compendiumdb: a database and R package for storing and analyzing expression data

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Contents

T	Introduction	1					
2	Installation of compendiumdb package						
3	Commonly used functions 3.1 Connecting to and creating the database	4					
4	Sample annotation 4.1 Using createESET	8					
5	Querying the compendium database	10					
6	Use case: building a breast cancer compendium 6.1 Functional enrichment analysis	10 11					

1 Introduction

Public repositories such as the Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) (Barrett et al. 2013) and ArrayExpress (Rustici et al. 2013) provide a large amount of expression data from a wide range of studies performed in different organisms and on different (microarray) platforms. However, integrating datasets for a specific domain of study to extract meaningful biological information from these repositories is often challenging. Both the use of different platforms and the maintenance of a large number of flat files can hamper an integrative analysis of these datasets. Several programs and web-based resources have been developed (Bareke et al. 2010; Cheng et al. 2010; Kilpinen et al. 2008; Lacson et al. 2010; Liu et al. 2011; Taminau et al. 2011; Xia et al. 2009) to facilitate the aggregation of data from gene expression data repositories. However, a uniform, flexible, and portable framework for analysis and integration of these datasets is still lacking. We developed the R package compendiumdb that enables

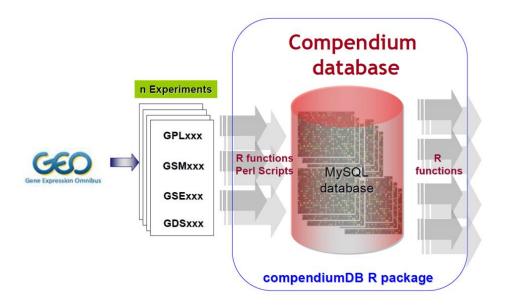


Figure 1: Typical workflow when loading data from GEO into the database using the compendiumdb package

building a domain-specific compendium of expression datasets via a flexible and homogeneous framework in the form of a MySQL database. The compendiumdb package consists of a number of R functions developed to access the database either locally or remotely. The database schema has been designed to be rich enough to store most of the information provided by MIAME-compliant expression databases such as GEO. Furthermore, an empty MySQL database in the form of a MySQL dump file is bundled with the package.

The objective of the compendiumdb package is to provide a homogeneous framework to store and analyze a large number of expression datasets from different studies and expression profiling platforms (Figure 1). The package provides R functions to (i) download data from GEO given the identifier of the experiment, (ii) load the expression data and probe annotation to a relational database, and (iii) save the expression data as an *ExpressionSet* (in binary file format). The resulting *ExpressionSet* and other data stored in the compendium database can then be queried using R functions.

2 Installation of compendiumdb package

Installing compendiumdb in a Linux or MacOSX environment is straightforward. It just requires recent distributions of MySQL and Perl to be present. The package can then be installed from source the default way (using *install.packages*).

Under a Windows operating system some more effort is required, since no Windows binary

has been made available for the package RMySQL that compendiumdb depends upon. The steps to take are:

- 1. Install the most recent version of MySQL:
 - (a) Download the MySQL Installer from http://dev.mysql.com/downloads/installer/.
 - (b) Open the MySQL Installer by clicking on the MSI (MicroSoft Installer) file you just downloaded.
 - (c) Use the default settings; for a minimal installation choose 'Server only' under Setup Type.
 - (d) Create a root account by entering a password under Configuration.
- Add the path name to your MySQL bin directory (e.g., C:\Program Files\MySQL\MySQL Server 5.6\bin to the PATH environment variable (see http://dev.mysql.com/doc/mysql-windows-excerpt/5.6/en/mysql-installation-windows-path html).
- 3. Open a Command Prompt window and log in to your MySQL account by typing mysql -u root -p and entering your password for the root account.
- 4. On the mysql prompt create a database named compendium using CREATE DATABASE compendium;.
- 5. Install a recent version of Perl:
 - (a) Go to ActiveState's ActivePerl home page http://www.activestate.com/activeperl.
 - (b) Click on 'Download Now' and to download the installer for ActivePerl for Windows. There is no need to fill out any of the contact information on the next page in order to download ActivePerl.
 - (c) Install ActivePerl by clicking on the MSI file you just downloaded and accepting the default options.
 - (d) Check if the following Perl modules are already installed. If not go to the Command Prompt and type ppm. This will open the Perl Package Manager. Install the following modules: DateTime-Format-DateManip, DBD-mysql.
- 6. Install the latest version of Rtools by downloading the executable from http://cran.r-project.org/bin/windows/Rtools/ and running it. In the setup check the option to edit the PATH environment variable.
- Install the RMySQL package (http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/RMySQL/index. html).
 - (a) Create (if it does not exist yet) or edit the file C:\Program Files\R\R-3.0.2\etc\Renviron.site and add a line containing the path to your MySQL installation: MYSQL_HOME="C:\Program Files\MySQL\MySQL Server 5.6". If necessary, change these to the settings appropriate for your computer.

