

Statistics 360: Advanced R for Data Science

Lecture 12

Brad McNeney

R packages, CRAN and GitHub

- ▶ CRAN and the R package system is the key to R's success, allowing contributions from hundreds of scientists outside the “R core team”.
- ▶ CRAN has strict quality-control checks and requirements.
- ▶ It is possible to distribute R packages *via* GitHub without the CRAN checks.

R packages

- ▶ What is an R package?
 - ▶ An easy-to-install collection of R functions, documentation and example data.
- ▶ Why make an R package?
 - ▶ Share your work with others
 - ▶ Get credit for your work
 - ▶ Make it easier for you to use your own work.

Making R packages

- ▶ The definitive source for making R packages is the “Writing R Extensions” document, which you can find at <https://mirror.rcg.sfu.ca/mirror/CRAN/doc/manuals/r-release/R-exts.html>
- ▶ A minimal R package is a folder containing DESCRIPTION and NAMESPACE files and an R subfolder.
- ▶ Other possible subfolders are data, demo, exec, inst, man, po, src, tests, tools and vignettes.
- ▶ Other possible files in the directory are INDEX, configure, cleanup, LICENSE, LICENCE and NEWS.

Getting Started

- ▶ A helper function called `package.skeleton()` in the `utils` package that comes with R takes a package name and list of R objects as arguments and sets up directories, files and skeleton help files.

```
rm(list=ls()) # clear workspace  
source("../mars.R") # location of my mars source files  
# package.skeleton(name="mars",ls()) # Can't be re-run
```

Creating directories ...
Creating DESCRIPTION ...
Creating NAMESPACE ...
Creating Read-and-delete-me ...
Saving functions and data ...
Making help files ...
Done.
Further steps are described in './mars/Read-and-delete-me'.

```
$ more mars/Read-and-delete-me
```

- * Edit the help file skeletons in 'man', possibly combining help files for multiple functions.
- * Edit the exports in 'NAMESPACE', and add necessary imports.
- * Put any C/C++/Fortran code in 'src'.
- * If you have compiled code, add a useDynLib() directive to 'NAMESPACE'.
- * Run R CMD build to build the package tarball.
- * Run R CMD check to check the package tarball.

Read "Writing R Extensions" for more information.

devtools

- ▶ A package called `devtools` provides more help.
 - ▶ `devtools` was started by Hadley Wickham and has since expanded into a collection of tools for developing R packages, described in a work-in-progress book called “R Packages”
<https://r-pkgs.org/index.html>
 - ▶ We'll skim Chapter 2, which provides an overview of functionality.
- ▶ In addition to automating more of the process, `devtools` uses `roxygen2` to create documentation from structured comments in your R source files.
 - ▶ C++ programmers will recognize the approach from Doxygen

Getting started with `create_package()`

- ▶ Call `create_package()` to initialize an R package directory and new R project
- ▶ Recommended that this new directory **not** be part of an existing R project or be under version control.
- ▶ Launches a new RStudio session in the newly-created directory/project
 - ▶ Switch to this new session.
 - ▶ Call `use_git()` to initialize a git repository

```
# install.packages("devtools")  
library(devtools)
```

```
## Loading required package: usethis
```

```
# create_package("/home/mcneney/MyRpackages/mars")
```

Start your R source files

- ▶ Copy your R source files to the R sub-folder.
 - ▶ For example, mars.R, predict.mars.R, plot.mars.R, etc.
- ▶ Call `load_all()` to load the source into your R session.
 - ▶ Rather than just `source` in your R code, `load_all()` loads the R functions as a package.
 - ▶ Gives a better sense of how the code will behave when loaded by a user.

```
library(devtools) # call in new R session  
# load_all()
```

check

- ▶ R CMD check from the command line
- ▶ `check()`
- ▶ Will throw a warning of a non-standard licence

Edit DESCRIPTION file

- ▶ Add your name, collaborators, etc.

Add a licence

- ▶ Helper functions add a copy of the relevant license to your package main directory and update the Licence field of the DESCRIPTION file.

```
# use_gpl3_license()
```

Add documentation comments to your source file.

- Open your .R file(s), place your cursor in one of the functions and click Code->Insert Roxygen Skeleton to insert a skeleton of the roxygen2-style comments above the function.

```
#' Title
#'  
#' @param formula  
#' @param data  
#' @param control  
#' @param ...  
#'  
#' @return  
#' @export  
#'  
#' @examples
```

```
#' Multivariate Adaptive Regression Splines (MARS)
#'  
#'  
#' @param formula an R formula  
#' @param data a data frame containing the data for the model  
#' @param control an object of class 'mars.control'  
#' @param ... other arguments -- currently not used  
#'  
#' @return an object of class 'mars'  
#'  
#' @export  
#'  
#' @examples  
#' mm <- mars(wage ~ age,data=ISLR::Wage)  
#' @import stats
```


Call document()

- ▶ Calling `document()` will create the `.Rd` file from your comments and add `mars()` to the `mars` `NAMESPACE` file.

```
> document()
Updating mars documentation
Loading mars
Writing NAMESPACE
Writing mars.Rd
> load_all()
Loading mars
> ?mars
Rendering development documentation for 'mars'
```

Add other packages you depend on

- ▶ Reference: R packages, Chapter 8
- ▶ Your package's reliance on other packages can be as
 - ▶ “Depends” – you expect that users will always want to call `library(package)` when loading your package – not common these days
 - ▶ “Imports” – you need to call functions from the `NAMESPACE` of another package. Add these to the `NAMESPACE` with `use_package()` and to the `DESCRIPTION` file yourself.
 - ▶ “Suggests” – Packages that are not crucial, but helpful (e.g., used in examples). Add these to the `DESCRIPTION` file yourself
 - ▶ “Enhances” – Packages that are enhanced by yours – not common

```
# use_package("stats")
```

check

- ▶ Call `check()` to check your package using the same checks as R CMD check from the command line.
- ▶ Should return no errors, warnings or notes.

```
# check()
```

install

- ▶ Call `install()` to install the package in your R library.

```
# install()
```

Topics not covered

- ▶ Documenting classes, generics and methods: R packages, Chapter 10, SS 7
- ▶ Vignettes: R packages, Chapter 11
- ▶ Testing: R packages, Chapter 12