

WGCNA User Manual

(for version 1.0.x)

A systems biologic microarray analysis software for finding important genes and pathways.

The WGCNA (weighted gene co-expression network analysis) software implements a systems biologic method for analyzing microarray gene expression data, gene information data, and microarray sample traits (e.g. case control status or clinical outcomes). WGCNA can be used for constructing a weighted gene co-expression network, for finding co-expression modules, for calculating module membership measures, and for finding highly connected intramodular hub genes. WGCNA facilitates a network based gene screening method that can be used to identify candidate biomarkers or therapeutic targets. The gene screening method integrates gene significance information (e.g. correlation between gene expression and a clinical outcome) and module membership information to identify biologically and statistically plausible genes. The software has a graphic interface that facilitates straightforward input of microarray and clinical trait data or pre-defined gene information. The software can analyze networks comprised of tens of thousands of genes and implements several options for automatic and manual gene selection ("network screening").

To cite the software, please use Zhang and Horvath (2005), Horvath et al (2006), and Langfelder et al (2007).

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Background information

WGCNA begins with the understanding that the information captured by microarray experiments is far richer than a list of differentially expressed genes. Rather, microarray data are more completely represented by considering the relationships between measured transcripts, which can be assessed by pair-wise correlations between gene expression profiles. In most microarray data analyses, however, these relationships go essentially unexplored. WGCNA starts from the level of thousands of genes, identifies clinically interesting gene modules, and finally uses intramodular connectivity, gene significance (e.g. based on the correlation of a gene expression profile with a sample trait) to identify key genes in the disease pathways for further validation. WGCNA alleviates the multiple testing problem inherent in microarray data analysis. Instead of relating thousands of genes to a microarray sample trait, it focuses on the relationship between a few (typically less than 10) modules and the sample trait. Toward this end, it calculates the eigengene significance (correlation between sample trait and eigengene) and the corresponding p-value for each module. The module definition does not make use of a priori defined gene sets. Instead, modules are constructed from the expression data by using hierarchical clustering. Although it is advisable to relate the resulting modules to gene ontology information to assess their biological plausibility, it is not required. Because the modules may correspond to biological pathways, focusing the analysis on intramodular hub genes (or the module eigengenes) amounts to a biologically motivated data reduction scheme. Because the expression profiles of intramodular hub genes are highly correlated, typically dozens of candidate biomarkers result. Although these candidates are statistically equivalent, they may differ in terms of biological plausibility or clinical utility. Gene ontology information can be useful for further prioritizing intramodular hub genes. Examples of biological studies that show the importance of intramodular hub genes can be found reported in (Horvath et al 2006, Carlson et al 2006, Gargalovic et al 2006, Ghazalpour et al 2006, Miller et al 2008).

Analysis overview

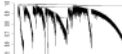
Construct a network

Rationale: make use of interaction patterns between genes



Identify modules

Rationale: module (pathway) based analysis

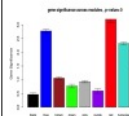


Relate modules to external information

Array Information: Clinical data, SNPs, proteomics

Gene Information: gene ontology, EASE, IPA

Rationale: find biologically interesting modules



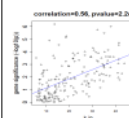
Find the key drivers in *interesting* modules

Tools: intramodular connectivity

(highly related to module membership),

gene significance

Rationale: experimental validation, therapeutics, biomarkers



Short glossary of network concepts

Term	Definition
Coexpression network	We define coexpression networks as undirected, weighted gene networks. The nodes of such a network correspond to gene expressions, and edges between genes are determined by the pairwise Pearson correlations between gene expressions. By raising the absolute value of the Pearson correlation to a power $\beta \geq 1$ (soft thresholding), the weighted gene coexpression network construction emphasizes large correlations at the expense of low correlations. Specifically, $a_{ij} = \text{cor}(x_i, x_j) ^\beta$ represents the adjacency of an unsigned network. Optionally, the user can also specify a signed co-expression network where the adjacency is defined as follows: $a_{ij} = 0.5 + 0.5 * \text{cor}(x_i, x_j) ^\beta$
Module	Modules are clusters of highly interconnected genes. In an unsigned coexpression network, modules correspond to clusters of genes with high absolute correlations. In a signed network, modules correspond to positively correlated genes.
Connectivity	For each gene, the connectivity (also known as degree) is defined as the sum of connection strengths with the other network genes: $k_i = \sum_{u \neq i} a_{iu}$. In coexpression networks, the connectivity measures how correlated a gene is with all other network genes.
Intramodular connectivity (kIN)	Intramodular connectivity measures how connected, or coexpressed, a given gene is with respect to the genes of a particular module. The intramodular connectivity may be interpreted as a measure of module membership.
Module eigengene	The module eigengene corresponds to the first principal component of a given module. It can be considered the most representative gene expression in a module. Example: MEblue (also denoted as PCblue) denotes the module eigengene of the blue module.
Eigengene significance	When a microarray sample trait y is available (e.g. case control status or body weight), one can correlate the module eigengenes with this outcome. The correlation coefficient is referred to as eigengene significance. The WGCNA software outputs the eigengene significance of each module (eigengene) and the corresponding correlation test p-value.
Module Membership also known as eigengene-based connectivity (kME)	For each gene, we defined a “fuzzy” measure of module membership by correlating its gene expression profile with the module eigengene of a given module. For example $\text{MMblue}(i) = \text{cor}(x_i, \text{MEblue})$ measures how correlated gene i is to the blue module eigengene. $\text{MMBlue}(i)$ measures the membership of the i^{th} gene with respect to the Blue module. If $\text{MMBlue}(i)$ is close to 0, then the i^{th} gene is <i>not</i> part of the Blue module. But if $\text{MMBlue}(i)$ is close to 1 or -1, it is highly connected to the Blue module genes. The sign of module membership encodes whether the gene has a positive or a negative relationship with the Blue module eigengene. WGCNA also outputs the corresponding correlation test p-value for module membership (denoted by PvalueMMblue). The module membership measure can be defined for all input genes (irrespective of their original module membership). It turns out that the module membership measure is highly related to the intramodular connectivity kIN. Highly connected intramodular hub genes tend

Term	Definition
	to have high module membership values to the respective module.
Hub gene	This loosely defined term is used as an abbreviation of “highly connected gene.” By definition, genes inside coexpression modules tend to have high connectivity.
Gene significance	To incorporate external information into the co-expression network, we make use of gene significance measures. Abstractly speaking, the higher the absolute value of $GS(i)$, the more biologically significant is the i -th gene. Examples: $GS(i)$ could encode pathway membership (e.g. 1 if the gene is a known apoptosis gene and 0 otherwise), knockout essentiality, or the correlation with an external microarray sample trait. A gene significance measure could also be defined by minus log of a p-value. The only requirement is that gene significance of 0 indicates that the gene is not significant with regard to the biological question of interest. The GS can take on either positive or negative. When the user specifies a microarray sample trait y (e.g. case control status or a quantitative outcome), WGCNA defines the gene significance measure as follows $GeneSignificance(i) = \text{cor}(x_i, y)$.
Module significance	Module significance is determined as the average absolute gene significance measure for all genes in a given module. This measure is highly related to the correlation between module eigengene and the outcome y .

Construction of weighted gene co-expression networks and modules

Genes with expression levels that are highly correlated are biologically interesting, since they imply common regulatory mechanisms or participation in similar biological processes. To construct a network from microarray gene-expression data, we begin by calculating the Pearson correlations for all pairs of genes in the network. Because microarray data can be noisy and the number of samples is often small, we weight the Pearson correlations by taking their absolute value and raising them to the power β . This step effectively serves to emphasize strong correlations and punish weak correlations on an exponential scale. These weighted correlations, in turn, represent the connection strengths between genes in the network. By adding up these connection strengths for each gene, we produce a single number (called connectivity, or k) that describes how strongly that gene is connected to all other genes in the network. We use the general framework of weighted gene co-expression network analysis presented in (Zhang and Horvath 2005, Horvath et al 2006). Briefly, the absolute value of the Pearson correlation coefficient is calculated for all pairwise comparisons of gene-expression values across all microarray samples. The Pearson correlation matrix is then transformed into an adjacency matrix A , i.e., a matrix of connection strengths by using a power function. Thus, the connection strength (adjacency) $a(i,j)$ between gene expressions $x(i)$ and $x(j)$ is defined as $a(i,j) = |\text{cor}(x(i), x(j))|^\beta$. Optionally, WGCNA can also be used to construct a signed network, which keeps track of the sign of the correlation coefficient: $a(i,j) = |0.5 + 0.5 * \text{cor}(x(i), x(j))|^\beta$.