- (b) Copy libmysql.lib from MYSQL_HOME\lib to MYSQL_HOME\lib\opt to meet dependencies (create the directory opt if it does not exist yet).
- (c) Start R and run install.packages('RMySQL',type='source').
- (d) Load RMySQL using library(RMySQL).
- 8. Install compendiumdb:

```
> install.packages("path_to_tar_file/compendiumdb_0.1.0.tar.gz",
+ type = "source")
```

3 Commonly used functions

3.1 Connecting to and creating the database

We start by loading compendiumdb in the current R session:

> library(compendiumDB)

To create a compendium database one first has to connect to the MySQL database using the function *connectDatabase*. Before calling this function, a MySQL server should be running on the host machine and an (empty) database compendium has to be created on the MySQL server (see Section 2).

```
> conn = connectDatabase(user = "root", password = "root", host = "localhost",
+ dbname = "compendium")
```

Here we connected to a database running on a local machine, but the *host* argument can also be used to connect to a database on a remote server. Once the connection to the database has been established, load the database schema of the MySQL compendium database using the function *loadDatabaseSchema* (default value *updateSchema=FALSE*):

> loadDatabaseSchema(conn, updateSchema = TRUE)

Note that in general one should set updateSchema=TRUE only once, i.e., before filling the database with expression data, or if one explicitly wants to delete all the records of the database and reload the schema.

3.2 Loading data into the compendium database

First one should download the expression datasets of interest from GEO (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/). For this purpose, the package provides the function downloadGEOdata. GEO contains the following types of records (see also http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/info/overview.html):

• Platform record (GPL): describes properties of the microarray, e.g., cDNA or oligonucleotide probesets. Each platform has a unique identifier (GPLxxx).

- Sample record (GSM): describes the conditions under which an individual Sample in the experiment was handled, the manipulations it underwent, and the abundance measurement of each element derived from it. It refers to only one sample and can be part of multiple series. Its unique identifier is GSMxxx.
- Series record (GSE): links a number of individual related samples together and provides a description of the whole study, the data obtained, analysis and conclusions. Its unique identifier is GSExxx.
- Dataset record (GDS):

The function download GEO data downloads SOFT (Simple Omnibus Format in Text) files from GEO to the user's local machine for GSEs, GPLs, GSMs, and GDSs corresponding to the GSE identifiers provided by the user. For example, here we download the very first Series record and its associated GPL and GSMs from GEO:

> downloadGEOdata(GSEid = "GSE18290", destdir = getwd())

The function downloadGEOdata creates a data directory called BigMac (BIoinformatics Group MicroArray Compendium) in a directory destdir specified by the user. The BigMac directory contains several subdirectories: annotation, COMPENDIUM, data and log. The data directory contains further subdirectories to store the downloaded SOFT files corresponding to GSEs, GSMs, GPLs, and GDSs downloaded from GEO. More information about the structure of the BigMac directory can be found at http://www.bioinformaticslaboratory.nl/twiki/bin/view/BioLab/compendiumdb.

