# Using C and C++ with R

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#### Plan

Calling foreign languages

Built-in C interface

The Rcpp package

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## Foreign languages

- ▶ C , C++
- ▶ Fortran
- ► Java<sup>1</sup>.

## Other scripting languages

- ► R/Perl<sup>2</sup> and R/Python<sup>3</sup> bidirectional interfaces.
- ► There is also the system() function for direct access to OS functions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>http://www.omegahat.org/RSPerl/





<sup>1</sup>http://www.rforge.net/rJava/

Robert Gentleman, in *R Programming for Bioinformatics*, 2008, about R's built-in C interfaces

Since R is not compiled, in some situations its performance can be substantially improved by writing code in a compiled language. There are also reasons not to write code in other languages, and in particular we caution against premature optimization, prototyping in R is often cost effective. And in our experience very few routines need to be implemented in other languages for efficiency reasons. Another substantial reason not to use an implementation in some other language is increased complexity. The use of another language almost always results in higher maintenance costs and less stability. In addition, any extensions or enhancements of the code will require someone that is proficient in both R and the other language.

Rcpp does make some of the above caution statements slightly less critical.

- ▶ Why? R is getting slow or is not doing well in terms of memory management: for example for loops that can't be vectorised, recursion, . . .
- When? R can't do better and the slow code has been identified → Rprof

- ▶ Why? R is getting slow or is not doing well in terms of memory management: for example for loops that can't be vectorised, recursion, . . .
- When? R can't do better and the slow code has been identified → Rprof

▶ Why? Re-using existing infrastructure

#### Requirement for C/C++

Working compilers. On Windows, Rtools<sup>1,2</sup>. On Mac, Xcode<sup>3,4</sup>.

- 1. http://cran.r-project.org/bin/windows/Rtools/
- 2. http://cran.r-project.org/doc/manuals/R-admin.html#The-Windows-toolset
- 3. http://cran.r-project.org/doc/manuals/R-admin.html#Installing-R-under-\_0028Mac\_0029-OS-X
- 4. http://cran.r-project.org/doc/manuals/R-admin.html#Mac-OS-X

#### We will be using the following packages:

- ▶ inline and the cfunction to write inline C code that is compiled on the fly. (There is also a cxxfunction for C++ code).
- ▶ Rcpp, illustrating some of its functionality as well as the cppFunction for inline/on the fly compilation of C++ code.

## Example

We have a DNA sequence, represented by a string of A, C, G and T and we want to compute the GC content.

```
x <- "ACCGGGTTTT"
gccountr <- function(x) table(strsplit(x, "")[[1]])
gccountr(x)
##
## A C G T
## 1 2 3 4</pre>
```

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#### The R C API

- Very frequent in R but has its quirks.
- ▶ Better know how to program in C.
- ▶ Documentation is not always easy to follow: R-Ext, R Internals as well as R and other package's code.

#### .C

- Not recommended.
- Arguments and return values must be primitives (vectors of doubles or integers).

#### .Call

- ► Accepts any R data structures as arguments and return values as SEXP.
- Manual memory management: allocate memory, protect objects to avoid them being garbage collected and subsequently unprotect them.

## S (or symbolic) expression

SEXP is a super-type that matches all R data structures. Each data type has its own SEXP sub-type.

- REALSXP and INTSXP for double and integer vectors
- ► LGLSXP and STRSXP for logical and character vectors
- ▶ VECSXP for a list (NB: R list are called vectors at the C level)

Function input and outputs are always SEXP and will have to be coerced to the appropriate SXP sub-type.

