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Contents

1	Introd	roduction						1								
2	IRanges objects									2						
	2.1	Normali	ity													4
	2.2	Lists of IRanges objects														
	2.3	Vector Extraction														
	2.4	Finding Overlapping Ranges 6														
	2.5	Counting Overlapping Ranges 6														
	2.6	Finding	Neighboring Ran	iges .												6
	2.7	Transfor	rming Ranges Adjusting starts, e													7 7
		2.7.2 2.7.3	Making ranges dis Other transformati	joint .												9
	2.8	Set Ope	erations													11
3	Vector Views							11								
	3.1	Creating	g Views													12
	3.2	Aggrega	ating Views													12
4	Lists	Lists of Atomic Vectors						12								
5	Session Information						16									

1 Introduction

When analyzing sequences, we are often interested in particular consecutive subsequences. For example, the a vector could be considered a sequence of lower-case letters, in alphabetical order. We would call the first five letters (a to e) a consecutive subsequence, while the subsequence containing only the vowels would not be consecutive. It is not uncommon for an analysis task to focus only on the geometry of the regions, while ignoring the underlying sequence values. A list of indices would be a simple way to select a subsequence. However, a sparser representation for consecutive subsequences would be a range, a pairing of a start position and a width, as used when extracting sequences with window.

Two central classes are available in Bioconductor for representing ranges: the *IRanges* class defined in the *IRanges* package for representing ranges defined on a single space, and the *GRanges* class defined in the *GenomicRanges* package for representing ranges defined on multiple spaces.

In this vignette, we will focus on *IRanges* objects. We will rely on simple, illustrative example datasets, rather than large, real-world data, so that each data structure and algorithm can be explained in an intuitive, graphical manner. We expect that packages that apply *IRanges* to a particular problem domain will provide vignettes with relevant, realistic examples.

The *IRanges* package is available at bioconductor.org and can be downloaded via **BiocMan** ager::install:

```
> if (!require("BiocManager"))
+    install.packages("BiocManager")
> BiocManager::install("IRanges")
> library(IRanges)
```

2 IRanges objects

To construct an *IRanges* object, we call the <u>IRanges</u> constructor. Ranges are normally specified by passing two out of the three parameters: start, end and width (see help(IRanges)) for more information).

```
> ir1 <- IRanges(start=1:10, width=10:1)</pre>
IRanges object with 10 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
            start
                                 width
                         end
       <integer> <integer> <integer>
                                     10
   [1]
                1
                          10
                2
   [2]
                          10
                                      8
   [3]
                3
                          10
   [4]
                4
                          10
                                      7
                                      6
                5
                          10
   [5]
                                      5
   [6]
                6
                          10
                7
                                      4
   [7]
                          10
   [8]
                8
                          10
                                      3
   [9]
                9
                          10
                                      2
               10
                          10
                                      1
  [10]
> ir2 <- IRanges(start=1:10, end=11)</pre>
> ir3 <- IRanges(end=11, width=10:1)</pre>
> identical(ir1, ir2) && identical(ir1, ir3)
[1] FALSE
> ir < - IRanges(c(1, 8, 14, 15, 19, 34, 40),
                 width=c(12, 6, 6, 15, 6, 2, 7))
> ir
```

```
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
          start
                     end
                             width
     <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
             1
                      12
  [2]
             8
                      13
                                 6
  [3]
            14
                      19
                                 6
  [4]
            15
                      29
                                15
  [5]
            19
                      24
                                 6
  [6]
            34
                      35
                                 2
  [7]
            40
                      46
                                 7
```

All of the above calls construct the same *IRanges* object, using different combinations of the start, end and width parameters.

Accessing the starts, ends and widths is supported via the start, end and width getters:

```
> start(ir)
[1] 1 8 14 15 19 34 40

> end(ir)
[1] 12 13 19 29 24 35 46

> width(ir)
[1] 12 6 6 15 6 2 7
```

Subsetting an IRanges object is supported, by numeric and logical indices:

```
> ir[1:4]
```

IRanges object with 4 ranges and 0 metadata columns:

	start	end	width
	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>
[1]	1	12	12
[2]	8	13	6
[3]	14	19	6
[4]	15	29	15

```
> ir[start(ir) <= 15]
```

IRanges object with 4 ranges and 0 metadata columns:

```
end
                       width
      start
   <integer> <integer>
[1]
         1
                 12
                          12
         8
                 13
                           6
[2]
[3]
         14
                 19
                           6
[4]
         15
                 29
                          15
```

In order to illustrate range operations, we'll create a function to plot ranges.