Because microarray data can be noisy and the number of samples is often small, we weight the Pearson correlations by taking their absolute value and raising them to the power β .

The resulting weighted network represents an improvement over unweighted networks based on dichotomizing the correlation matrix, because (i) the continuous nature of the gene coexpression information is preserved and (ii) the results of weighted network analyses are highly robust with respect to the choice of the parameter β , whereas unweighted networks display sensitivity to the choice of the cutoff. The network connectivity $k(i)$ of the i th gene expression profile $x(i)$ is the sum of the connection strengths with all other genes in the network, i.e. it represents a measure of how correlated the i -th gene is with all the other genes in the network.

To determine the power β used in the definition of the network adjacency matrix, we make use of the fact that gene expression networks, like virtually all types of biological networks, have been found to exhibit an approximate scale free topology (Albert et al 2000).

To choose a particular power β , we used the scale-free topology criterion described in (Zhang and Horvath 2005).

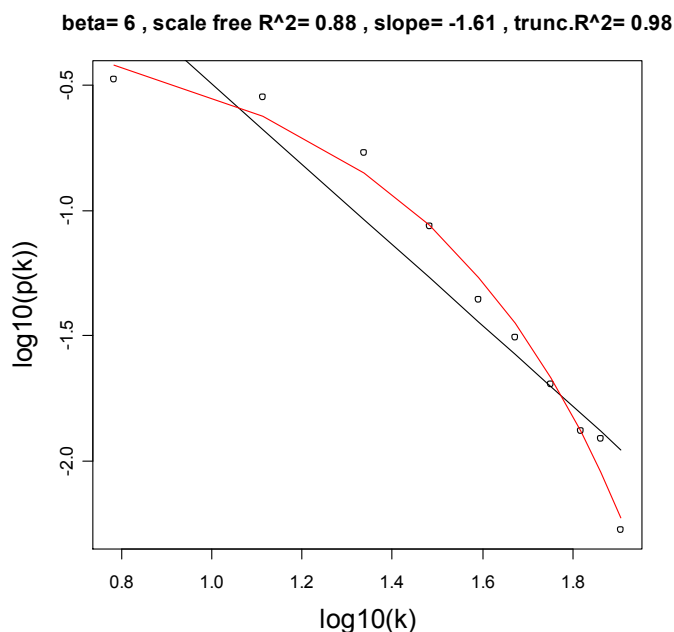


Figure: Assessing the scale free topology of a weighted gene co-expression network (constructed using $\beta=6$). If the dots form an approximate straight line relationship then the network forms a scale free network. The black curve corresponds to the regression line with model fitting index R^2 . The red curve describes a truncated exponential fit (see Zhang and Horvath 05) for more details.

Scale free topology criterion (this technical section may be skipped at first reading).

The network exhibits a scale free topology if the frequency distribution $p(k)$ of the connectivity follows a power law: $p(k) \sim k^{-\gamma}$. (Incidentally, the power gamma has nothing to do with the soft threshold beta that is used to define the co-expression network). To visually inspect whether approximate scale-free topology is satisfied, one plots $\log(p(k))$ versus $\log(k)$. A straight line is indicative of scale-free topology. To measure how well a network satisfies a scale-free topology, we use the square of the correlation between $\log(p(k))$ and $\log(k)$, i.e. the model fitting index R^2 of the linear model that regresses $\log(p(k))$ on $\log(k)$. If R^2 of the model approaches 1, then there is a straight line relationship between $\log(p(k))$ and $\log(k)$. Many co-expression networks satisfy the scale-free property only approximately.

Most biologists would be very suspicious of a gene co-expression network that does not satisfy scale-free topology at least approximately. Therefore, a soft threshold power β (in $a(i,j)=|\text{cor}(x(i),x(j))|^\beta$) that give rise to a network that does not satisfy approximate scale-free topology should not be considered. There is a natural trade-off between maximizing scale-free topology model fit (scale free fitting parameter R^2) and maintaining a high mean number of connections. High values of β often lead to high values of R^2 . But the higher the power β , the lower is the mean connectivity of the network.

These considerations have motivated us to propose the following scale-free topology criterion for choosing the power β : Only consider those powers that lead to a network satisfying scale-free topology at least approximately, e.g. $R^2 > 0.80$. In addition, we recommend that the user take the following additional considerations into account when choosing the adjacency function parameter. First, the mean connectivity should be high so that the network contains enough information (e.g. for module detection). Second, the slope of the regression line between $\log(p(k))$ and $\log(k)$ should be negative (typically smaller than -2). In practice, we find the relationship between R^2 and β is characterized by a saturation curve. In most applications, we use the lowest power β where saturation is reached.

As a caveat, we mention that sometimes scale free topology cannot be reached for reasonably low values of β (say smaller than 20). For example, severe array outliers or globally distinct groups of arrays may lead to strong correlations between the expression profiles (and very large co-expression modules). In this case, we simply recommend going with the default choice of β : for an unsigned network $\beta=6$, for a signed network $\beta=12$.

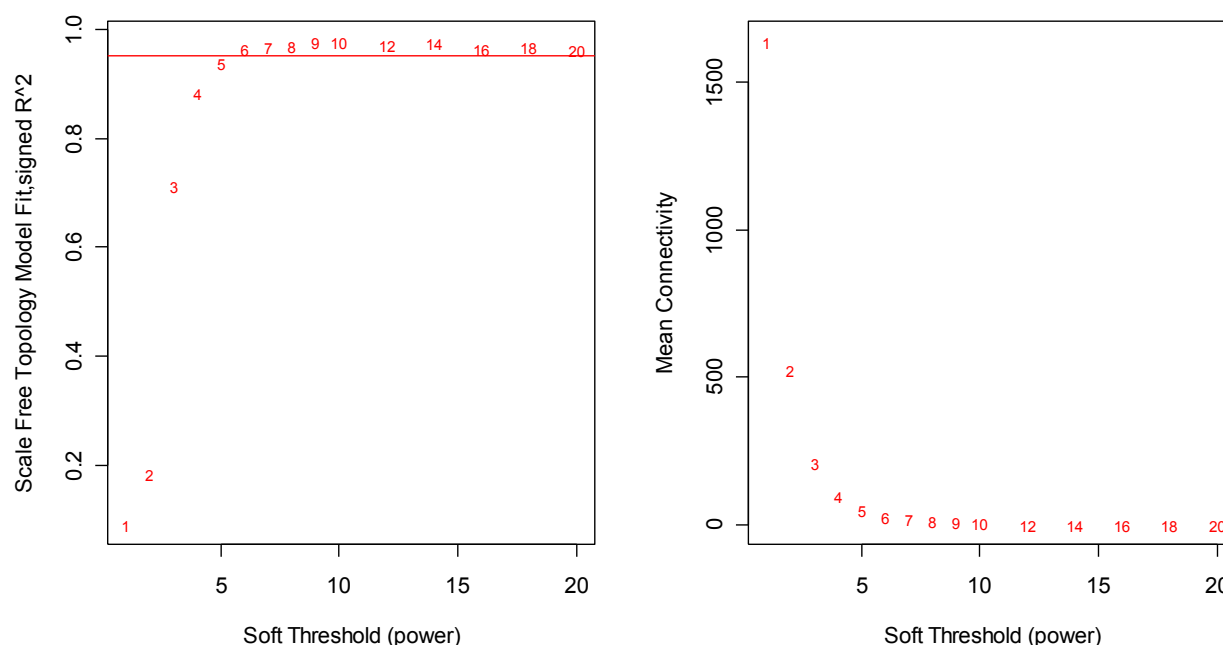


Figure a) Scale free topology fit (R^2 , y-axis) as a function of different powers. In many (but not all) applications, one observes a saturation type curve. Here we would choose a power of 6 since the saturation level is reached at this point. The analysis is highly robust with respect to the choice of the power. b) Mean connectivity (y-axis) versus the power. The higher the power, the lower the mean connectivity.