Rinternals.h defines all C functions, data types and macros.

```
file.path(R.home(), "include", "Rinternals.h")
## [1] "/usr/local/lib/R/include/Rinternals.h"
```

```
library("inline")
## From Hadley Wickham, devtools wiki, adapted from inspect.c
## https://github.com/hadley/devtools/wiki/C-interface
sexp type <- cfunction(c(x = "ANY"), '
  switch (TYPEOF(x)) {
    case NTLSXP:
                      return mkString("NILSXP");
    case SYMSXP:
                      return mkString("SYMSXP");
    case LISTSXP:
                      return mkString("LISTSXP"):
    case CLOSXP:
                      return mkString("CLOSXP");
                      return mkString("ENVSXP");
    case ENVSXP:
    case PROMSXP:
                      return mkString("PROMSXP"):
    case LANGSXP:
                      return mkString("LANGSXP");
    case SPECTALSXP:
                      return mkString("SPECIALSXP");
    case BUILTINSXP.
                      return mkString("BUILTINSXP"):
    case CHARSXP:
                      return mkString("CHARSXP"):
                      return mkString("LGLSXP");
    case LGLSXP:
                      return mkString("INTSXP");
    case INTSXP:
    case REALSXP.
                      return mkString("REALSXP"):
    case CPLXSXP:
                      return mkString("CPLXSXP");
                      return mkString("STRSXP");
    case STRSXP:
    case DOTSXP:
                      return mkString("DOTSXP"):
    case ANYSXP:
                      return mkString("ANYSXP");
    case VECSXP:
                      return mkString("VECSXP");
    case EXPRSXP:
                      return mkString("EXPRSXP"):
    case BCODESXP:
                      return mkString("BCODESXP");
    case EXTPTRSXP:
                      return mkString("EXTPTRSXP");
    case WEAKREESXP.
                      return mkString("WEAKREFSXP"):
    case S4SXP:
                      return mkString("S4SXP");
    case RAWSXP:
                      return mkString("RAWSXP");
                      return mkString("<unknown>");
    default:
}')
```

```
source("src/sexp.R")
sexp_type(1:3)
## [1] "INTSXP"
sexp type(10L)
## [1] "INTSXP"
sexp_type(TRUE)
## [1] "LGLSXP"
sexp_type(letters)
## [1] "STRSXP"
sexp_type(list(a = 1, b = letters))
## [1] "VECSXP"
sexp type(ls)
## [1] "CLOSXP"
```

## Garbage collection

Every R object that is created at the C level (not function arguments, that R is already aware of) must be PROTECTed to avoid being garbage collected. Before the return statement, these must be explicitly UNPROTECTed.

```
SEXP x;

PROTECT(x = ...)

## do stuff

UNPROTECT(1)

return(x)
```

## Object creation

- Allocate memory: allocVector, allocMatrix, alloc3DArray
- 2. Initialise objects: memset

```
SEXP x;
PROTECT(x = allocVector(INTSXP, 10) )
memset(INTEGER(x), 0, 10 * sizeof(int))
## do stuff
UNPROTECT(1)
return(x)
```

## Accessing/setting SXP elements

- ► REAL(x)[i] if x is a REALSXP
- ► INTEGER(x)[i] if x is a INTSXP
- ▶ LOGICAL(x)[i] if x is a LGLSXP
- **•** . . .
- ► STRING\_ELT(x, i) to access individual CHARSXP elements of a STRSXP
- ▶ VECTOR\_ELT(x, i) to access individual elements of a VECSXP
- ► SET\_STRING\_ELT(str, i, x)) to set an element in a string.
- ► SET\_VECTOR\_ELT(vec, i, x)) to set an element in a list.

```
SEXP gccount(SEXP inseq) {
      int i, 1;
3
      char p;
      SEXP ans, dnaseq;
5
      PROTECT(dnaseq = STRING_ELT(inseq, 0)); // a CHARSXP
7
8
      1 = length(dnaseq);
9
      PROTECT(ans = allocVector(INTSXP, 4)):
10
      memset(INTEGER(ans), 0, 4 * sizeof(int));
11
12
      for (i = 0; i < 1; i++) {
13
        p = CHAR(dnaseq)[i];
14
        if (p == 'A')
15
          INTEGER (ans) [0]++;
16
        else if (p == 'C')
17
         INTEGER (ans)[1]++;
18
        else if (p == 'G')
19
          INTEGER (ans) [2]++:
20
        else if (p == 'T')
21
          INTEGER (ans) [3]++;
22
        else
23
           error("Wrong alphabet");
24
25
      UNPROTECT (2);
26
      return(ans):
27
    }
```

- 1. ingccount: embedding the C directly in R using the inline package.
- 2. gccount: writing the C into its own code file and using .Call.