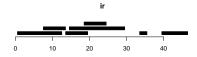


Figure 1: Plot of original ranges

```
+ height <- 1
+ if (is(xlim, "IntegerRanges"))
+ xlim <- c(min(start(xlim)), max(end(xlim)))
+ bins <- disjointBins(IRanges(start(x), end(x) + 1))
+ plot.new()
+ plot.window(xlim, c(0, max(bins)*(height + sep)))
+ ybottom <- bins * (sep + height) - height
+ rect(start(x)-0.5, ybottom, end(x)+0.5, ybottom + height, col=col, ...)
+ title(main)
+ axis(1)
+ }
> plotRanges(ir)
```

2.1 Normality

Sometimes, it is necessary to formally represent a subsequence, where no elements are repeated and order is preserved. Also, it is occasionally useful to think of an *IRanges* object as a set of integers, where no elements are repeated and order does not matter.

The NormallRanges class formally represents a set of integers. By definition an IRanges object is said to be normal when its ranges are: (a) not empty (i.e. they have a non-null width); (b) not overlapping; (c) ordered from left to right; (d) not even adjacent (i.e. there must be a non empty gap between 2 consecutive ranges).

There are three main advantages of using a *normal IRanges* object: (1) it guarantees a subsequence encoding or set of integers, (2) it is compact in terms of the number of ranges, and (3) it uniquely identifies its information, which simplifies comparisons.

The reduce function reduces any *IRanges* object to a *NormallRanges* by merging redundant ranges.

```
> reduce(ir)
IRanges object with 3 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
                      end
                               width
          start
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
              1
                       29
                                  29
  [2]
             34
                       35
                                   2
                                   7
  [3]
             40
                       46
> plotRanges(reduce(ir))
```

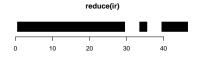


Figure 2: Plot of reduced ranges

2.2 Lists of IRanges objects

It is common to manipulate collections of *IRanges* objects during an analysis. Thus, the *IRanges* package defines some specific classes for working with multiple *IRanges* objects.

The *IRangesList* class asserts that each element is an *IRanges* object and provides convenience methods, such as start, end and width accessors that return *IntegerList* objects, aligning with the *IRangesList* object. Note that *IntegerList* objects will be covered later in more details in the "Lists of Atomic Vectors" section of this document.

To explicitly construct an IRangesList, use the IRangesList function.

```
> rl <- IRangesList(ir, rev(ir))

> start(rl)

IntegerList of length 2
[[1]] 1 8 14 15 19 34 40
[[2]] 40 34 19 15 14 8 1
```

2.3 Vector Extraction

As the elements of an *IRanges* object encode consecutive subsequences, they may be used directly in sequence extraction. Note that when a *normal IRanges* is given as the index, the result is a subsequence, as no elements are repeated or reordered. If the sequence is a *Vector* subclass (i.e. not an ordinary *vector*), the canonical [function accepts an *IRanges* object.



Figure 3: Plot of ranges with accumulated coverage

2.4 Finding Overlapping Ranges

The function findOverlaps detects overlaps between two IRanges objects.

```
> ol <- findOverlaps(ir, reduce(ir))</pre>
> as.matrix(ol)
     queryHits subjectHits
[1,]
              1
[2,]
              2
                           1
[3,]
              3
                           1
[4,]
              4
                           1
[5,]
              5
                           1
[6,]
              6
                           2
[7,]
```

2.5 Counting Overlapping Ranges

The function coverage counts the number of ranges over each position.

```
> cov <- coverage(ir)
> plotRanges(ir)
> cov <- as.vector(cov)
> mat <- cbind(seq_along(cov)-0.5, cov)
> d <- diff(cov) != 0
> mat <- rbind(cbind(mat[d,1]+1, mat[d,2]), mat)
> mat <- mat[order(mat[,1]),]
> lines(mat, col="red", lwd=4)
> axis(2)
```

2.6 Finding Neighboring Ranges

The nearest function finds the nearest neighbor ranges (overlapping is zero distance). The precede and follow functions find the non-overlapping nearest neighbors on a specific side.