The data corresponding to GSE18290, for example, can be loaded to the compendium database using the function *loadDataToCompendium*:

> loadDataToCompendium(conn, "GSE18290")

The current contents of the compendium database can be inspected using the function GSEinDB:

> GSEinDB(conn)

	id_Compendium	Experiment	experiment	Design	Chip	Samples		Tag
1	1	GSE18290		SC	GPL2112	16		<na></na>
2	1	GSE18290		SC	GPL339	18		<na></na>
3	1	GSE18290		SC	GPL570	18		<na></na>
4	2	GSE35547		SC	GPL6885	8		<na></na>
5	3	GSE18931		SC	GPL570	6		<na></na>
6	4	GSE11121		SC	GPL96	200	breast	cancer
7	5	GSE2990		SC	GPL96	189	breast	cancer
8	6	GSE7390		SC	GPL96	198	breast	cancer
9	8	GSE1456		SC	GPL96	159	breast	cancer
10	8	GSE1456		SC	GPL97	159	breast	cancer
	OrganismNCBIid	OrganismNa	me GDS		date_	Loaded		
1	9913	Bos taur	rus GDS3960	2014-0	01-20 10	:22:08		
2	10090	Mus muscul	us GDS3958	2014-0	01-20 10	:22:08		

```
9606 Homo sapiens GDS3959 2014-01-20 10:22:08
3
4
            10090 Mus musculus
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 10:27:08
5
             9606 Homo sapiens
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 10:28:08
6
             9606 Homo sapiens
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 10:39:14
7
             9606 Homo sapiens
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 10:46:30
8
             9606 Homo sapiens
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 10:52:55
             9606 Homo sapiens
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 11:29:06
10
             9606 Homo sapiens
                                   <NA> 2014-01-20 11:29:06
```

GSE18290 contains time course expression data from early bovine, human, and mouse embryos (Xie et al. 2010). Since a different platform was used for each species the table contains three entries, one for each species.

3.3 Creating ExpressionSets

> createESET(conn, "GSE18290")

Once a dataset has been loaded into the database, one would often like to further analyze the dataset using other packages provided in R/Bioconductor. For this purpose the package provides the function createESET that creates an ExpressionSet given a GSE identifier:

```
ExpressionSet esetGSE18290_GPL570 created
ExpressionSet esetGSE18290_GPL339 created
ExpressionSet esetGSE18290_GPL2112 created
> esetGSE18290_GPL2112
ExpressionSet (storageMode: lockedEnvironment)
assayData: 24128 features, 16 samples
  element names: exprs
protocolData: none
phenoData
  rowNames: GSM456627 GSM456628 ... GSM456642 (16 total)
  varLabels: development stage GPL
  varMetadata: labelDescription
featureData
  featureNames: AFFX-BioB-5_at AFFX-BioB-M_at ... Bt.19900.1.A1_at
    (24128 total)
  fvarLabels: ID Gene title ... GenBank Accession (10 total)
  fvarMetadata: labelDescription
experimentData: use 'experimentData(object)'
Annotation: GPL2112
```

Again, since a different platform was used for each species, three different *ExpressionSets* were created. The numerical data contained in the *assayData* slot is identical to the normalized expression data provided by GEO. The *featureData* slot is based upon the most recent (probe) annotation provided by GEO.

4 Sample annotation

It is a well-known problem that the annotation of individual samples in public expression data repositories is often inconsistent or even non-existent (Pitzer et al. 2009). The compendiumdb package offers various ways to obtain a better sample annotation.

4.1 Using createESET

GSM870393 "GPL6885"

As an example, consider GSE35547 containing gene expression data on the role of Notch in CD4+ T cell response (Helbig et al. 2012):

```
> downloadGEOdata("GSE35547")
> loadDataToCompendium(conn, "GSE35547")
```

The function *GSMdescriptions* provides a convenient overview of the sample title, sample characteristics, and sample source fields for each sample.

> head(GSMdescriptions(conn, "GSE35547"), n = 4)

```
sampletitle
GSM870390 "C-Ig day1_mouse1"
GSM870391 "C-Ig_day3_mouse1"
GSM870392 "DLL4_day1_mouse1"
GSM870393 "C-Ig_day3_mouse1 (technical replicate)"
          samplesource
GSM870390 "naive CD4+ T cells, control, day 1"
GSM870391 "naive CD4+ T cells, control, day 3"
GSM870392 "naive CD4+ T cells, Delta4-Ig, day 1"
GSM870393 "naive CD4+ T cells, control, day 3"
          samplechar
GSM870390 "strain: C57BL6/NCrl; tissue: inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
GSM870391 "strain: C57BL6/NCrl; tissue: inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
GSM870392 "strain: C57BL6/NCrl; tissue: inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
GSM870393 "strain: C57BL6/NCrl; tissue: inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
          GPL
GSM870390 "GPL6885"
GSM870391 "GPL6885"
GSM870392 "GPL6885"
```