Module detection

We use average linkage hierarchical clustering coupled with a gene dissimilarity measure to define a dendrogram (cluster tree) of the network.

Once a dendrogram is obtained from a hierarchical clustering method, we choose a height cutoff to arrive at a clustering. Modules correspond to branches of the dendrogram

WGCNA implements two network dissimilarity measures. The default choice is the topological overlap matrix based dissimilarity measure (Ravasz et al 2002, Zhang and Horvath 2005, Li and Horvath 2006, Yip and Horvath 2007). The use of topological overlap serves as a filter to exclude spurious or isolated connections during network construction.

The topological overlap dissimilarity is used
as input of hierarchical clustering

$$TOM_{ij} = \frac{\sum_u a_{iu}a_{uj} + a_{ij}}{\min(k_i, k_j) + 1 - a_{ij}}$$

$$DistTOM_{ij} = 1 - TOM_{ij}$$

- Generalized in Zhang and Horvath (2005) to the case of weighted networks
- Generalized in Yip and Horvath (2006) to higher order interactions

As alternative dissimilarity measure, we also define $dissA(i,j)=1-a(i,j)$ (i.e., 1 minus the adjacency matrix). This alternative measure is computationally much faster than the topological overlap measure and often leads to approximately similar modules.

WGCNA defines modules by cutting (pruning) branches off the dendrogram. A common but inflexible method uses a static (constant) height cutoff value; this method exhibits suboptimal performance on complicated dendrograms. Therefore, WGCNA also implements dynamic branch cutting methods for detecting clusters in a dendrogram depending on their shape (Langfelder, Zhang and Horvath 2007). Compared to the constant height cutoff method, dynamic branch cutting offers the following advantages: (1) it is capable of identifying nested clusters; (2) it is flexible - branch shape parameters can be tuned to suit the application at hand; (3) they are suitable for automation. WGCNA implements two types of dynamic branch cutting method. The first only considers the shape parameters. The second method is hybrid method that combines the advantages of hierarchical clustering and partitioning around medoids.

Research aims that can be addressed with WGCNA

Identification of co-expression modules with high module significance.

Based on the gene significance measure, we define two types of module significance measures.

The first type is simply the average gene significance of the module genes. The second type of is referred to as eigengene significance, which is only defined for a microarray sample trait y . When a microarray sample trait y is available (e.g. case control status or body weight), one can correlate the module eigengenes with this outcome. The correlation coefficient is referred to as eigengene significance. WGCNA also outputs the eigengene significance of each module (eigengene) and the corresponding correlation test p-value.

Identification of intramodular hub genes.

Intramodular connectivity can be interpreted as a fuzzy measure of module membership. Thus, a systems biologic gene screening method that combines gene significance and connectivity (module membership) measure amounts to a pathway based gene screening method. Empirical evidence shows that the resulting systems biologic gene screening methods can lead to important biological insights (Horvath et al 2006, Carlson et al 2006, Gargalovic et al 2006, Ghazalpour et al 2006).

Fuzzy module annotation of the genes

Apart from detecting co-expression modules, WGCNA also provide a comprehensive annotation of all genes on the array with regard to module membership. For each gene, the module membership table reports the module membership with regard to the identified modules. Instead of forcing genes into distinct modules, the fuzzy module assignment allows the user to identify genes that may be close to two or more modules. These fuzzy module annotation tables form a resource for biomarker discovery. The annotation tables can also be used to determine how close a given gene of interest is to the identified modules. We report both the module membership measure (correlation between the gene expression profile and the module eigengene) and the corresponding correlation test p-value.

Functional enrichment analysis of module genes

It is natural to use the module membership measure to come up with lists of genes that comprise the module. For example, one could select blue module genes on the basis of $MM_{Blue} > 0.6$ or $MM_{Blue} < -0.6$. Alternatively, one could select the 200 genes with highest absolute module membership values. The selected genes could be used as input of a functional enrichment analysis software (EASE, KEGG, Webgestalt, Ingenuity, etc).

For example, we often use the software EASE (David)

<http://david.abcc.ncifcrf.gov/summary.jsp>

Relating modules to each other and to a microarray sample trait

WGCNA also outputs the module eigengenes in a separate file.

By correlating the module eigengenes one can determine how related (co-expressed) the modules are to each other. Module eigengenes form the nodes of an eigengene network (Langfelder and Horvath 2007), which may reveal that modules are organized into meta-modules (clusters of co-expressed modules). The module eigengenes can also be used as covariates of a multivariate regression models that regresses the microarray sample trait y on the eigengenes.

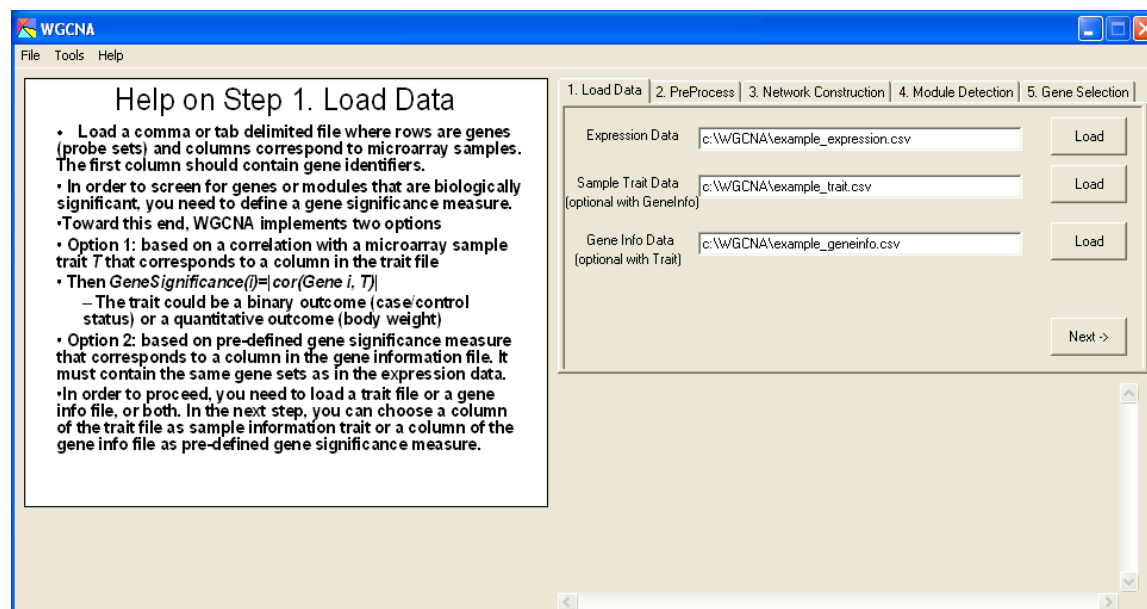
Installation requirements

1. Windows operating system (Win2000, NT, WinXP or Vista) with .NET Framework installed. NET Framework could be freely downloaded from Microsoft windows update.
2. All necessary software is listed in the file “WGCNA_Installation_Guide.doc”, which is included in WGCNA package. Please follow the installation steps.

3. There's no hardware requirement for running WGCNA. However, considering the computation task of network construction, we recommend computers with CPU frequency higher than 2.0 GHz and memory bigger than 2 GB.

Detailed description of the analysis steps

1. Load data



User should specify the “Expression Data” file location first. It’s a comma or tab delimited file where rows are genes (probe sets) and columns correspond to microarray samples. The first column should contain gene identifiers.