2.7 Transforming Ranges

Utilities are available for transforming an *IRanges* object in a variety of ways. Some transformations, like <u>reduce</u> introduced above, can be dramatic, while others are simple per-range adjustments of the starts, ends or widths.

2.7.1 Adjusting starts, ends and widths

Perhaps the simplest transformation is to adjust the start values by a scalar offset, as performed by the shift function. Below, we shift all ranges forward 10 positions.

```
> shift(ir, 10)
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
           start
                       end
                                width
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
              11
                        22
  [2]
              18
                        23
                                    6
  [3]
              24
                        29
                                    6
  [4]
              25
                        39
                                   15
              29
                        34
  [5]
                                    6
  [6]
              44
                        45
                                    2
                        56
                                    7
  [7]
              50
```

There are several other ways to transform ranges. These include narrow, resize, flank, reflect, restrict, and threebands. For example narrow supports the adjustment of start, end and width values, which should be relative to each range. These adjustments are vectorized over the ranges. As its name suggests, the ranges can only be narrowed.

```
> narrow(ir, start=1:5, width=2)
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
                       end
                               width
          start
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
              1
                         2
  [2]
              9
                        10
                                    2
                                    2
  [3]
                        17
             16
  [4]
             18
                        19
                                    2
                                    2
  [5]
              23
                        24
              34
                        35
                                    2
  [6]
  [7]
                        42
                                    2
```

The restrict function ensures every range falls within a set of bounds. Ranges are contracted as necessary, and the ranges that fall completely outside of but not adjacent to the bounds are dropped, by default.

The threebands function extends narrow so that the remaining left and right regions adjacent to the narrowed region are also returned in separate *IRanges* objects.

```
> threebands(ir, start=1:5, width=2)
$left
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
                       end
                               width
          start
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
              1
                         0
  [2]
              8
                         8
                                    1
             14
                        15
                                    2
  [3]
                                    3
  [4]
             15
                        17
  [5]
             19
                        22
                                    4
  [6]
             34
                        33
                                    0
             40
                        40
  [7]
                                    1
$middle
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
          start
                       end
                               width
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
              1
                         2
  [1]
                                    2
  [2]
              9
                        10
                                    2
                                    2
  [3]
             16
                        17
  [4]
             18
                        19
                                    2
  [5]
             23
                        24
                                    2
                                    2
  [6]
             34
                        35
             41
                                    2
                        42
  [7]
$right
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
                       end
                                width
          start
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
              3
                        12
                                   10
             11
  [2]
                        13
                                    3
                        19
                                    2
  [3]
             18
  [4]
             20
                        29
                                   10
  [5]
             25
                        24
                                    0
             36
                        35
                                    0
  [6]
                        46
  [7]
              43
                                    4
```

The arithmetic operators +, - and * change both the start and the end/width by symmetrically expanding or contracting each range. Adding or subtracting a numeric (integer) vector to an *IRanges* causes each range to be expanded or contracted on each side by the corresponding value in the numeric vector.

```
[3]
            11
                        22
                                    12
[4]
                        33
                                    23
            11
[5]
            14
                        29
                                    16
                        41
                                    14
[6]
            28
[7]
            33
                        53
                                    21
```

The soperator symmetrically magnifies an *IRanges* object by a factor, where positive contracts (zooms in) and negative expands (zooms out).

```
> ir * -2 # double the width
IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
                              width
          start
                     end
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
             -5
                      18
             5
  [2]
                       16
                                 12
             11
                       22
                                 12
  [3]
  [4]
             7
                       36
                                 30
                       27
                                 12
  [5]
             16
  [6]
             33
                       36
                                  4
  [7]
             36
                       49
                                 14
```

WARNING: The semantic of these arithmetic operators might be revisited at some point. Please restrict their use to the context of interactive visualization (where they arguably provide some convenience) but avoid to use them programmatically.

2.7.2 Making ranges disjoint

A more complex type of operation is making a set of ranges disjoint, *i.e.* non-overlapping. For example, threebands returns a disjoint set of three ranges for each input range.