According to GEO guidelines (see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/info/spreadsheet.html#samples_tab) the sample characteristics field should contain detailed sample annotation. For GSE35547 this is indeed the case, and for each sample the variables strain, tissue, celltype, stimulus, timepoint, and mouse are defined. In GSMdescriptions these variables are separated by ';'. The function createESET with its argument parsing=TRUE enables splitting the sample characteristics into separate columns:

```
> createESET(conn, "GSE35547", parsing = TRUE)
```

```
Parsing phenoData......Done. ExpressionSet esetGSE35547_GPL6885 created
```

> head(pData(esetGSE35547_GPL6885), n = 4)

```
strain
                                                                         tissue
                        inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
GSM870390
           C57BL6/NCrl
GSM870391
           C57BL6/NCrl
                        inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
GSM870392 C57BL6/NCrl
                        inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
GSM870393 C57BL6/NCrl
                        inguinal, axillary and brachial lymph nodes and spleen
                                 stimulus timepoint mouse
                    cell_type
GSM870390 naive CD4+ T cells
                               control Ig
                                              day 1
                                                         1
GSM870391 naive CD4+ T cells
                                               day 3
                                                         1
                               control Ig
GSM870392 naive CD4+ T cells
                                Delta4-Ig
                                              day 1
                                                         1
GSM870393 naive CD4+ T cells
                               control Ig
                                              day 3
                                     sampletitle
GSM870390
                                C-Ig day1_mouse1
GSM870391
                                C-Ig_day3_mouse1
GSM870392
                                DLL4_day1_mouse1
GSM870393 C-Ig_day3_mouse1 (technical replicate)
                                  samplesource
                                                    GPL
            naive CD4+ T cells, control, day 1 GPL6885
GSM870390
GSM870391
            naive CD4+ T cells, control, day 3 GPL6885
GSM870392 naive CD4+ T cells, Delta4-Ig, day 1 GPL6885
GSM870393
            naive CD4+ T cells, control, day 3 GPL6885
```

With the resulting *ExpressionSet* it is straightforward to perform follow-up analyses, for example, testing for differential expression using limma.

4.2 Using the inSilicoDb package

Often data uploaded to GEO does not conform with the guidelines. As an example, consider GSE18931 containing gene expression data in human normal mammary stem cells (Pece et al. 2010):

- > downloadGEOdata("GSE18931")
- > loadDataToCompendium(conn, "GSE18931")
- > GSMdescriptions(conn, "GSE18931")

Here the essential information of a sample being either PKH positive or PKH negative is not provided in the sample characteristics field but in the sample title field. In this case, one could use curated sample annotation accessible via the inSilicoDB (Taminau et al. 2011). This package is a command-line front-end to the InSilico DB (http://insilico.ulb.ac.be), a web-based database currently containing close to 160,000 expert-curated Affymetrix and Illumina expression profiles compiled from almost 3,700 GEO repository series in human, mouse, and rat (Coletta et al. 2012).

The current annotation of a sample can be easily updated using the function *updatePhenoData*:

- > updatePhenoData(conn, pdata)
- > head(GSMdescriptions(conn, "GSE18931"), n = 4)

```
rownames.pdata. Cell.Type PKH26.Label GPL

GSM468802 "GSM468802" "mammary epithelial cells" "PKH-negative" "GPL570"

GSM468803 "GSM468803" "mammary epithelial cells" "PKH-positive" "GPL570"

GSM468804 "GSM468804" "mammary epithelial cells" "PKH-negative" "GPL570"

GSM468805 "GSM468805" "mammary epithelial cells" "PKH-positive" "GPL570"
```

Here the sample annotation was imported from InSilico DB. Of course, a user can also create a dataframe with curated sample annotation, for example with fix, and use updatePhenoData to store the updated sample annotation in the database.

