats, utils
- Other packages: Biobase 2.14.0, IlluminaHumanMethylation450kmanifest 0.1.0, lattice 0.20-0, mclust 3.4.10, minfi 1.0.0, minfiData 0.1.1, plyr 1.6, reshape 0.8.4

• Loaded via a namespace (and not attached): AnnotationDbi 1.16.0, Biostrings 2.22.0, DBI 0.2-5, IRanges 1.12.0, MASS 7.3-16, RColorBrewer 1.0-5, RSQLite 0.10.0, affyio 1.22.0, annotate 1.32.0, beanplot 1.1, bit 1.1-7, crlmm 1.12.0, ellipse 0.3-5, ff 2.2-3, genefilter 1.36.0, grid 2.14.0, limma 3.10.0, matrixStats 0.3.0, multtest 2.10.0, mvtnorm 0.9-9991, nor1mix 1.1-3, oligoClasses 1.16.0, preprocessCore 1.16.0, siggenes 1.28.0, splines 2.14.0, survival 2.36-10, tools 2.14.0, xtable 1.6-0, zlibbioc 1.0.0

References

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