The <u>disjoin</u> function makes an *IRanges* object disjoint by fragmenting it into the widest ranges where the set of overlapping ranges is the same.

> disjoin(ir)

IRanges object with 10 ranges and 0 metadata columns:

	start	end	width
	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>
[1]	1	7	7
[2]	8	12	5
[3]	13	13	1
[4]	14	14	1
[5]	15	18	4
[6]	19	19	1
[7]	20	24	5
[8]	25	29	5
[9]	34	35	2
[10]	40	46	7

> plotRanges(disjoin(ir))

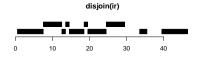


Figure 4: Plot of disjoined ranges

A variant of disjoin is disjointBins, which divides the ranges into bins, such that the ranges in each bin are disjoint. The return value is an integer vector of the bins.

> disjointBins(ir)
[1] 1 2 1 2 3 1 1

2.7.3 Other transformations

Other transformations include reflect and flank. The former "flips" each range within a set of common reference bounds.

> reflect(ir, IRanges(start(ir), width=width(ir)*2))

IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:

	start	end	width
	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>
[1]	13	24	12
[2]	14	19	6
[3]	20	25	6
[4]	30	44	15
[5]	25	30	6
[6]	36	37	2
[7]	47	53	7

The flank returns ranges of a specified width that flank, to the left (default) or right, each input range. One use case of this is forming promoter regions for a set of genes.

> flank(ir, width=seq_len(length(ir)))

IRanges object with 7 ranges and 0 metadata columns:

	start	end	width
	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>	<integer></integer>
[1]	0	0	1
[2]	6	7	2
[3]	11	13	3
[4]	11	14	4
[5]	14	18	5
[6]	28	33	6
[7]	33	39	7

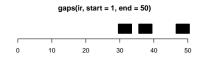


Figure 5: Plot of gaps from ranges

2.8 Set Operations

Sometimes, it is useful to consider an *IRanges* object as a set of integers, although there is always an implicit ordering. This is formalized by *NormalIRanges*, above, and we now present versions of the traditional mathematical set operations *complement*, *union*, *intersect*, and *difference* for *IRanges* objects. There are two variants for each operation. The first treats each *IRanges* object as a set and returns a *normal* value, while the other has a "parallel" semantic like pmin/pmax and performs the operation for each range pairing separately.

The *complement* operation is implemented by the gaps and pgap functions. By default, gaps will return the ranges that fall between the ranges in the (normalized) input. It is possible to specify a set of bounds, so that flanking ranges are included.

```
> gaps(ir, start=1, end=50)
IRanges object with 3 ranges and 0 metadata columns:
                       end
                               width
      <integer> <integer> <integer>
  [1]
             30
                        33
                        39
  [2]
             36
                                   4
  [3]
             47
                        50
> plotRanges(gaps(ir, start=1, end=50), c(1,50))
```

pgap considers each parallel pairing between two *IRanges* objects and finds the range, if any, between them. Note that the function name is singular, suggesting that only one range is returned per range in the input.

The remaining operations, *union*, *intersect* and *difference* are implemented by the [p]union, [p]intersect and [p]setdiff functions, respectively. These are relatively self-explanatory.

3 Vector Views

The *IRanges* package provides the virtual *Views* class, which stores a vector-like object, referred to as the "subject", together with an *IRanges* object defining ranges on the subject. Each range is said to represent a *view* onto the subject.

Here, we will demonstrate the *RleViews* class, where the subject is of class *Rle*. Other *Views* implementations exist, such as *XStringViews* in the *Biostrings* package.

3.1 Creating Views

There are two basic constructors for creating views: the Views function based on indicators and the slice based on numeric boundaries.

```
> xViews <- Views(xRle, xRle >= 1)
> xViews <- slice(xRle, 1)
> xRleList <- RleList(xRle, 2L * rev(xRle))
> xViewsList <- slice(xRleList, 1)</pre>
```

Note that *RleList* objects will be covered later in more details in the "Lists of Atomic Vectors" section of this document.