#### ./src/ingccount.R

```
library("inline")
ingccount <- cfunction(
  sig = c(inseq = "character"),
 bodv = "
 int i. 1:
 char p;
 SEXP ans, dnaseq;
 PROTECT(dnaseq = STRING_ELT(inseq, 0)); // a CHARSXP
 1 = length(dnaseq);
 PROTECT(ans = allocVector(INTSXP, 4));
 memset(INTEGER(ans), 0, 4 * sizeof(int));
 for (i = 0: i < 1: i++) {
    p = CHAR(dnaseq)[i];
   if (p == \'A\')
      INTEGER(ans)[0]++:
    else if (p == \'C\')
      INTEGER(ans)[1]++;
    else if (p == \'G\')
      INTEGER(ans)[2]++;
    else if (p == \'T\')
      INTEGER(ans)[3]++:
    else
      Rf_error(\"Wrong alphabet\");
 UNPROTECT(2):
 return(ans);
")
```

```
source("./src/ingccount.R")
ingccount(x)
## [1] 1 2 3 4
```

#### src/gccount.c

```
#include <R.h>
#include <Rdefines.h>
SEXP gccount(SEXP inseq) {
 int i, 1;
 char p;
 SEXP ans, dnaseq;
 PROTECT(dnaseg = STRING_ELT(inseg, 0)); // a CHARSXP
 1 = length(dnaseq);
 PROTECT(ans = allocVector(INTSXP, 4));
 memset(INTEGER(ans), 0, 4 * sizeof(int));
 for (i = 0; i < 1; i++) {
   p = CHAR(dnaseq)[i];
   if (p == 'A')
      INTEGER(ans)[0]++:
    else if (p == 'C')
      INTEGER(ans)[1]++:
    else if (p == 'G')
      INTEGER(ans)[2]++;
    else if (p == 'T')
      INTEGER (ans) [3]++:
    else
      error("Wrong alphabet");
 UNPROTECT(2);
 return(ans);
```

## Use directly

- 1. Create a shared library: R CMD SHLIB gccount.c
- Load the shared object: dyn.load("gccount.so")
- 3. Create an R function that uses it:

```
gccountC <-
function(inseq) .Call("gccount", inseq)</pre>
```

4. Use you C code:

```
gccountC(x)
## [1] 1 2 3 4
```

#### In a package

- ▶ The C code comes in the src directory.
- ▶ The R wrapper will be

```
gccount <- function(inseq)
.Call("gccount", inseq, PACKAGE = "mypackage")</pre>
```

- Document the R function
- Export the R function and useDynLib(mypackge) in the NAMESPACE

```
library(sequences)
gccount
## function (inseq)
## {
       .Call("gccount", inseq, PACKAGE = "sequences")
##
## }
## <environment: namespace:sequences>
gccount(x)
## [1] 1 2 3 4
```

#### We could check that

```
if (TYPEOF(inseq) != STRSXP)
error("Need a character vector!");
```

#### although

```
gccountC(123)
## Error in gccountC(123): STRING_ELT() can only be
applied to a 'character vector', not a 'double'
```

and type checking could easily be done at the R level. There is also isReal(x), isInteger(x), ... for atomics vectors.

There is of course much more to this ... see references at the end.

# Benchmarking

```
library(microbenchmark)
microbenchmark(gccountr(x),
              ingccount(x),
              gccountC(x),
              times = 1e4)
## Unit: nanoseconds
                  min lq
                                           median
##
           expr
                                    mean
                                                       ua
                                                              max neval
##
   gccountr(x) 125087 130977.5 143159.805 134359.0 137629.5 38280832 10000
##
   ingccount(x) 411 739.0 1197.539 1018.0 1507.0 970378 10000
   gccountC(x) 4159 4697.0 7034.850 5443.5 8717.0 1096013 10000
##
   cld
##
##
    b
##
    а
##
```

Could we do better in R ? (should be asked first, really)

