**R Glossary and Helpsheet**

This is a glossary and helpsheet for users using R as a GIS. This is very much a work in progress, so if you have any comments or commands that you think should be included, please let me know - [n.bearman@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:n.bearman@liverpool.ac.uk).

**Commands & Functions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **?** | shows the help file for that command, for example, ?help or ?head |
| **??** | will search through the help files for any reference to the word you type, ??dataframe |
| **#** | used to precede a comment, #this is a comment |
| **<-** | assigns a value or output from a function to a variable |
| **$** | used to refer to columns within a data frame, dataframe$column |
| **@** | used to refer to a *slotNames* within a spatial data frame, spatialdataframe@data$column |
| **[,]** | square brackets are used to refer to specific elements in a list or data frame. pop2011[1,] will show the first row and pop2011[,1] will show the first column. |
| **abline()** | adds vertical lines to a histogram, used to show classification breaks  abline(v = breaks$brks, col = “red”) |
| **as.character()** | converts a value to a string/text (e.g. from a number) *see also as.numeric()* |
| **as.numeric()** | converts a value to a number (e.g. from a string/text) *see also as.character()* |
| **brewer.pal()** | function to set the colours used and number of colours,  brewer.pal(6, "YlOrRd") |
| **c(,)** | used to create a list, either numbers c(1,2,3) or strings (text) c("Thomas","Richard","Harriet") |
| **cex** | used to scale items in a plot, legend(x=412971, y=439516, legend=levels(OA@data$oac\_group), fill=my\_colour, bty="n", cex=.5, ncol=2) |
| **cbind()** | sticks two R data frames together, like *merge* but doesn’t use a common attribute to match the rows |
| **classIntervals()** | function to set the data classification breaks, number of groups and classification method classIntervals(LSOA@data$Age0to14pc,n=6,style="fisher") |
| **col** | used within *plot()* function to set colours |
| **colnames()** | shows the names and numbers of the columns in the specified data set, colnames(hp.data) |
| **data.frame()** | function used to create a new *data frame*, particularly used with *match*. |
| **dev.off()** | used to stop PDF output, *see pdf()* |
| **findInterval()** | function using breaks (from *classIntervals*) to set which data point is in which category |
| **fix(dataframe)** | edits a data frame in a new window, make sure you close this window before continuing |
| **for()** | begins a loop to make R repeat a command a set number of times,  for (i in 1:length(mapvariables)) |
| **gBuffer()** | function to create a buffer around a point object with the specified radius, gBuffer(schools\_SP\_Leeds, width=1608, byid=TRUE) |
| **gCentriod()** | function to calculate the *centroid* of a polygon, gCentroid(OA, byid=TRUE) |
| **getwd()** | shows the current working directory, see also *setwd()* |
| **head()** | used to show the first six rows of the data frame, head(hp.data) |
| **header = TRUE** | parameter used in read.csv to tell R to read the first line of the CSV file as the column headers (specifying header = FALSE will do the opposite) |
| **hist()** | Shows a histogram of the specified data, hist(LSOA@data[,"Age0to4pc"]) |
| **install.packages()** | allows the user to install *packages* (also known as *libraries*) which is required the first time they are used on a computer, install.packages("rgdal") |
| **is.na()** | tests whether a value is listed as NA (not applicable) schools\_SP[!is.na(schools\_SP@data$label),]  ! inverts this (so !is.na keeps everything that is not NA) |
| **lapply()** | applies a function to each item in a list |
| **legend()** | adds a legend to an existing plot, legend(x = 357000, y = 392000, legend = leglabs(breaks$b), fill = breaks$c, bty = "n", cex = 0.5) |
| **library()** | loads the specified library, library(rgdal) (see also *install.packages()*) |
| **locator()** | tool to select coordinates on plot window, use mouse to select points, click Finish to end and the coordinates will appear in the *console* |
| **ls()** | function to list all of the *variables* in the *environment* |
| **match()** | similar to *merge*, used to join two data frames together using a common attribute, particularly useful for spatial data, data.frame(OA@data, pop2013[match(OA@data[,"code"], pop2013[,"OA11CD"]),]) |
| **merge()** | joins two data frames together using a common attribute or ID, merge(sthel@data,hp.data,by.x="SP\_ID",by.y="ID", all.x=TRUE) |
| **ncol()** | lists the number of columns in a data frame, ncol(hp.data) |
| **nrow()** | lists the number of rows in a data frame, nrow(hp.data) |
| **order()** | reorders a data frame by the specified variable, schools[order(schools$Easting,decreasing = TRUE),] |
| **over()** | function to perform a point in polygon GIS analysis, over(schools\_SP,OA) |
| **par()** | function to change the background colour of the plot window,  par(bg = "#696969") |
| **pdf()** | used to output plot commands to a PDF file, always ends with dev.off(), pdf(file="image.pdf") |
| **plot()** | creates a map from a Spatial data frame, plot(sthel) |
| **read.csv()** | used to read CSV files (often converted from Excel) into R,  hp.data <- read.csv("hpdata.csv") |
| **readShapeSpatial()** | reads in a shape file from the specified location,  sthel <- readShapeSpatial("sthel") |
| **round()** | formatting function, used to round numbers, e.g. text in a legend, round(breaks$brks, 1) |
| **rowSums()** | adds up the values in the specified data frame rows, rowSums(pop2011[,c(20,22)]) |
| **rm()** | used to delete specific variables, ***Warning*** *there is no “are you sure?” prompt,*  rm(price) |
| **setwd()** | sets the working directory, setwd(“c:\folder”) |
| **skip = n** | parameter used in read.csv to tell R to skip the first n lines of the CSV file |
| **slotNames()** | returns the different types of slots within a SpatialDataFrame, slotNames(LSOA) |
| **SpatialPolygonsRescale()** | function to draw north arrow and scale bar on plot |
| **spTransform()** | changes a data set from one projection to another, crime.pts <- spTransform(crime.pts, CRS(ukgrid)) |
| **substr()** | function to extract characters from a string (text), substr(OA@data$oac\_group,1,1) |
| **title()** | adds a title to an existing plot, title('Burglary Rates per 10,000 Homes in St. Helens') |
| **text()** | function to add text to a plot, text(335379,380606,"0km", cex=.8) |
| **unzip()** | unzips the specified zip file into the current working folder, unzip("sthel.zip") |
| **View()** | opens the dataframe in a new tab in RStudio, View(sthel) |
| **writeOGR()** | saves a shapefile object including the projection, writeOGR(crime.pts, “crime2.shp”, crimes, driver = “ESRI Shapefile”) |
| **writeSpatialShape()** | saves a shapefile object, but does not include projection, *see writeOGR* |