3.2 Aggregating Views

While sapply can be used to loop over each window, the native functions viewMaxs, viewMins, viewSums, and viewMeans provide fast looping to calculate their respective statistical summaries.

```
> head(viewSums(xViews))
[1] 1 1 1 1 1 2
> viewSums(xViewsList)
IntegerList of length 2
[[1]] 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 2 3 1 6 1 3 4 ... 12 6 37 10 8 11 6 4 5 1 1 5 1 1
[[2]] 2 2 10 2 2 10 8 12 22 16 20 74 12 ... 2 12 2 6 4 2 2 4 2 2 2 2 2
> head(viewMaxs(xViews))
[1] 1 1 1 1 1 2
> viewMaxs(xViewsList)
IntegerList of length 2
[[1]] 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 1 ... 3 5 2 5 6 2 8 3 2 2 1 1 2 1 1
[[2]] 2 2 4 2 2 4 4 6 16 4 12 10 4 10 6 ... 4 2 4 2 4 2 2 2 4 2 2 2 2
```

4 Lists of Atomic Vectors

In addition to the range-based objects described in the previous sections, the *IRanges* package provides containers for storing lists of atomic vectors such as *integer* or *Rle* objects. The *IntegerList* and *RleList* classes represent lists of *integer* vectors and *Rle* objects respectively. They are subclasses of the *AtomicList* virtual class which is itself a subclass of the *List* virtual class defined in the *S4Vectors* package.

```
> showClass("RleList")
Virtual Class "RleList" [package "IRanges"]
Slots:
```

```
Name: elementType elementMetadata metadata
Class: character DataTable_OR_NULL list

Extends:
Class "AtomicList", directly
Class "List", by class "AtomicList", distance 2
Class "Vector", by class "AtomicList", distance 3
Class "list_OR_List", by class "AtomicList", distance 3
Class "Annotated", by class "AtomicList", distance 4
Class "vector_OR_Vector", by class "AtomicList", distance 4
Known Subclasses: "SimpleRleList", "RleViews", "CompressedRleList"
```

As the class definition above shows, the *RleList* class is virtual with subclasses *SimpleRleList* and *CompressedRleList*. A *SimpleRleList* class uses an ordinary *R* list to store the underlying elements and the *CompressedRleList* class stores the elements in an unlisted form and keeps track of where the element breaks are. The former "simple list" class is useful when the *Rle* elements are long and the latter "compressed list" class is useful when the list is long and/or sparse (i.e. a number of the list elements have length 0).

In fact, all of the atomic vector types (logical, integer, numeric, complex, character, raw, and factor) have similar list classes that derive from the *List* virtual class. For example, there is an *IntegerList* virtual class with subclasses *SimpleIntegerList* and *CompressedIntegerList*.

Each of the list classes for atomic sequences, be they stored as vectors or *Rle* objects, have a constructor function with a name of the appropriate list virtual class, such as *IntegerList*, and an optional argument compress that takes an argument to specify whether or not to create the simple list object type or the compressed list object type. The default is to create the compressed list object type.

```
> args(IntegerList)
function (..., compress = TRUE)
NULL
> cIntList1 <- IntegerList(x=xVector, y=yVector)</pre>
> cIntList1
IntegerList of length 2
> sIntList2 <- IntegerList(x=xVector, y=yVector, compress=FALSE)</pre>
> sIntList2
IntegerList of length 2
> ## sparse integer list
> xExploded <- lapply(xVector[1:5000], function(x) seq_len(x))</pre>
> cIntList2 <- IntegerList(xExploded)</pre>
> sIntList2 <- IntegerList(xExploded, compress=FALSE)</pre>
> object.size(cIntList2)
```

```
33208 bytes
> object.size(sIntList2)
294016 bytes
```

The <u>length</u> function returns the number of elements in a *Vector*-derived object and, for a *List*-derived object like "simple list" or "compressed list", the <u>lengths</u> function returns an integer vector containing the lengths of each of the elements:

Just as with ordinary *R list* objects, *List*-derived object support the [[for element extraction, c for concatenating, and lapply/sapply for looping. When looping over sparse lists, the "compressed list" classes can be much faster during computations since only the non-empty elements are looped over during the lapply/sapply computation and all the empty elements are assigned the appropriate value based on their status.

```
> system.time(sapply(xExploded, mean))
   user system elapsed
   0.03
           0.00
                   0.03
> system.time(sapply(sIntList2, mean))
   user system elapsed
   0.03
           0.00
                   0.03
> system.time(sapply(cIntList2, mean))
   user system elapsed
   0.03
           0.00
                   0.03
> identical(sapply(xExploded, mean), sapply(sIntList2, mean))
[1] TRUE
> identical(sapply(xExploded, mean), sapply(cIntList2, mean))
[1] TRUE
```

