

Reproducible Research with knitr

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Teaching/Learning Approach

- Hands-on practice
- Work independently to enhance your own workflow
- You will not learn everything today

Outline for afternoon

- A short activity
- History and philosophy of literate programming
- Work through basics together
- Independent project work
- Wrap up and move forward

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Think about your own workflow

- Think about: *How do I get outputs from my data?*
- Draw a map or diagram of your workflow
- Include relevant steps and tools, such as:
 - Tables
 - Figures
 - In-text citations and reference list
 - In-text analysis summaries
 - Cross-referencing (tables, figures, sections)
 - Document layout
- Make notes about areas that are *time-consuming* and/or *difficult*

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Literate programming

- Origins in computer program documentation
- Software source code should describe how to use that software
- Early tools
 - WEB by Donald Knuth (author of TeX)
 - noweb by Norman Ramsey (1989)
- Two operations to create two different outputs
 - *Weave*: Nice Documentation
 - *Tangle*: Executable code

Sweave

- Released in 2002 by Friedrich Leisch¹
- Written for S (the language of R)
- Focused on creating articles
- Two operations to create two different outputs
 - SWeave: LaTeX document (and PDF)
 - STangle: Executable R code

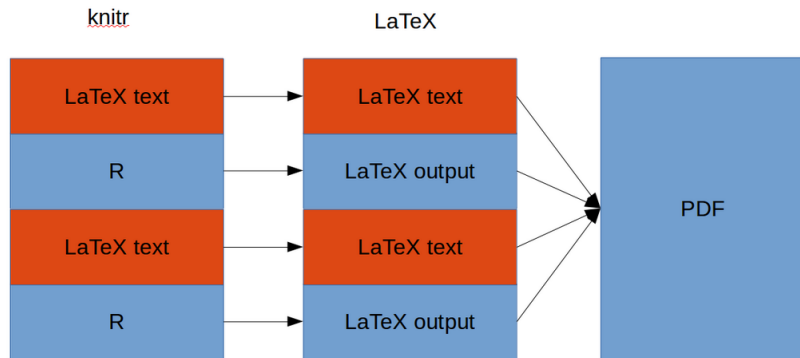
¹Sweave: Dynamic Generation of Statistical Reports Using Literate Data Analysis

knitr

- Released in 2012 by Yihui Xie²
- Conceptual descendant of Sweave
 - Easier than Sweave
 - Much more functionality and flexibility
- Three operations to create two different outputs
 - `knit`: PDF (and LaTeX document)
 - `purl`: Executable R code
 - `spin`: PDF (from pure R code)
- Also create various outputs from non-LaTeX input

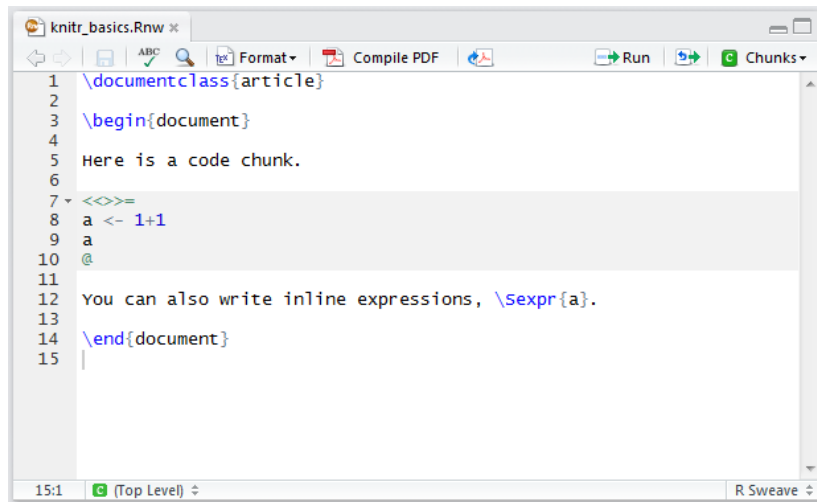
²knitr Homepage

How knitr Works³



³Image by Ari B. Friedman

knitr Input



The screenshot shows the knitr Rnw editor interface. The title bar indicates the file is 'knitr_basics.Rnw'. The toolbar includes icons for navigation, saving, undo, redo, and buttons for 'Format', 'Compile PDF', 'Run', and 'Chunks'. The main text area contains the following LaTeX code:

```
1 \documentclass{article}
2
3 \begin{document}
4
5 Here is a code chunk.
6
7 <<=>
8 a <- 1+1
9 a
10 @
11
12 You can also write inline expressions, \sexpr{a}.
13
14 \end{document}
15 |
```

The status bar at the bottom shows the cursor is at line 15, column 1, and the document is at the 'Top Level'.