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```
gccountr2 <-
function(x) tabulate(factor(strsplit(x, "")[[1]]))</pre>
```

## Could we do better in R ? (should be asked first, really)

```
gccountr2 <-
function(x) tabulate(factor(strsplit(x, "")[[1]]))</pre>
```

```
microbenchmark(gccountr(x),
              gccountr2(x),
              ingccount(x),
              gccountC(x),
              times = 1e4)
  Unit: nanoseconds
##
                                          median
           expr
                   min
                          lq
                                   mean
                                                     uq
                                                           max neval
                                                                      cld
    gccountr(x) 125762 133062 142962.693 136248.5 140247 2134009 10000
##
   gccountr2(x) 64033 69402
                              74603.422 71345.5 73745 1688857 10000
##
   ingccount(x) 417 883 1271.015 1345.0 1535 14632 10000 a
##
##
    gccountC(x) 6764 7632 10819.372 11676.0 12099 48055 10000
```

But, obviously, table and tabular do much more than gccount.

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# The Rcpp package

- Dirk Eddelbuettel and Romain Francois, with contributions by Douglas Bates, John Chambers and JJ Allaire.
- ► A flexible framework that facilitates the integration of R and C/C++ .
- http://www.rcpp.org/
- It comes with loads of documentation and examples: vignette(package = "Rcpp").
- ▶ All basic R types are implemented as C++ classes.
- ▶ No need to worry about garbage collection.

## Associated packages

- RcppArmadillo Armadillo templated C++ library for linear algebra.
- ▶ RcppEigen high-performance Eigen linear algebra library.
- ► RInside use R from inside another C++ by wrapping the existing R embedding API in an easy-to-use C++ class.

#### C++ classes

Scalar	Vector	Matrix
double	NumericVector	NumericMatrix
int	${\tt IntegerVector}$	${ t Integer Matrix}$
string	${\tt CharacterVector}$	CharacterMatrix
bool	LogicalVector	LogicalMatrix

And Function, List, DataFrame ...

Automatic conversions from R (C) to C++ (R) using as (wrap).

- 1. ingccount2: embedding the C++ directly in R using the Rcpp::cppFunction package.
- 2. gccount2: in a package, writing the C++ into its own code file and using .Call.
- 3. gccountX: using sourceCpp to source the C++ file and export the function to R .

```
IntegerVector ingccount2(CharacterVector inseq) {
      IntegerVector ans(4);
3
      std::string s = Rcpp::as<std::string>(inseq[0]);
4
      int n = inseq[0].size();
5
6
7
      for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {
        if (s[i] == 'A')
          ans[0]++;
8
        else if (s[i] == 'C')
9
          ans[1]++;
10
        else if (s[i] == 'G')
11
          ans[2]++;
12
        else if (s[i] == 'T')
13
          ans[3]++;
14
        else
15
          Rf_error(\"Wrong alphabet\");
      }
16
17
      return wrap(ans);
18
```

```
library("Rcpp")
cppFunction("
IntegerVector ingccount2(CharacterVector inseq) {
  IntegerVector ans(4);
  std::string s = Rcpp::as<std::string>(inseq[0]);
  int n = inseq[0].size();
  for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {
    if (s[i] == 'A')
      ans[0]++;
    else if (s[i] == 'C')
      ans[1]++;
    else if (s[i] == 'G')
      ans[2]++:
    else if (s[i] == T)
      ans[3]++;
    else
      Rf_error(\"Wrong alphabet\");
  return wrap(ans);
```

```
x <- "ACCGGGTTTT"
source("src/ingccount2.R")
ingccount2(x)
## [1] 1 2 3 4</pre>
```

### ./src/gccount2.cpp