GeneName	Person1	Person2	Person3	Person4	Person5	Person6	Person7	Person8	Person9	Person10
G1	0.348876	1.181723	-0.88371	1.420832	1.937326	-0.88351	0.296692	-0.1815	-2.44984	1.293784
G2	2.282398	0.889877	0.365667	-0.19999	0.16848	-0.51231	-0.63858	-0.95834	-1.9177	2.381971
G3	1.464872	-1.07043	0.781256	0.220238	-2.31713	0.204578	-1.59509	2.424814	3.100237	0.586301
G4	0.425562	2.21847	1.115272	0.480486	3.186945	0.545041	-1.54841	-1.48429	-4.21591	1.162176
G5	0.523249	2.227833	-0.34264	-0.2664	1.469669	0.735608	-0.21587	-0.93992	-3.78887	1.242386
G6	-0.46861	-1.03871	-0.22851	-0.70281	-3.20909	-0.96619	1.169791	0.268063	1.56886	0.249678

(Example expression data)

In order to screen for genes or modules that are biologically significant, WGCNA needs to define a gene significance measure.

Option 1: based on a correlation with a microarray sample trait T that corresponds to a column in the trait file as “Sample Trait Data” file.

Then $\text{GeneSignificance}(i) = |\text{cor}(\text{Gene } i, T)|$; the trait could be a binary outcome (case/control status) or a quantitative outcome (body weight)

Option 2: based on pre-defined gene significance measure that corresponds to a column in the gene information file. It must contain the same gene sets as in the expression data.

In order to proceed, the user needs to load a trait file or a gene info file, or both. In the next step, the user can choose a column of the trait file as sample information trait or a column of the gene info file as pre-defined gene significance measure.

GeneName	Outcome1	Outcome2
Person1	0.07	0.732
Person2	2.19	0.234
Person3	0.29	0.78
Person4	-0.07	0.43
Person5	0.26	0.52
Person6	0.79	0.79
Person7	-0.91	0.28

(Example trait data)

“Gene information Data” file can contain additional gene information like gene names, chromosome location etc that user wants to keep in the analysis.

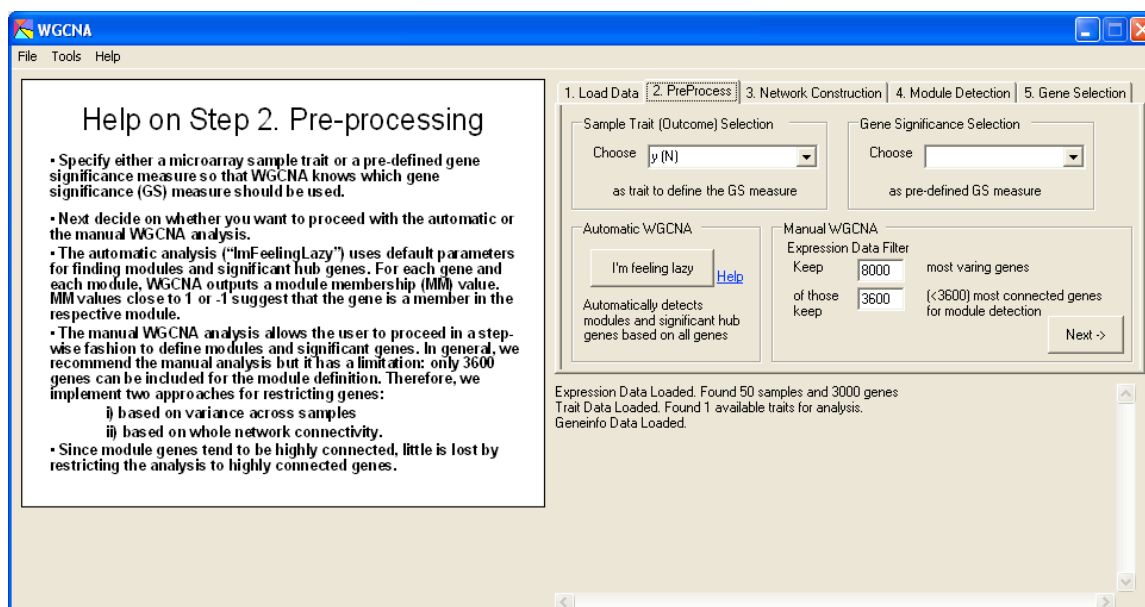
GeneID	GeneName	GeneSignificanceValue	PathwayRelated
G1	ATG	0.73	mRNA Processing
G2	IL10	0.13	Immune Response
G3	OPTR	0.46	
G4	IL6	0.28	Immune Response

(Example gene information data)

Please follow the data format as in sample files. WGCNA can take either comma or tab delimited text file as input.

After loading the expression data and trait data (or gene information data), user should click the “Next->” button in order to move to data “Preprocess” step.

2. Data preprocessing and Im Feeling Lazy analysis



First, the user needs to specify how the gene significance measure should be defined.

For example a microarray sample trait (e.g. a numeric outcome) can be chosen from the sample trait file. If there is more than one trait in the trait data, user needs to choose a certain trait to be used for gene significance calculation. As an alternative, user can also specify a pre-defined gene significance column in gene info data. WGCNA automatically detects whether a column is numeric (denoted by “N”) or character (denoted by “C”). Please make sure to choose a numeric column as trait or gene significance values.

Alternatively, the user can choose a pre-specified gene significance measure from the gene information file. For example, the pre-specified gene significance measure indicates pathway membership, knock-out essentiality, or the T-test statistic from a prior study.

After specifying the gene significance measure, the user can either choose the manual WGCNA analysis (which allows the user to identify modules and select intramodular hub genes) or the user can choose and automatic WGCNA analysis by pushing the “I’m feeling lazy” button. The automatic analysis will automatically choose modules and rank the entire genes according to network screening results. The automatic analysis has one major advantage: it can deal with tens of thousands of genes. However, the user does not get to see a cluster tree, module heatmaps etc. Although we find that the default parameters of the automatic (lazy) analysis work quite well in many real applications, there is a danger that a module may be an artefact e.g due to an array outlier.

The manual analysis allows the user to interact with the program regarding module detection and gene selection but it can only deal with relatively few genes (on our laptop computer fewer than 3600 genes). Since module detection is computationally intensive, the user can filter genes based on the variance (across the microarrays) and the user can select the most connected genes among the most varying genes. Since module genes tend to be highly connected, restricting the analysis to the most connected genes is a reasonable gene filtering criterion (when it comes to module detection). At the end of the analysis, WGCNA outputs module membership measures which are defined for all genes in the input data (not just the 3600 most connected genes).

