

Extending iSEE

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Preface

The Bioconductor *iSEE* package provides functions for creating an interactive graphical user interface (GUI) using the RStudio *Shiny* package for exploring data stored in *SummarizedExperiment* objects, including row- and column-level metadata (Rue-Albrecht et al., 2018). In this book we describe how to create web-applications that leverage built-in panels and develop new ones.

Chapter 1

Panel classes

1.1 Overview

The types of panels available to compose an *iSEE* app are defined as a hierarchy of S4 classes.

- Panel
 - DotPlot
 - * ColumnDotPlot
 - RedDimPlot
 - ColDataPlot
 - FeatAssayPlot
 - * RowDotPlot
 - RowDataPlot
 - SampAssayPlot
 - Table
 - * RowTable
 - RowStatTable
 - * ColumnTable
 - ColStatTable
 - HeatMapPlot

1.2 The Panel class

The top-most class is called `Panel`. It is a virtual class that defines the core properties common to any panel - existing or future - that may be displayed in the interface.

<code>PanelId</code>	Integer index indicating the i^{th} panel of a given type.
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PanelHeight	Height of the panel, in pixels.
PanelWidth	Width of the panel, an integer value indicating the number of columns to use, from 1 to 12.
SelectBoxOpen	Logical value indicating if the <i>Selection parameters</i> box of the panel is open when the app starts.
SelectByPlot	Encoded name of the panel from which to receive a selection of data points.
SelectMultiType	Keyword indicating the method to deal with multiple incoming selections of data points.
SelectMultiSaved	Integer index indicating a single data point selection to use, among multiple incoming selections.

1.3 The DotPlot and Table panel families

The **Panel** virtual class is directly derived into two major virtual sub-classes:

- **DotPlot**
- **Table**

Those classes introduce properties that are specific to distinct subsets of panel types.

The **DotPlot** class introduce parameters specific to panels where the output is a **ggplot** object and each row in the data-frame is represented as a point in a plot.

The **Table** class introduce parameters specific to panels where the main output is a data-frame directly displayed as a table in the GUI.

In addition, the **HeatMapPlot** class defines a special panel class that directly extends the **Panel** class, as it introduces a set of parameters distinct from both the **DotPlot** and **Table** panel families. This panel type is described in further details in a separate section below.

1.4 The ColumnDotPlot and RowDotPlot panel families

1.5 Built-in ColumnDotPlot panel classes

1.6 Built-in RowDotPlot panel classes

1.7 The ColumnTable and RowTable panel families

1.8 Built-in ColumnTable panel classes

1.9 Built-in RowTable panel classes

1.10 The HeatMapPlot panel class

This type of panel introduces parameters specific to panels where the output is a heat map, with each row representing a feature and each column representing a sample in the `se` object.

Chapter 2

The iSEE server

2.1 Reactive objects

2.2 Persistent (non-reactive) objects

2.3 The app memory

The app `memory` is a list of instances created from available panel classes, which defines the order in which individual panels are displayed in the GUI.

2.4 The panel API

2.4.1 `.cacheCommonInfo`

Each individual panel (e.g., *RedDimPlot*) and family of panels (e.g., *ColDotPlot*) defines a `.cacheCommonInfo` function.

This function is called for each panel instance in memory when the app is initialized. It allows the app to efficiently compute a single time common information that only depends on the input `se` object, and may be frequently reused during the runtime of the app.

Following the hierarchy of panel types, each call to the signature takes a panel instance `x` and the `se` object, and caches the computed information in the `se` object itself, before calling `callNextMethod()` to invoke the next parent signature.

The top-most signature - for the `Panel` class - returns the `se` object that contains all the cached information.

2.4.2 `.refineParameters`

Each individual panel (e.g., *RedDimPlot*) and family of panels (e.g., *ColDotPlot*) defines a `.refineParameters` function.

This function is called for each panel instance in memory when the app is initialized, and also when a new panel is added to the GUI. It inspects the parameters of a given panel instance, and replaces invalid parameters with sensible values for a given `se` object.

Following the hierarchy of panel types, each call to the signature takes an instance `x` and the `se` object, and first calls `callNextMethod()` to invoke the next parent signature, to refine generic parameters before processing specific ones.

The called signature ultimately returns the updated instance panel `x`, or `NULL` if the panel instance is not available for this app.

2.5 Initialization of the app server

The app server is initialized as soon as a valid `se` object is provided. This can be either in the call to `iSEE(se)` or using the Shiny file upload button in apps that were launched without providing the `se` arguments, e.g., `iSEE()`.

The `initialize_server` function takes the `se` object and the list holding reactive values used to trigger re-rendering of the GUI, as described above.

The very first step invokes the function `.sanitize_SE_input` on the `se` object. This function coerces the `se` to `SingleCellExperiment`, flatten nested DataFrames, add row and column names, and remove other non-atomic fields. In addition, it also sanitizes the `SingleCellExperiment` object by moving internal fields into the column- or row-level metadata, making them visible in the *Column statistics table* and *Row statistics table* panels, respectively. The function returns both the sanitized `se` object that will be used by the app, and the list of R commands that will be displayed in the code tracker for users.

Next, the server invokes the `checkColormapCompatibility` function. This function takes the `se` object and the optional `colormap` provided to `iSEE()`, and carries out a number of compatibility checks between the two objects. The function collects a character vector of issue messages that are displayed - if any - as warning messages in GUI during initialization.

Next, the `.cacheCommonInfo` and `.refineParameters` are successively invoked on each panel instance initialized in the app memory. As described in a separate section above, the first function precomputes and caches information specific to the `se` object and frequently used throughout the runtime of the app. The second function ensures that each panel instance is initialized with valid parameters; it replaces any invalid parameters with sensible values for a given `se` object.

Next, persistent (non-reactive) objects are initialized:

- the app `memory` (see this section)
- the count of panels of each type, used to assign increasing ID to new panel instances
- the list of commands to display in the code tracker for each panel instance
- the list of data point coordinates selectable in each panel instance¹
- a list of miscellaneous cached information²

¹Data points downsampled for rendering speed performance remain selectable, even though they are not visible in the plot.

²The plot that contain the legend keys of *Heatmap* panels is currently cached as miscellaneous information retrieved separately when rendering the GUI.

Chapter 3

The plotting API

3.1 `.getPlottingFunction`

Each panel type available for use in the GUI defines a `.getPlottingFunction`.

This function is called within `.createRenderedOutput`, which is triggered by observers when the value of the panel input widgets are changed by users, or when a new panel is added to the GUI.

The `.getPlottingFunction` function inspects the parameters for a given panel instance, and uses the app `memory` of all active panels and parameters, the coordinates of data points in each plot panel, the `se` object, and the `colormap` to generate all the information necessary to render the outputs of this panel and those that depend on it.

For `DotPlot` panels, the output is a list that includes:

- the list of commands to display in the code tracker
- the coordinates of data points in the plot
- the `ggplot` object

For `Table` panels, the output is a `datatable`.

For the `HeatMap` panel, the function does not return any value. Instead it sets relevant elements in the `output` object of the Shiny session.

Bibliography

Rue-Albrecht, K., Marini, F., Soneson, C., and Lun, A. T. L. (2018). isee: Interactive summarizedexperiment explorer. *F1000Res*, 7:741.