```
#include <Rcpp.h>
using namespace Rcpp;
RcppExport SEXP gccount2(SEXP inseq)
 Rcpp::IntegerVector ans(4);
 Rcpp::CharacterVector dnaseq(inseq);
 std::string s = Rcpp::as<std::string>(dnaseq[0]);
 for (int i = 0; i < s.size(); i++) {
    char p = s[i];
    if (p=='A')
      ans[0]++;
    else if (p=='C')
      ans[1]++:
    else if (p=='G')
      ans[2]++;
    else if (p=='T')
      ans[3]++:
    else
      Rf_error("Wrong alphabet");
 return(ans);
```

# In a package

- 1. You will need a Makevars file in the src directory.
- 2. Modify DESCRIPTION file:

Depends: Rcpp (>= 0.10.1)
LinkingTo: Rcpp

3. Create an R function that uses it

```
gccount2 <- function(inseq)
.Call("gccount2", inseq, PACKAGE = "mypackage")</pre>
```

- 4. Document the R function
- Export the R function and useDynLib(mypackge) in the NAMESPACE

Check the sequences package. But see Rcpp.package.skeleton below.

### Using sourceCpp

- ▶ Write the C++ code into a cpp file, including headers and dedicated export statement (see next slide).
- Source it and use the R function.

```
sourceCpp("src/gccountX.cpp")
gccountX(x)
## [1] 1 2 3 4
```

```
#include <Rcpp.h>
using namespace Rcpp;
// [[Rcpp::export]]
IntegerVector gccountX(CharacterVector inseq) {
 IntegerVector ans(4);
 std::string s = Rcpp::as<std::string>(inseq[0]);
 for (int i = 0; i < s.size(); i++) {
    if (s[i] == 'A')
      ans[0]++;
    else if (s[i] == 'C')
      ans[1]++:
    else if (s[i] == 'G')
      ans[2]++;
    else if (s[i] == T)
      ans[3]++:
    else
      Rf_error("Wrong alphabet");
 return(ans);
```

#### sugar

sugar (for syntactic sugar) is a set of C++ functions that (mostly) work and look like their R couterparts. Allows for example compact vectorised expression. Looks like R with the C++ efficiency. (Rcpp-sugar vignette/paper)

- ▶ Vectorised arithmetic and logical operators: +, >, !, ...
- ► Functions: seq\_len, seq, sapply, rnorm, abs, sum, ...

```
NumericVector cumsum1(NumericVector x){
     // initialize an accumulator variable
3
     double acc = 0:
     // initialize the result vector
5
     NumericVector res(x.size());
6
     for(int i = 0; i < x.size(); i++){}
7
8
       acc += x[i];
       res[i] = acc;
9
10
     return res;
11
```

```
1
   NumericVector cumsum1(NumericVector x){
     // initialize an accumulator variable
3
     double acc = 0:
4
     // initialize the result vector
5
    NumericVector res(x.size());
6
     for(int i = 0; i < x.size(); i++){}
       acc += x[i];
8
       res[i] = acc;
9
10
     return res;
11 }
   NumericVector cumsum2(NumericVector x){
     return cumsum(x); // compute + return result
```

#### Translate these R functions into C or C++

```
sum
rowSums
pdistR <- function(x, ys)</pre>
  sqrt( (x - vs) ^ 2 )
sety <- function(x, y) {</pre>
    x[x > 0] \leftarrow y
    x[x < 0] < -y
    X
lgl_biggerY <- function(x, y) x > y
biggerY <- function(x, y) x[x > y]
foo \leftarrow function(x, y) ifelse(x \leftarrow y, x*x, -(y*y))
```

When possible, write two versions; one with an explicit for loop and another using sugar vectorised functions.

Hints: The nrow and ncol functions can be used to extract matrix dimensions. The matrix subsetting operator is () (instead of []). To specify all indices, use the underscore.

Benchmark the R and C++ implementations.

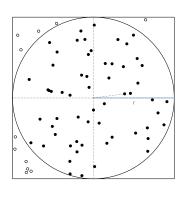
# Modification of the function arguments!