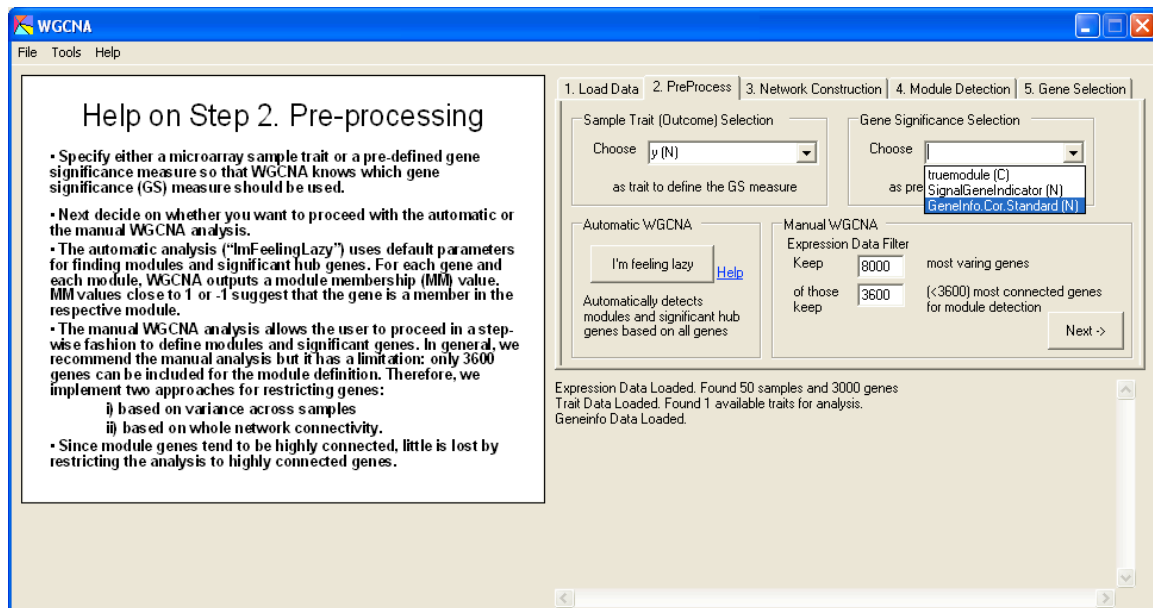


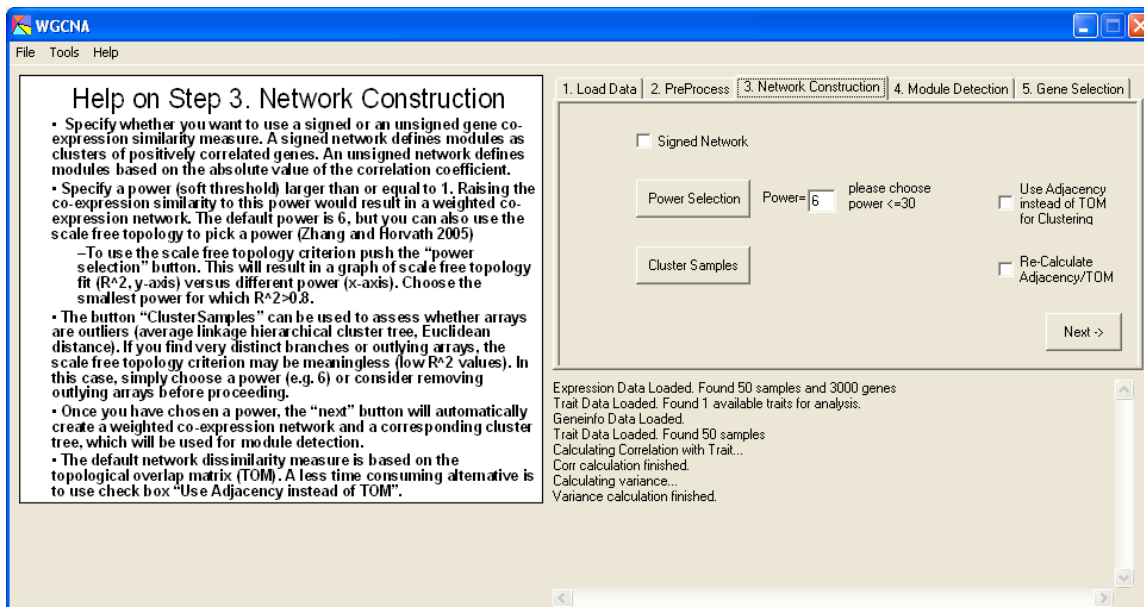
Figure: To proceed with the automatic or the manual WGCNA analysis.

(1). the automatic analysis (“I’m feeling lazy”) uses default parameters for finding modules and significant hub genes. For each gene and each module, WGCNA outputs a module membership (MM) value. MM values close to 1 or -1 suggest that the gene is a member in the respective

module. By using “I’m feeling lazy”, WGCNA will include all the available genes in its analysis, regardless of their variance or connectivity. Regarding to the output of the automatic analysis, please refer to the “5. Gene Selection” section for details.

(2). the manual WGCNA analysis allows the user to proceed in a step-wise fashion to define modules and significant genes. In general, we recommend the manual analysis but it has a limitation: only 3600 genes can be included for the module definition.

3. Network Construction



First, the user needs to specify whether a signed or an unsigned gene co-expression network should be constructed. Signed network defines modules as clusters of positively correlated genes. An unsigned network defines modules based on the absolute value of the correlation coefficient.

To construct a weighted network, a power (soft threshold) larger than or equal to 1 should be specified. Raising the co-expression similarity to this power would result in a weighted co-expression network. The default power for an unsigned and a signed network is 6 and 12, respectively. To choose a power, the WGCNA also implements plots for the scale free topology criterion (Zhang and Horvath 2005). This criterion is described in a separate section.

The “power selection” button results in a graph of scale free topology fit (R^2 , y-axis) versus different power (x-axis). Choose the smallest power for which $R^2 > 0.8$ or if a saturation curve results, choose the power at the kind of the saturation curve.

The button “ClusterSamples” can be used to assess whether arrays are outliers (average linkage hierarchical cluster tree, Euclidean distance). If the dendrogram has two or more very distinct branches or outlying arrays, the scale free topology criterion may be meaningless (low R^2 values). In this case, simply choose a power (e.g. 6) or consider removing outlying arrays before proceeding.

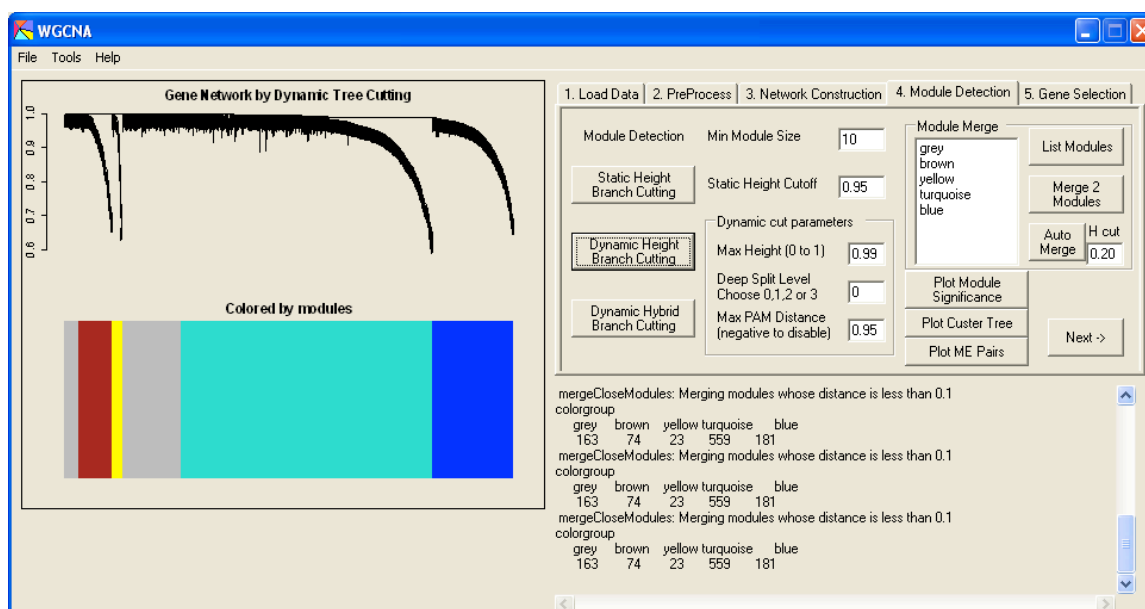
Once the user have chosen a power, the “next” button will automatically create a weighted co-expression network and a corresponding cluster tree, which will be used for module detection.

The default network dissimilarity measure is based on the topological overlap matrix (TOM). A less time consuming alternative is to use check box “Use Adjacency instead of TOM”.

Because calculation of TOM or adjacency matrix is very time consuming, WGCNA allows user to skip this step by un-checking “Re-Calculate Adjacency/TOM”. It’s particularly useful when user switch back to Step 2 to pick another trait or gene significance column for analysis without re-calculating the same gene network.

After choosing power, user can click “Next->” button to move to module detection step.