Unlike ordinary *R list* objects, *AtomicList* objects support the Ops (e.g. +, ==, &), Math (e.g. log, sqrt), Math2 (e.g. round, signif), Summary (e.g. min, max, sum), and Complex (e.g. Re, Im) group generics.

```
> xRleList > 0

RleList of length 2
[[1]]
logical-Rle of length 10000000 with 197127 runs
Lengths: 780 1 208 1 1599 ... 1 91 1 927
```

```
Values : FALSE TRUE FALSE TRUE FALSE ... TRUE FALSE TRUE FALSE
[[2]]
logical-Rle of length 10000000 with 197127 runs
  Lengths:
          927
                   1
                        91
                              1
                                    5 ...
                                             1
                                                 208
  Values : FALSE TRUE FALSE TRUE FALSE ... TRUE FALSE TRUE FALSE
> yRleList <- RleList(yRle, 2L * rev(yRle))
> xRleList + yRleList
RleList of length 2
[[1]]
integer-Rle of length 10000000 with 1957707 runs
              1 208
                       1 13
                              1 413 ... 5 1 91
  Lengths: 780
                                                    1 507
                                                            1 419
  Values :
              1
                   0
                      1
                          0
                              1
                                  0 ...
                                         0 1
[[2]]
integer-Rle of length 10000000 with 1957707 runs
  Lengths: 419 1 507
                      1 91
                              1 5 ... 413 1 13
                                                    1 208
                                                            1 780
  Values : 0
               2 0
                     2 0
                              2
                                  0 ... 0 2 0
                                                            2
> sum(xRleList > 0 | yRleList > 0)
[1] 2105185 2105185
```

Since these atomic lists inherit from *List*, they can also use the looping function endoapply to perform endomorphisms.

```
> safe.max <- function(x) { if(length(x)) max(x) else integer(0) }
> endoapply(sIntList2, safe.max)
IntegerList of length 5000
[[1]] integer(0)
[[2]] integer(0)
[[3]] integer(0)
[[4]] integer(0)
[[5]] integer(0)
[[6]] integer(0)
[[7]] integer(0)
[[8]] integer(0)
[[9]] integer(0)
[[10]] integer(0)
<4990 more elements>
> endoapply(cIntList2, safe.max)
IntegerList of length 5000
[[1]] integer(0)
[[2]] integer(0)
[[3]] integer(0)
[[4]] integer(0)
[[5]] integer(0)
[[6]] integer(0)
[[7]] integer(0)
```

```
[[8]] integer(0)
[[9]] integer(0)
[[10]] integer(0)
...
<4990 more elements>
> endoapply(sIntList2, safe.max)[[1]]
integer(0)
```

5 Session Information

Here is the output of sessionInfo() on the system on which this document was compiled:

```
R version 3.6.2 (2019-12-12)
Platform: x86_64-w64-mingw32/x64 (64-bit)
Running under: Windows Server 2012 R2 x64 (build 9600)
Matrix products: default
locale:
[1] LC_COLLATE=C
[2] LC_CTYPE=English_United States.1252
[3] LC_MONETARY=English_United States.1252
[4] LC_NUMERIC=C
[5] LC_TIME=English_United States.1252
attached base packages:
[1] stats4
             parallel stats
                                 graphics grDevices utils
[7] datasets methods base
other attached packages:
                                           BiocGenerics_0.32.0
[1] IRanges_2.20.2
                      S4Vectors_0.24.2
loaded via a namespace (and not attached):
                                            evaluate_0.14
 [1] Rcpp_1.0.3
                        digest_0.6.23
 [4] rlang_0.4.2
                        rmarkdown_2.0
                                            BiocStyle_2.14.4
 [7] tools_3.6.2
                        xfun_0.12
                                            yaml_2.2.0
[10] compiler_3.6.2
                        BiocManager_1.30.10 htmltools_0.4.0
[13] knitr_1.26
```