4.3 Using GEO Datasets

When downloading a GSE, the function downloadGEOData checks if the GSE has been curated by GEO staff and been made available as a GDS. If so, the corresponding GDS is also downloaded and when loading the data to the database the curated sample annotation provided by the GDS is stored. For GSE18290 loaded above this is the case:

> GDSforGSE(conn, "GSE18290")

```
id_Compendium Experiment experimentDesign
                                                 Chip Samples
                                                               Tag OrganismNCBIid
1
                  GSE18290
                                          SC GPL2112
                                                           16 <NA>
                                                                              9913
2
                  GSE18290
                                          SC
                                              GPL339
                                                           18 <NA>
                                                                             10090
              1
3
                  GSE18290
                                          SC
                                               GPL570
                                                           18 <NA>
                                                                              9606
                   GDS
                                date_loaded
  OrganismName
    Bos taurus GDS3960 2014-01-20 10:22:08
2 Mus musculus GDS3958 2014-01-20 10:22:08
3 Homo sapiens GDS3959 2014-01-20 10:22:08
```

GSE18290 has actually been split into three different GDSes, one for each species. If a GDS is available, the individual samples are in general well annotated:

> head(GSMdescriptions(conn, "GSE18290"))

5 Querying the compendium database

6 Use case: building a breast cancer compendium

The compendiumdb package provides a convenient framework to store and analyze a large number of expression datasets from a specific domain of study. Here we create a breast cancer compendium of gene expression datasets that have been generated over the past ten years. The selected GSEs were all measured using Affymetrix Human Genome U133A and/or U133B arrays, i.e., GPL96 and GPL97 platforms, respectively. First download the selected breast cancer datasets from GEO using their GSE identifiers:

```
> gseids <- c("GSE11121", "GSE2990", "GSE7390", "GSE1456")
> for (i in gseids) {
+     downloadGE0data(i)
+ }
```

Then load the data to the relational database using loadDataToCompendium:

```
> for (i in gseids) {
+ loadDataToCompendium(con = conn, GSEid = i)
+ }
```

The datasets loaded to the compendium can be tagged with a specific label such as "breast cancer".

```
> for (i in gseids) {
+ tagExperiment(con = conn, GSEid = i, tag = "breast cancer")
+ }
```

Such a tag can, for example, be used to retrieve datasets of the user's interest from the compendium datase.

To keep the dataset homogeneous, below we analyse ExpressionSets of breast cancer datasets from the platform GPL96 (Affymetrix Human Genome U133A Array). The ExpressionSet can be created using createESET function. Depending on the number of size of the expression data and type of machine, it might take some time in creating ExpressionSet from createESET function.

The ExpressionSets generated by createESET contain expression data at the probeset level. In order to perform a functional enrichment analysis, one has to select a single probe if multiple probes map to the same to one gene expression data. This can be achieved by using the nsFilter from the genefilter package:

```
> require(genefilter)
> for (i in 1:length(esets)) {
+    annotation(esets[[i]]) <- "hgu133a"
+    esets[[i]] <- nsFilter(esets[[i]], remove.dupEntrez = TRUE,
+    var.func = sd, var.filter = FALSE)$eset
+ }</pre>
```

The annotation of samples, i.e., phenodata of the datasets is improper and can be modified manually. The annotated, pre-processed expression datasets can be loaded as follows:

6.1 Functional enrichment analysis

To infer biological relevance from a compendium of related expression studies, it is important to understand how datasets in the compendium are functionally related to each other. In this section of the vignette, we illustrate a functional enrichment analysis that reveals the consistency and variation on a geneset level among datasets of the compendium. For this purpose, we selected a number of large breast cancer microarray datasets. Breast cancer is a well-known disease that comprises a diverse and heterogeneous set of subtypes. Identification of variations at the molecular level within one cancer type such as breast cancer has always been challenging. Analysis of a compendium of breast cancer datasets will provide insight in the consistency and variation among cancer types and will help in improving microarray breast cancer event predictions.