4. Module Detection



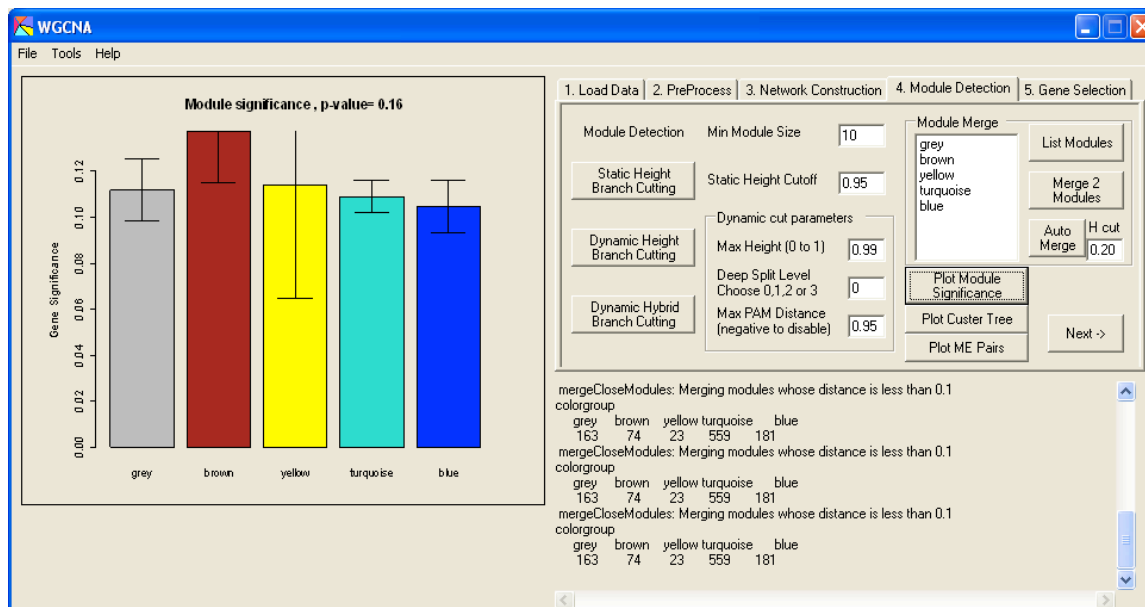
WGCNA implements three different approaches for defining modules based on a hierarchical clustering tree of the genes. All of the three methods required a minimum module size setting.

- 1) The static branch cutting method simply defines modules as branches that lie below the height corresponding to the y-axis of the cluster tree.
- 2) The dynamic height branch cutting method automatically chooses a height cut-off for each branch based on the shape of each branch (Langfelder et al, Bioinformatics 2007)
- 3) The dynamic hybrid method is a hybrid between the dynamic method and partitioning around medoid (PAM) clustering.

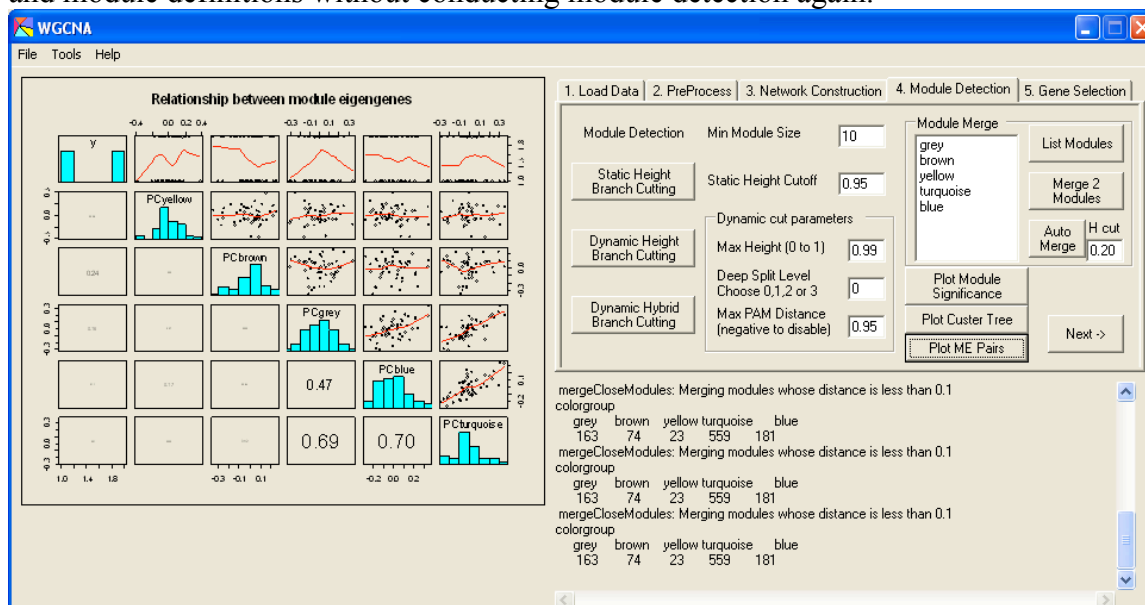
The button “Plot Module Significance” plots the average gene significance for each module. The user can go back to step 2 to specify a different gene significance (GS) measure in the gene info file or pick a different clinical trait (column) in the sample trait file. In this way, the user can

study module significance based on different significance measurements without re-calculating TOM (needs to keep “Re-Calculate Adjacency/TOM box unchecked).

The module merge functions allow the user to manually or automatically merge closely related modules. User can go ahead to merge close modules using “Merge 2 modules” function. Besides, “Auto Module Merge” offers an automatic module merging process.



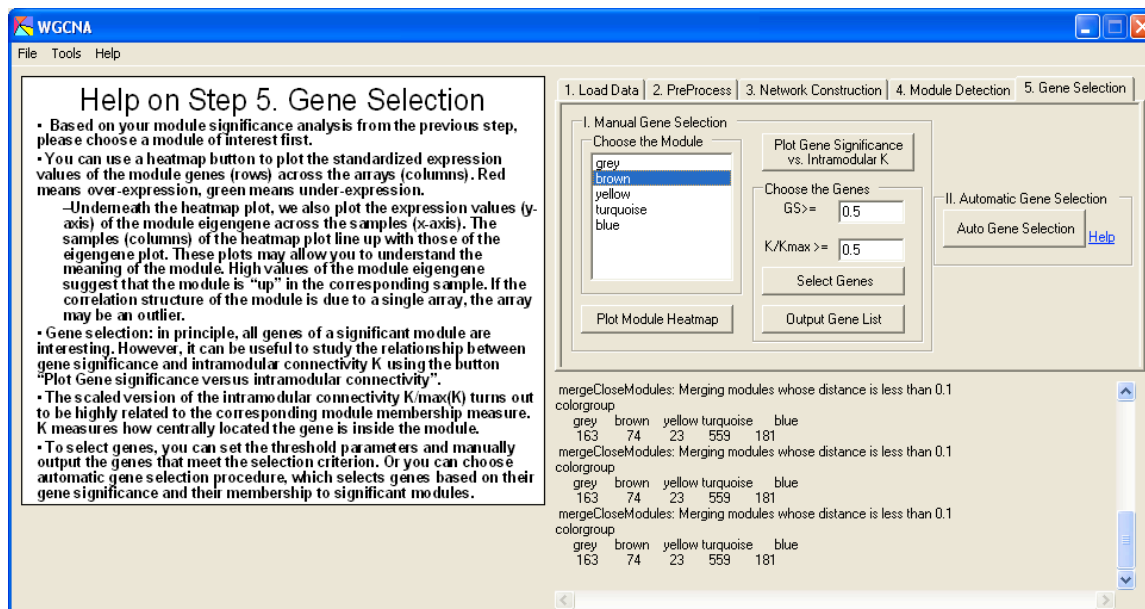
Once modules are defined, user can generate module significance plot by clicking “plot module significance”. And the “plot cluster tree” button offers an easy way to re-draw hierarchical tree and module definitions without conducting module detection again.