```
1  // [[Rcpp::export]]
2  IntegerVector modifyX(IntegerVector x) {
3   int n = x.size();
4   for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {
5     x[i] = i;
6   }
7   return x;
8 }</pre>
```

```
sourceCpp("src/modify.cpp")
(x < -3:1)
## [1] 3 2 1
modifyX(x)
## [1] 0 1 2
X
## [1] 0 1 2
```

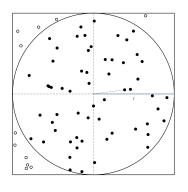
# Cloning

```
IntegerVector nomodifyX(IntegerVector x) {
   IntegerVector y = clone(x);
   int n = x.size();
   for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {
      y[i] = i;
   }
   return y;
}</pre>
```



$$\frac{d}{n} = \frac{\pi r^2}{4r^2} = \pi/4$$

$$\pi \approx \frac{4d}{n}$$



$$\frac{\frac{d}{n} = \frac{\pi r^2}{4r^2} = \pi/4$$

$$\pi \approx \frac{4d}{n}$$

```
piR <- function(N) {
    x <- runif(N)
    y <- runif(N)
    d <- sqrt(x^2 + y^2)
    4 * sum(d < 1.0) / N
}</pre>
```

```
piR <- function(N) {
    x <- runif(N)
    y <- runif(N)
    d <- sqrt(x^2 + y^2)
    return(4 * sum(d < 1.0) / N)
}</pre>
```

```
piR <- function(N) {
    x <- runif(N)
    y <- runif(N)
    d <- sqrt(x^2 + y^2)
    return(4 * sum(d < 1.0) / N)
}</pre>
```

```
#include <Rcpp.h>
using namespace Rcpp;
// [[Rcpp::export]]
double piSugar(const int N) {
    RNGScope scope; // ensure RNG gets set/reset
    NumericVector x = runif(N);
    NumericVector y = runif(N);
    NumericVector d = sqrt(x*x + y*y);
    return 4.0 * sum(d < 1.0) / N;
}</pre>
```

```
source("src/pi.R")
library("Rcpp")
sourceCpp("src/pi.cpp")
N < -1e6
set.seed(42)
resR <- piR(N)
set.seed(42)
resCpp <- piSugar(N)</pre>
stopifnot(identical(resR, resCpp))
```

### Missing values

There are type specific NA\_REAL, NA\_INTEGER, NA\_STRING, NA\_LOGICAL. A vector can be tested with is\_na. To test a scalar, use R\_IsNA.

Sugar also provides all and any.

```
is.na
foo <- function(x, y) ifelse(x < y, x*x, -(y*y))</pre>
```

### Recursion

```
fr <- function(n) {
    if (n < 2) return(n)
    return(fr(n-1) + fr(n-2))
}</pre>
```

### Calling a function

```
// [[Rcpp::export]]
NumericVector callFunction(NumericVector x,
    Function f) {
    NumericVector res = f(x);
    return res;
}
## in R
callFunction(x, summary)
```

### sapply in C++

```
double square( double x ){
  return x*x;
}

// [[Rcpp::export]]
NumericVector applyC(NumericVector xx){
  return sapply(xx, square);
}
```

### Rcpp modules

Using S4 Reference Classes to reflect C++ classes and methods (see the Rcpp-modules vignette).

# Interface to the Standard template library

C++ library with data structure and algorithms: vectors, arrays, stacks, iterators, accumulators, ... (see the Rcpp-sugar vignette).

```
NumericVector cumsum3(NumericVector x) {
NumericVector res(x.size());
std::partial_sum(x.begin(), x.end(), res.begin());
return res;
}
```

### Using Rcpp in packages

```
Rcpp.package.skeleton("mypackage")
```

#### References

# Further reading

- Writing R Extensions, R Core team.
- ▶ Robert Gentleman, R Programming for Bioinformatics, 2008.
- Rcpp documentation and Rcpp.org.
- ▶ Dirk Eddelbuettel, Seamless R and C++ Integration with Rcpp, Springer, 2013.
- ▶ Dirk Eddelbuettel and Romain Francois, Rcpp: Seamless R and C++ Integration, Journal of Statistical Software, Vol. 40, Issue 8, Apr 2011, http://www.jstatsoft.org/v40/i08/.
- Relevant devtools sections: C interface and Rcpp.

- ▶ This work is licensed under a CC BY-SA 3.0 License.
- Course web page and more material: https://github.com/lgatto/TeachingMaterial

Thank you for you attention