

Big jobs/simulations

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But first...

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- ▶ Make it an R package
- ▶ Write a test or two
- ▶ Commit it to a git repository

So what's the big deal?

- ▶ You don't want `knitr` running for a year.
- ▶ You don't want to re-run things if you don't have to.

Unix basics

```
nice +19 R CMD BATCH input.R output.txt &
```

```
fg
```

```
ctrl-z
```

```
bg
```

```
ps ux
```

```
top
```

```
kill
```

```
kill -9
```

```
pkill
```

Disk thrashing

In computer science, thrashing occurs when a computer's virtual memory subsystem is in a constant state of paging

– [Wikipedia](#)

Disk thrashing

In computer science, thrashing occurs when a computer's virtual memory subsystem is in a constant state of paging, rapidly exchanging data in memory for data on disk, to the exclusion of most application-level processing.

– [Wikipedia](#)

Biggish jobs in knitr

- ▶ Manual caching
- ▶ Built-in `cache=TRUE`
- ▶ Split the work and write a `Makefile`

Manual caching

```
```{r a_code_chunk}
file <- "cache/myfile.RData"

if(file.exists(file)) {
 load(file)
} else{

 save(object1, object2, object3, file=file)
}
```
```

Manual caching

```
```{r a_code_chunk}
file <- "cache/myfile.rds"

if(file.exists(file)) {
 object <- readRDS(file)
} else{

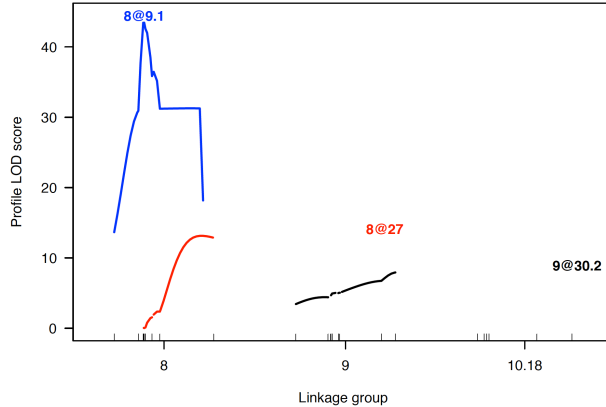
 saveRDS(object, file)
}
```
```

Chunk references

```
```{r not_shown, eval=FALSE}  
code_here <- 0
```  
  
```{r a_code_chunk, echo=FALSE}  
file <- "cache/myfile.RData"

if(file.exists(file)) {
 load(file)
} else{
<<not_shown>>
 save(code_here, file=file)
}
```
```

A cache gone bad



Knitr's cache system

```
```{r chunk_name, cache=TRUE}  
load("a_big_file.RData")
med <- apply(object, 2, median, na.rm=TRUE)
```
```

- ▶ Chunk is re-run if edited.
- ▶ Otherwise, objects from previous run are loaded.
- ▶ Don't cache things with side effects
e.g., `options()`, `par()`

Cache dependencies

Manual dependencies

```
```{r chunkA, cache=TRUE}  
Sys.sleep(2)
x <- 5
```  
  
```{r chunkB, cache=TRUE, dependson="chunkA"}  
Sys.sleep(2)
y <- x + 1
```  
  
```{r chunkC, cache=TRUE, dependson="chunkB"}  
Sys.sleep(2)
z <- y + 1
```
```


Cache dependencies

Automatic dependencies

```
```{r setup, include=FALSE}  
opts_chunk$set(autodep = TRUE)
dep_auto()
```
```

Parallel computing

If your computer has multiple processors, use `library(parallel)` to make use of them.

- ▶ `detectCores()`
- ▶ `RNGkind("L'Ecuyer-CMRG")` and `mclapply` (Unix/Mac)
- ▶ `makeCluster`, `clusterSetRNGStream`, `clusterApply`, and `stopCluster` (Windows)

Systems for distributed computing

- ▶ HTCondor and the UW-Madison CHTC
- ▶ Other condor-like systems
- ▶ “By hand”
 - e.g., perl script + template R script

Simulations

- ▶ Computer simulations require RNG seeds (`.Random.seed` in R).
- ▶ Multiple parallel jobs need different seeds.
- ▶ Don't rely on the current seed, or on having it generated from the clock.
- ▶ Use something like `set.seed(91820205 + i)`
- ▶ An alternative is create a big batch of simulated data sets in advance.

Save everything

- ▶ RNG seeds
- ▶ input
- ▶ output
- ▶ version numbers, with `sessionInfo()`
- ▶ raw results
- ▶ script to combine results
- ▶ combined results
- ▶ ReadMe describing the point

One Makefile to rule them all

- ▶ Separate directory for each batch of big computations.
- ▶ Makefile that controls the combination of the results (and everything else).
- ▶ KnitR-based documents for the analysis/use of those results.

Potential problems

- ▶ Forgetting `save()` in your distributed jobs
- ▶ A bug in the `save()` command
- ▶ `make clobbers` some important results
 - Scripts should refuse to overwrite output files

Summary

- ▶ Careful organization and modularization.
- ▶ Save everything.
- ▶ Document everything.
- ▶ Learn the basic skills for distributed computing.