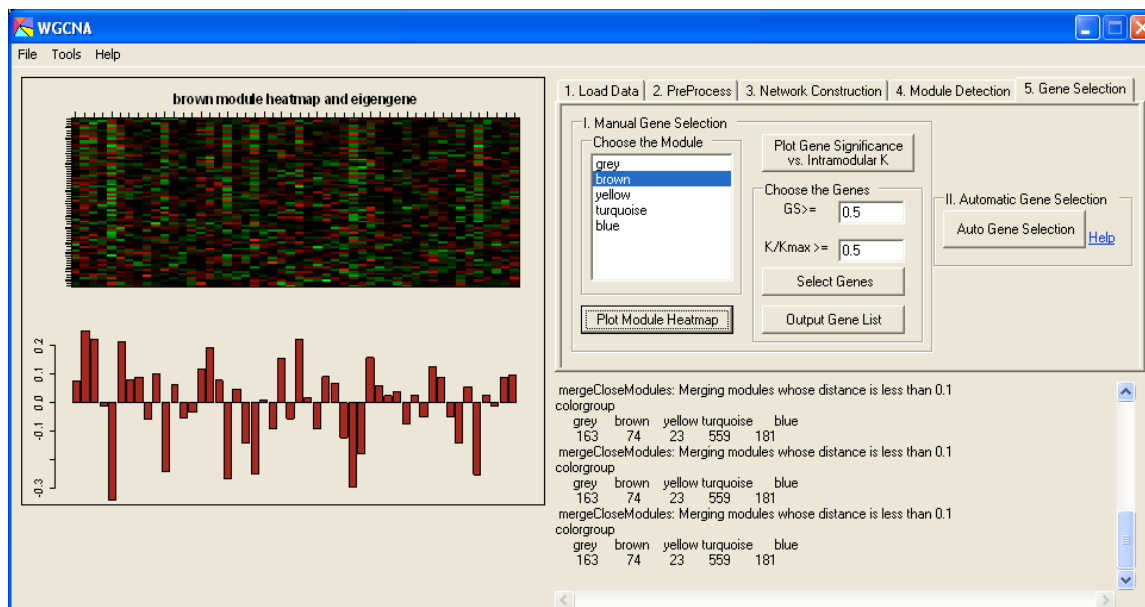
And the “plot ME Pairs” function plots the relationship between module eigengenes. It’s useful for studying module similarities, and help merging similar modules. Message: the module eigengenes (first PC) of different modules may be highly correlated. WGCNA can be interpreted as a biologically motivated data reduction scheme that allows for dependency between the resulting components. Compare this to principal component analysis that would impose orthogonality between the components. Since modules may represent biological pathways there is no biological reason why modules should be orthogonal to each other.

With modules detected, user can click “Next->” button to move to gene selection step.

5. Gene Selection



Based on the user module significance analysis from the previous step, please choose a module of interest first.

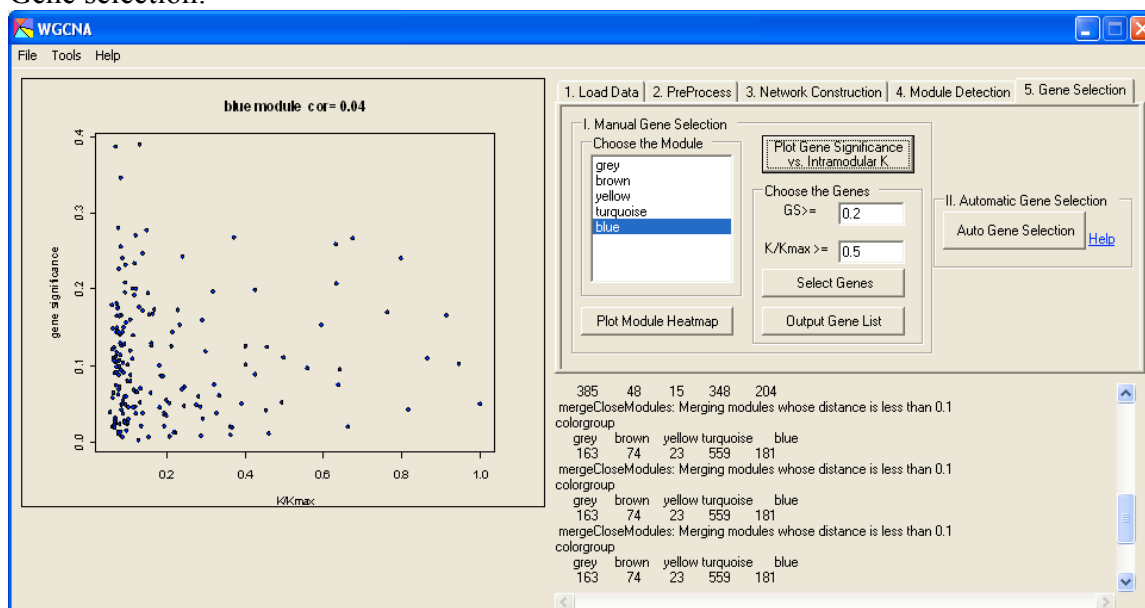


The user can use a heatmap button to plot the standardized expression values of the module genes (rows) across the arrays (columns). The top row shows the heatmap of the brown module genes (rows) across the microarrays (columns). The lower row shows the corresponding module eigengene expression values (y-axis) versus the same microarray samples. Note that the module eigengene takes on low values in arrays where a lot of module genes are under-expressed (green

color in the heatmap). The ME takes on high values for arrays where a lot of module genes are over-expressed (red in the heatmap). ME can be considered the most representative gene expression profile of the module.

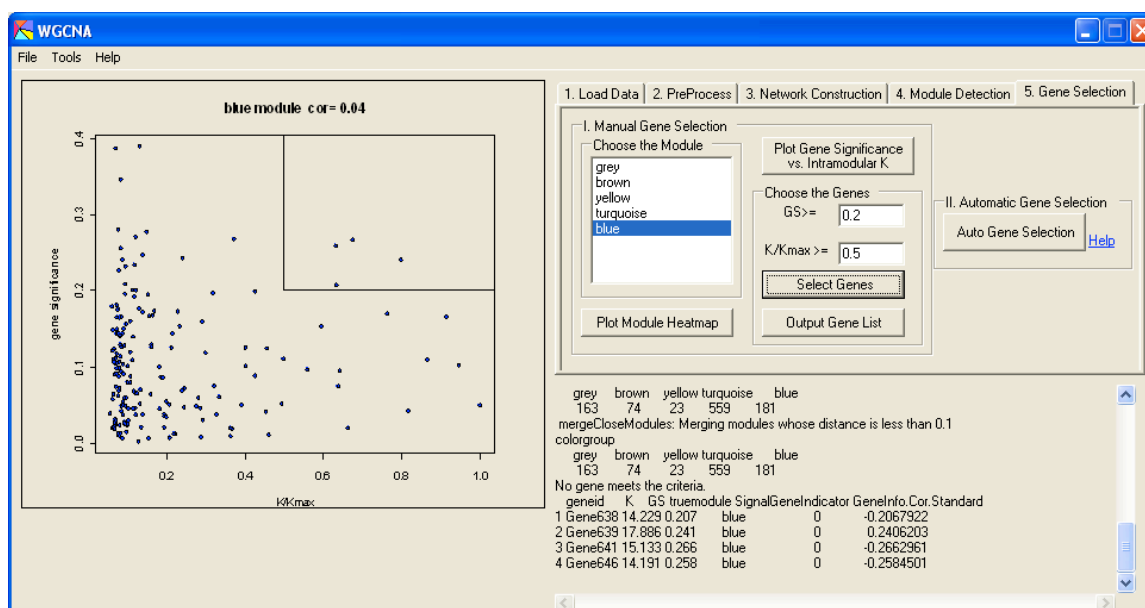
These plots may allow the user to understand the meaning of the module. High values of the module eigengene suggest that the module is “up” in the corresponding sample. If the correlation structure of the module is due to a single array, the array may be an outlier.

Gene selection:



It can be useful to study the relationship between gene significance and intramodular connectivity K using the button “Plot Gene significance versus intramodular connectivity”.

The scaled version of the intramodular connectivity $K/\max(K)$ turns out to be highly related to the corresponding module membership measure. K measures how centrally located the gene is inside the module.



To select genes, the user can set the threshold parameters and manually output the genes that meet the selection criterion. (The user can also save the list to a file). Or the user can choose automatic gene selection procedure, which selects genes based on their gene significance and their membership to significant modules.

In gene selection step, user can generate heat map for each specific module. The sample order is exact the same as in expression data.

“Auto Gene Selection” function allows user to obtain a gene lists with most significant genes ranked by putting both gene significance and intra-modular connectivity into consideration.

Gene selection output files

Both “I am feeling lazy” and “auto gene selection” functions generate two files as output. They are of the same format.

(1). Analysis using Trait data

Output contains two different files

- 1) “LazyGenelist.csv” which contains results for each gene (rows)
- 2) “MEResults...csv” which contains results for each array sample.