PDF Output

Here is a code chunk.

```
a <- 1+1  
a  
  
## [1] 2
```

You can also write inline expressions, 2.

LaTeX Intermediary

```
\begin{document}
```

Here is a code chunk.

```
\begin{knitroun}  
\definecolor{shadecolor}{rgb}{0.969, 0.969, 0.969}\color{fgcolor}\begin{kframe}  
\begin{alltt}  
\hlstd{a} \hlkwb{<-} \hlnum{1}\hlopt{+}\hlnum{1}  
\hlstd{a}  
\end{alltt}  
\begin{verbatim}  
## [1] 2  
\end{verbatim}  
\end{kframe}  
\end{knitroun}
```

You can also write inline expressions, 2.

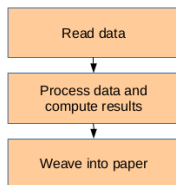
```
\end{document}
```

Workflows for knitr

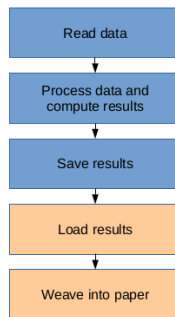
	Analysis	Output
Irreproducible	R	Copy-paste
No knitr	R	Manual includes
Output only	R	Load and knit
Full knitr	knitr	n/a

Workflows for knitr⁴

Workflow 1: All knitr



Workflow 2: Finish in knitr



⁴Image by Ari B. Friedman

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Code Chunks

- Code chunks contain three parts
- Label
 - Used for referencing chunks
- Options
 - Control chunk behavior and appearance
- Contents
 - R code to be evaluated

Code Chunks: Anatomy

Code Chunks: Options

- `echo`
- `eval`
- `hold`
- `tidy` and `highlight`
- `error`, `warning`, `message`

Code Chunks: Inline Code

- In addition to chunks, code can be written in-line
- Anything in `Sexpr` is evaluated
- Useful for in-line reporting of analyses

Externalization

- Possible to *externalize* R code
- “Child” documents
 - Code chunks in separate file
- Reading code chunks
 - Keep code in specially formatted R script

Chunk Caching

- knitr runs every chunk every time
- The `cache` chunk option changes this
- Cached chunks are only run after changes

Chunk Caching: How it Works

Chunk Caching: Chunk Dependencies

Figures

- Two ways to include figures:
- Using knitr chunk options for figures
 - Handles lots of details automatically
 - Takes work to customize
- Manually using `includegraphics`
 - Somewhat finer control
 - Requires more LaTeX overhead

Tables

- LaTeX tables are tedious
- Doing them by-hand is irreproducible and a waste of time
- Lots of ways to create tables with knitr
 - `kable`
 - `xtable`
 - `stargazer`

Package Versioning

- Reproducibility requires knowing software used to conduct analyses
- Including package names using `library` or `require` is not enough
- Your future self (and others) need to know package versions
- How do we handle that?

Package Versioning: Do it Manually

- Record versions and either:
 - Put these in a README
 - Have knitr fail on wrong version

- Manually install package version:
 - devtools
 - repmis

- Tedious

Package Versioning: packrat

- Package developed by RStudio
- Work in an isolated software environment
- Install packages into a local project directory
- Share your **packrat** directory as part of your reproducible directory

Package Versioning: checkpoint

- Package developed by Revolution Analytics
- Register a “checkpoint” (a date) for your analyses
- All packages are drawn from MRAN, a daily snapshot of the R package universe
- No need to store/share a large package directory

Wrapup

- What questions/concerns do you have?
- How have today's activities helped you think about your own reproducible workflow?

Things we probably didn't cover

- knitr's `spin` function: Creates a PDF from an R script
 - Really useful for teaching assignments
- Language engines: Embed non-R code
 - Python, Bash, Julia, FORTRAN, Stata(?)
- rmarkdown: knit without using LaTeX markup

Other Reproducible Research Tools

- Git: Version control
- GitHub and Bitbucket: Git cloud services⁵
- Pandoc: Command-line tool to convert documents between formats
- Tools for R package versioning
 - devtools
 - repmis
 - packrat
 - checkpoint

⁵“Collaborating with Git and Bitbucket”

knitr Resources

- knitr website
- CRAN Reproducible Research TaskView
- *Dynamic Documents with R and knitr*
- *Reproducible Research with R and RStudio*
- knitr Google Group
- knitr on StackOverflow