**Glossary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Buffer** | a circle around a point, where the radius of the circle is the buffer distance |
| **Centroid** | the centre point of a polygon |
| **Console** | window where you can type in commands for R to run, clears whenever you reopen R or run more than 1000 lines of commands *see also scripts* |
| **Data frame** | a format of storing spatial and non-spatial data in R |
| **Environment** | the area where the *variables* are stored, called *Workspace* by R, and can be shown by the command ls() can be saved |
| **History** | record of every command you have typed into R, can be saved |
| **Join** | the process of linking two data frames (usually an attribute data frame and a spatial data frame by a common attribute or ID) |
| **Library** | a set of commands that can be loaded and used in R (also known as *package*) |
| **Package** | a set of commands that can be loaded and used in R (also known as *library*) |
| **Script** | a series of R commands that can be run on demand (filename usually ends with .R) useful for rerunning commands |
| **R** | the main program used to run R commands, see also *RStudio* |
| **RStudio** | an interface that runs on top of R, allowing easier management of *variables*, *scripts* and *plots* |
| **Shapefile** | a type vector of spatial data file, consisting of one of points, lines OR polygons; consists of multiple files (between 4 and 6 files, with extensions of .shp, .dbf, .shx, .prj) |
| **Variable** | the way R stores values and data, assigned using the <- command |
| **Workspace** | the area where the variables are stored, called *Environment* by *RStudio* and shown in the top right hand corner |

**Error Messages**

Error messages are commonly caused by incorrect spellings or missing something small from the code. Below are some error messages that may occur.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Error in fix.by(by.y, y) : 'by' must specify a uniquely valid column | Common with the merge() function, where R can’t find the fields/columns you have specified |
| Error: could not find function "img" | Incorrect spelling should be png |
| Error in plot(LSOA) :  error in evaluating the argument 'x' in selecting a method for function 'plot': Error: object 'LSOA' not found | R can’t find the variable LSOA, check the spelling |

By Nick Bearman, 07/10/2015, v5