LazyGenelist.csv contains the following columns:

Module membership information, see the columns MM.blue, etc

For each gene and each automatically detected module, WGCNA outputs a module membership (MM) value. E.g, if a gene has an MMblue value close to 1 or -1, the gene is assigned to blue module.

Module colors are assigned according to module size: turquoise denotes the largest module, blue next, then brown, green, yellow, etc. The color grey is reserved for non-module genes.

Cor.Weighted denotes the weighted network estimate of the standard correlation $\text{cor}(x[i], y)$ between the i -th gene and the outcome y . It use of module membership info as well as the module eigengene significance.

Analogously, p.Weighted is a “weighted” version of a p-value, and q.Weighted is a weighted version of a q-value (local false discovery rate, see the qvalue library in R). Z.Weighted is a weighted version of the Fisher Z transform of a correlation coefficient.

In order to learn about which module eigengenes affect the calculation of these measures, WGCNA also provides the file “MEResults”, which reports the values of the module eigengenes (columns) for different arrays (rows). The top two rows in the file MEResults reports the eigengene significance of each module.

(2). Analysis using gene significance data

Output contains two different files

- 1) “LazyGenelist.csv” which contains results for each gene (rows)
- 2) “MEResults...csv” which contains results for each array sample.

LazyGenelist.csv contains the following columns:

Module membership information, see the columns MM.blue, etc

For each gene and each automatically detected module, WGCNA outputs a module membership (MM) value. For example, if a gene has an MMblue value close to 1 or -1, the gene is assigned to the blue module.

Module colors are assigned according to module size: turquoise denotes the largest module, blue next, then brown, green, yellow, etc. The color grey is reserved for non-module genes.

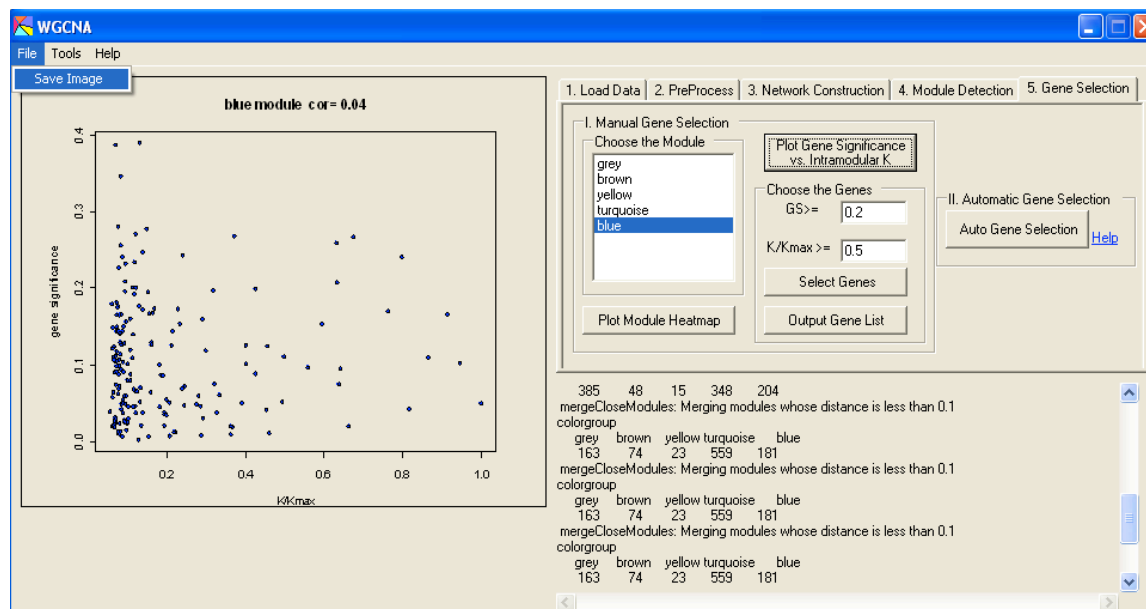
GS.Weighted is the weighted network estimate of the corresponding pre-defined GS measure.

GS.Weighted takes account of module membership information and the hub gene significance measure (HGS) of each module.

The file MEResults reports the module eigengenes (columns) across the arrays (rows).

The top two rows in the file MEResults report the hub gene significance of each module.

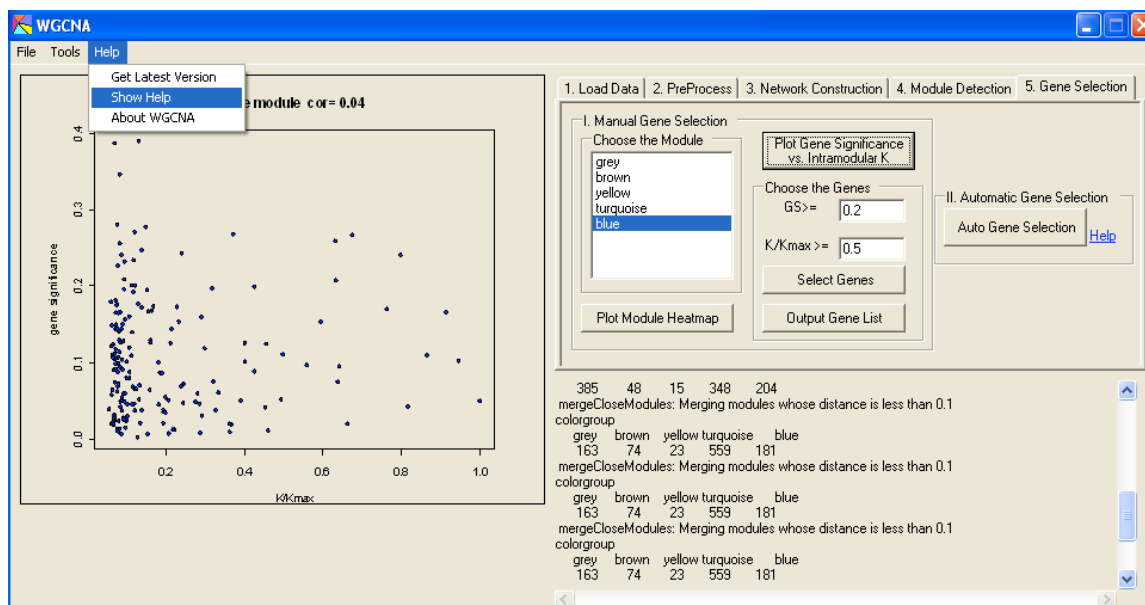
Save image



The user can save any plot in the display panel to a local file using “Save Image” function under “File” menu. The image format is “emf”. EMF (Enhanced Meta File) is a vector-based image format designed for and popularized by Microsoft Windows, which could be easily transfer to other desirable format.

To convert EMF files into PDF format, the user can insert the EMF file into Word, and then print it using “Acrobat PDFWriter” to crate a PDF file. If the user has Adobe Illustrator, the user can then edit the PDF file and save it to EPS format.

How to access help



If needs to read help for current step, the user can display the help by click the “Show Help” menu under “Help”.

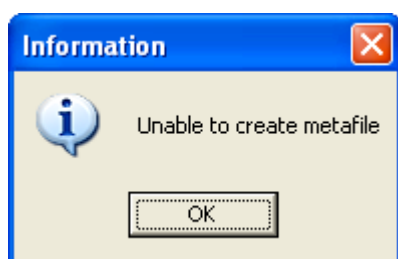
Network function library update

WGCNA utilizes a set of network functions, which is included in the WGCNA package called “NetworkFunctions-WGCNA.library”. Since we keep updating the library, please download the latest version from our website. The user can check the versions of both WGCNA program and its network library using “About WGCNA” menu under “Help”.

In order to update the network library, the user can simple download the latest version and save it to “C:\WGCNA” folder.

Recovery from unexpected errors

If WGCNA crashes due to any unexpected error, please use “Windows Task Manager” to kill the R server process, whose name is displayed as “STATCO~1.EXE”. Otherwise, the user may encounter error like “Unable to create metafile” when the user re-run WGCNA.



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