In this section we use the predefined gene sets (see c2BroadSets of GSVA package) and identify variation or consistency of the gene sets among breast cancer datasets. We use GSVA package to identify the enrichment of gene sets by comparing grade 1 (g1) and grade 2 (g2) phenotypes in each expression dataset. The package requires gene expression data and collection of gene set as the two main input arguments. Gene expression data of each breast cancer dataset is available in the form of ExpressionSet object as we obtained in the previous section. Once we have both ExpressionSet and GeneSets, we can perform enrichment analysis using the gsva function of GSVA package:

```
> require(GSVA)
> require(GSVAdata)
> require(limma)
```

```
> data(c2BroadSets)
> gseids = c("GSE11121", "GSE2990", "GSE7390", "GSE1456")
> fit.eb <- list()
> DEgeneSets <- list()
> adjPvalueCutoff <- 10^-12
> load("fit.eb.Rdata")
> load("DEgeneSets.Rdata")
> tstats <- c()
> for (i in 1:length(fit.eb)) {
      tstat <- fit.eb[[i]]$t
      tstats <- cbind(tstats, tstat[, "g3vsg1"])</pre>
+ }
> colnames(tstats) = gseids
> tstats <- c()
> for (i in 1:length(fit.eb)) {
      tstat <- fit.eb[[i]]$t</pre>
+
      tstats <- cbind(tstats, tstat[, "g3vsg1"])</pre>
+ }
> colnames(tstats) <- gseids
> heatmap(tstats[DEgeneSets[[1]][DEgeneSets[[1]]$adj.P.Val < 10^-11,</pre>
      "ID"], ], cexCol = 1, cexRow = 0.6, scale = "none", margins = c(2, 1)
```

The behaviour of gene sets in each breast cancer dataset can be analysed by plotting the heatmap of log odd ratio of gene sets as shown in Figure 2.

Acknowledgements

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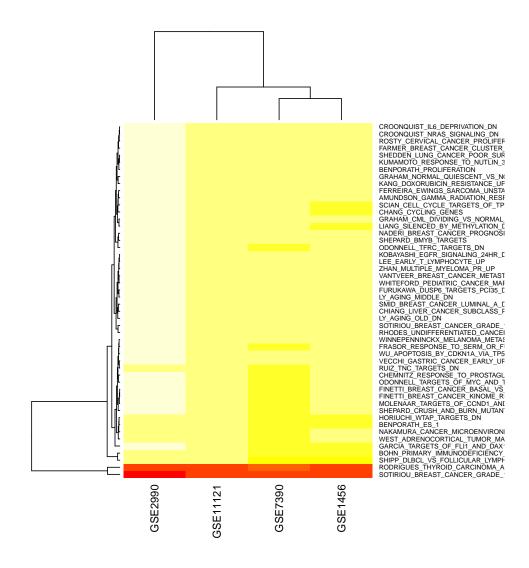


Figure 2: Heatmap of enriched pathways in breast cancer datasets at 0.1 % FDR where x-axis represents GSE ID and y-axis represents gene sets

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> sessionInfo()

R version 3.0.2 (2013-09-25)

Platform: i386-w64-mingw32/i386 (32-bit)

locale:

- [1] LC_COLLATE=English_United Kingdom.1252
- [2] LC_CTYPE=English_United Kingdom.1252
- [3] LC_MONETARY=English_United Kingdom.1252

- [4] LC_NUMERIC=C
- [5] LC_TIME=English_United Kingdom.1252

attached base packages:

[1] parallel stats graphics grDevices utils datasets methods

[8] base

other attached packages:

[1]	GSVAdata_0.99.11	hgu95a.db_2.10.1	GSVA_1.10.2
[4]	GSEABase_1.24.0	graph_1.40.1	annotate_1.40.0
[7]	hgu133a.db_2.10.1	org.Hs.eg.db_2.10.1	AnnotationDbi_1.24.0
[10]	<pre>genefilter_1.44.0</pre>	<pre>inSilicoDb_1.10.0</pre>	rjson_0.2.13
[13]	compendiumDB_0.86	GEOmetadb_1.22.0	RSQLite_0.11.4
[16]	GEOquery_2.28.0	limma_3.18.9	Biobase_2.22.0
[19]	BiocGenerics_0.8.0	RMySQL_0.9-3	DBI_0.2-7

loaded via a namespace (and not attached):

- [1] IRanges_1.20.6 RCurl_1.95-4.1 splines_3.0.2 stats4_3.0.2
- [5] survival_2.37-4 tools_3.0.2 XML_3.98-1.1 xtable_1.7-1